

We Strongly ‘Suggest’ You Read This Article

The recently launched NYC Simplicity Idea Market aims to improve city government by creatively utilizing its most valuable resource—its employees. The Idea Market, an interactive online forum where employees submit ideas and also comment and vote on the ideas of their colleagues, is a 21st century spin on a long tradition of innovation by NYC employees.

One historical example of this tradition was the NYC Department of Personnel’s Employee Suggestion Program. Like the Idea Market, the Employee Suggestion Program was a city-wide initiative to capitalize on the ingenuity of its employees in order to better serve the people of NYC. Cash awards of varying amounts were given to the winners depending on the perceived value of their suggestion.

The DEP Archives has administrative files from a DEP prede-



cessor agency, the Department of Water Supply, Gas & Electricity (DWSGE), which illustrate its participation in this program during the 1950-60s. In the case of the DWSGE Bureau of Water

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Spotlight on Safety

EHS SURVEY - Round Two!

Last year approximately 33% of DEP employees participated in the agency’s first EHS survey. The responses were summarized in a report and made available to employees.

In order to allow for continued communication about EHS matters within the agency, DEP has decided to conduct a survey annually. The second “Employee EHS Survey” questionnaire was made available electronically last week in an email memo from Commissioner Holloway. A hard copy version of the survey will be circulated this week for anyone without DEP computer access, which can then be sent

to Office of Environmental Health & Safety Assistant Commissioner **Persis Luke** by interoffice mail.

Please take a few minutes to complete the survey. Your answers, ideas, and opinions are all important in evaluating the effectiveness of the EHS program and help to make it more successful. All individual responses, including the identity of every respondent, will be kept strictly confidential. Results will once again be communicated to all DEP employees after they have been tabulated. Here is the link to the EHS Survey. Please note that the survey should be completed by July 18.

Commissioner’s Corner



Last week brought us a significant step closer to achieving one of our top strategic initiatives (#29, to be exact)—prohibiting hydraulic fracturing (a.k.a. “hydrofracking”) in the city’s watersheds. After more than a year of careful analysis, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) issued new recommendations regarding hydrofracking that would prohibit the practice in unfiltered watersheds, which include the water supplies of New York City and Syracuse. The City opposed fracking in our watersheds based on the results of an independent study DEP commissioned to assess the impacts of this drilling technique on the drinking water supply relied upon by nine million New Yorkers. The study concluded that hydrofracking poses too great a risk to water quality to be permitted within the city’s watersheds, and DEC agreed. Click here to read all of DEC’s recommendations—which recommend making other areas like aquifers and wildlife management areas off limits to hydrofracking. To convert the recommendations into actual rules, DEC appointed an advisory panel that will include major environmentalists like **Robert F. Kennedy Jr.** from Riverkeeper, and **Eric Goldstein** from the Natural Resources Defense Council. The new recommendations are a quantum leap forward, and **Mayor Bloomberg** specifically credited Governor **Andrew Cuomo** and DEC Commissioner **Joe Martens** for “fully recognizing the City’s position and for ensuring that the water supply of half of New York State is protected for generations to come.” On behalf of DEP, I would like to add our thanks as well; we look forward to working with DEC to make these recommendations a reality.

Speaking of drinking water quality, we kicked off the second summer

season of our Water-On-the-Go program last Thursday at City Hall Park, just in time for the July 4th weekend. To make NYC Water more widely available, DEP is setting up portable water fountains that we connect to hydrants in parks, plazas and at special events throughout the five boroughs. Last year we served more than 85,000 people with only one or two fountains out each day; this year we plan to shatter that record by deploying more than triple that number. We were joined at the launch by **Birdie**, the official PlaNYC mascot dedicated to creating a greener, greater New York. What better way to do that than by skipping bottled water in favor of delicious, healthy and environmentally-sustainable NYC Water. Watch a great NY1 clip of the announcement here. A full calendar of times and locations can be found here and I want to thank the entire Water-On-the-Go team, including **Margot Schloss**, **Eileen Alter** and **Eva Lynch**, for running such a great program.



Also in time for the Fourth of July, on Thursday, State Senator **Marty Golden**, Council Member **Vincent Gentile** and I announced the completion of the Central Residuals Building at Owls Head Wastewater Treatment Plant in Brooklyn. The building will provide a centralized location for the handling and disposal of materials removed from the approximately 100 million gallons of wastewater that the plant treats every day. We also announced two projects that will cut carbon emissions at the plant by 19,000 metric tons a year and reduce the electricity needed to run it. State Senator Golden said, “The Department of Environmental Protection continues to address the odor conditions emanating from the Owls Head plant.” You can read more about it here.

At DEP, everyone is responsible for safety. If you or anyone on your team is concerned about your working conditions, it’s okay to ask your supervisor or your bureau’s EHS liaison how they can help. If you’ve still got questions, you can call the EHS Employee Concerns Hotline. It’s DEP’s responsibility to acknowledge and fix unsafe situations, procedures, and practices. With your help, we’ll not only get the job done, we’ll make it safer for ourselves, our coworkers, our families, and our city. CALL (800) 897-9677 OR SEND A MESSAGE THROUGH PIPELINE. HELP IS ON THE WAY.

Focus on the Field



Martin Canning spent his first two years at DEP working at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant, but for the last 11 years has been at the Coney Island plant, just “a stone’s throw away” from the Brooklyn neighborhood where he was born and raised. Martin, a sewage treatment worker, starts at 7:00 am when he receives his daily assignment and finds out who will be in his crew. Repair and preventive maintenance work takes him throughout the plant, working with tanks, pipes, pumps, hoses, and plumbing.

As he sees it, the best part of his job is having the opportunity to work with different plant personnel and to find solutions to different problems. For example, there was a problem related to

the aeration tanks that are part of an extensive odor control system at the plant. The system protects the surrounding community from the odors and gases that are a natural by-product of wastewater treatment.

Lifting the aeration tank’s heavy and bulky aluminum covers was a challenge, especially since each cover is 20 feet in length and weighs more than 300 pounds. Five years ago, as a result of a combined effort with his co-worker, **Ed Fiore**, a tool was fabricated to accomplish this task more efficiently. The tool is an L-shaped steel bar and a chain that allows STWs to increase mechanical leverage for an easier lift, and more importantly, in a safer way.

Whether it is **Ojpal Auluck**, the Plant Superintendent, or other colleagues, many at the plant have become like family to Martin. In Martin’s spare time, salt water fishing is his hobby of choice and what he enjoys whenever he can. Although he won’t say the weight of the largest fish he has caught, Martin does admit to liking to fish locally, including Jamaica Bay, in pursuit of flounder and blue fish.

Milestones

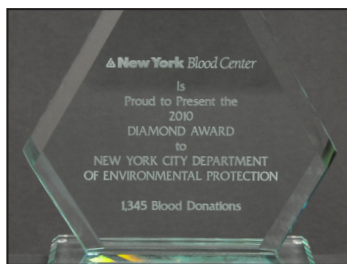
Double congratulations to **Samer Girgis**, BWS, and his wife **Amirah** on the birth of their twins, son **Giovanni** and daughter **Gianna**, on May 30.

Event Calendar

DEP’s **NYC Water-On-the-Go** fountains will be out Tuesday through Sunday every week through Labor Day. For more information, [click here](#).

OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS – SUIT DRIVE: DEP will be participating in the Suit Drive for Veterans that the Mayor’s Office of Veteran Affairs is launching, which will run from July 5 through July 22. Beginning today, collection bins for new or lightly worn interview attire will be available from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm, Monday through Friday, in the reception areas at the following locations: Lefrak - 18th floor; and the main floors at Sutton Park, Kingston, and Grahamsville. For more information please [click here](#).

Kudos Corner



DONORS HONORS: DEP received a Diamond Award from the New York Blood Center in recognition of the agency’s 1,345 blood donations in 2010. The award was presented to DEP at the Long Island Blood Services Annual Queens Group Recognition Dinner on June 23 for being one of the top five blood drives in Queens.

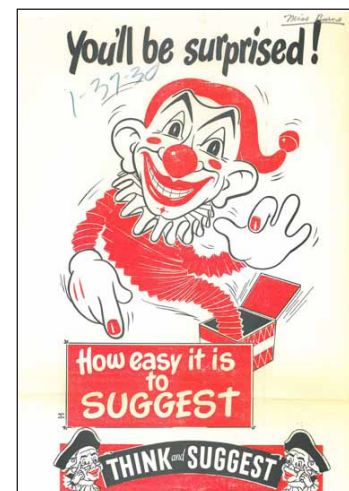
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Supply, ideas were reviewed first by the five borough superintendents. Their evaluation was then forwarded to the Chief Engineer for a final decision, with an occasional detour for input from related personnel such as the Safety Director or clerical staff.

One example of a successful idea submitted by a DWSGE employee was the conversion of 200 obsolete high pressure fire hydrant main valve rods into low pressure valve rods by an agency repair shop in 1966. This idea was suggested because the supplier of low pressure valves was on strike, leading to several hundred hydrants being put out of service in Brooklyn. In addition to averting potential fire disasters, the idea also saved the city approximately \$4,000. Another successful recommendation from 1966 was to include water conservation flyers in all outgoing mail.

Many suggestions dealt with combatting the unauthorized opening of fire hydrants during the summer, a problem that has plagued NYC water authorities since the introduction of Croton water in 1840s. Frustration with this issue led to a great deal of brainstorming, with one 1968 employee suggestion going so far as to propose that fire hydrants “be equipped with a simple and inexpensive gas bomb so that any person that starts to release water that is not authorized to will become sick and pass out.” Although the Suggestion Board was assured that the gas would not be harmful, this idea was unsurprisingly not adopted.

A more practical solution to the hydrant problem was suggested by **Raymond J. Cassidy**, an as-



sistant mechanical engineer at DWSGE who in 1953 received the highest possible award of \$500. Cassidy created a tool that has been a summer standby for NYC children since it was introduced in a pilot program that same year—the fire hydrant spray cap. His spray cap converted the hydrant nozzle into shower sprinklers, saving millions of gallons of water that otherwise would have been wasted by the unauthorized opening of hydrants (more than 250,000,000 gallons daily during hot summer weather). This ingenious invention allowed children to cool off while making sure that there was adequate water pressure to fight fires.

A 1950s poster for the Employee Suggestion Program aptly said, “One good suggestion is worth 10,000 gripes!” In Cassidy’s case it was also worth millions of gallons of water and huge cost savings for NYC. His invention had a large impact, but it was only one of many innovative ideas proposed by NYC employees—a legacy that continues today.

We welcome your feedback! To submit an announcement or suggestion, please email us at: newsletter@dep.nyc.gov.