Racing into the Future

By Daniella Bernett

Lesa France Kennedy, president of the International Speedway Corporation (ISC), epitomizes the professional drive, ambition and vision that is at the heart of everything the WTS organization strives to achieve. So, it was only fitting that Kennedy was invited to speak at the Greater New York Chapter’s May program about the ISC’s plans to build a NASCAR racetrack on Staten Island.

Kennedy was recently honored by Street & Smith’s Sports Business Journal as “Female Sports Executive of the Year,” and Auto Week magazine named her as “One of 10 Secret People Who Will Change the World.” In addition, in 1999 and 2000, Street & Smith named her one of the “Top 10 Female Sports Executives,” while in 2001 and 2002 she was among the Charlotte Observer’s “25 Most Influential People in NASCAR.”

Kennedy serves on the ISC’s Executive Management Planning Committee and was instrumental in the conception, design and development of the DAYTONA USA, an award-winning 50,000-square-foot entertainment complex at the Daytona International Speedway in Florida. She also serves on the board of directors for NASCAR.

“What had its humble beginnings on the beaches of Daytona, exploded into NASCAR,” Kennedy explained. “NASCAR is the No. 1 spectator sport in the country. What makes NASCAR a unique sport is the fact that drivers are very accessible to fans, 40 percent of which happen to be women. It is also a family-oriented sport. Families like to make a full day of the experience.” She also pointed out that NASCAR grosses $2 billion in sales of licensed merchandise annually.

Now the company would like to bring this multibillion-dollar industry to New York, which is NASCAR’s fifth largest market. ISC, partnered with developer The Related Cos., has bought 675 acres adjacent to the Goethals Bridge on Staten Island, formerly the site of an industrial oil tank farm. ISC and Related are proposing to build a sports facility and retail complex that includes a ¾-mile, 80,000-seat racetrack with luxury suites for an additional 2,500 spectators and 8,400 on-site parking spaces. The retail component calls for a mix of big box stores and chain restaurants.

The environmental process for the project has just begun and will include studies of impacts to land, wetlands and birds.

“Our plan for New York is bold and cutting...
edge,” Kennedy said. She went on to detail the extensive planning efforts undertaken to address traffic issues. ISC envisions that 80 percent of fans will use mass transit, while 20 percent will arrive by private vehicles. “Solving traffic concerns is our primary goal.”

“We looked at an on-site ferry dock, which could be used year-round, as well as shuttle buses. We also took traffic counts at each bridge at rush hour and have recommended a number of local roadway improvements, such as new ramps or widening of ramps to ensure timely egress after a race and to provide a great guest experience.”

As part of the ISC’s transportation plan, the company is developing alternative modes of transport. ISC is studying park-n-sail ferry service from nine locations including a few in New Jersey, one in Brooklyn and Pier 11 in Lower Manhattan. ISC is looking at linking ferry service to South Ferry Terminal in Manhattan and St. George’s Ferry Terminal on Staten Island. Another major aspect of the ISC’s plan involves charter bus service from park-and-ride lots in Queens and Long Island.

Kennedy pointed out that the plan also demands strict control of parking passes. ISC has allocated 8,000 parking spaces for Staten Island residents. The company has retained Gameday Management Group to develop the online “Click and Park” system, which ties transportation to the purchase of tickets.

As the racetrack will only be used three weekends a year in late spring and early fall, Kennedy said that ISC “was open to ideas about what would be best for the community the rest of the year. We’ve focused on the family entertainment aspect and have put a lot of family amenities in place.”

In view of New York’s bid to host the 2012 Olympic Games, Kennedy was asked whether ISC has been officially approached by the NYC2012 Olympic committee about incorporating the racetrack into the City’s plans. “We haven’t had a formal dialogue, but we’d love to be involved with the community in any way. The timing would be perfect.”

In the overall scheme of things, Kennedy does not perceive the proposed Xanadu entertainment and retail complex at the Meadowlands, a West Side stadium or Madison Square Garden as competition for its NASCAR plans for Staten Island. “On the contrary, I think that we’ll only enhance what they’re already doing.”

“There are a lot of challenges ahead,” Kennedy commented. “But, we think that with three and a half million NASCAR fans in the New York area that there’s a great future here.”

GNY Chapter’s Corporate Partnership Program

In February 2005, solicitation letters describing our new Corporate Partnership Program were sent to our supporters and friends. To date, five new Corporate Partners have signed on in support of the Chapter’s programs and services. At this time we would like to take the opportunity to welcome our newest Corporate Partners.

- Ocean Liner
  Michael Baker Corporation
- Yacht
  Gilbert Tweed Associates
- Motor Boat
  General Contractors Association of New York, Inc.
- Sailboat
  Booz Allen Hamilton
  New Jersey Turnpike Authority

Thank you for your continued generosity and support of the GNY Chapter.

Sincerely, Pippa Woods, President, and The Greater New York Chapter Board
Innovations: The Delivery of AirTrain JFK

By Karen Lockwood

Driving to JFK on the city’s congested highways was one of any New Yorker’s worst nightmares. Something had to be done to reduce the traffic and travel time to the airport and yet be easily accessible to the public. The construction of the AirTrain was the solution, as it connects with the Long Island Railroad and the New York City subways.

Janet Campbell, Steve Plate and Barry Nosowitz shared the secrets of AirTrain’s success at a dinner program held at Club 101 on March 30. The program was sponsored by Bombardier Transportation and Sam Schwartz PLLC.

Janet Campbell, Senior Vice President of Sam Schwartz, PLLC, showed a humorous portion of a “Seinfeld” episode in which Elaine recounts the story of driving at high speed to get someone to JFK.

She set the stage for Steve Plate, Program Director from the Port Authority of NY&NJ. Steve explained that AirTrain utilizes existing infrastructure systems by connecting passengers from the “A” train of the New York subway system and the Long Island Railroad (LIRR). The AirTrain also travels from terminal to terminal making those connections much faster and easier than they were before.

Steve also reviewed the Howard Beach and Jamaica transfer points of the system, showing the flow of the commute to and from these stops. The design of the Howard Beach station involved rebuilding of both the mezzanine and the community surrounding the area and improving the design for the New York City Transit area. At the Jamaica connection, the Port Authority worked with LIRR to rebuild platforms, an office tower, and the control center.

The whole of the project, as Steve mentioned throughout the presentation, was in picking an “A” team to work on it and in some luck. There was a shift in paradigms in working that helped make things much smoother and a common goal to finish this project “no matter what.” Even after September 11, 2001 and the very emotional time that followed, work proceeded to move ahead.

Barry Nosowitz, Project Manager for Slattery Skanska, talked about the difficulties faced with the high volume of traffic on the Van Wyck. He explained that with the help of the NYPD and FDNY they were able to avoid any interruptions with emergency situations, especially when there were complete closures of the highway. He also showed how innovative the construction was by having built the track work from the top down. Amazingly, they would set rail and pour the concrete underneath.

Today, AirTrain runs approximately 11,000 people a day to JFK.

What Do We Want? Membership Survey Shows Some Surprises

Congratulations to Agnes Pollard-Duncan, the winner of one complementary admission to a WTS-GNY Program.

Agnes was one of 164 people who responded to our survey. We distributed this survey at the beginning of the year to find out about the make-up and needs of our members and guests who attend our events. 72% of the respondents are current WTS members. Thank you to everyone who responded to this survey. Your comments will help us to develop programs that meet the needs and interests of our membership.

Here is what you told us:

- The number one reason for attendance at WTS program events is an interest in the topic. Networking is a close second, followed by interest in the speaker.
- 67.5% of respondents prefer single speakers.
- Professional development and policy issues were neck and neck for topic preference at 62.7% and 60.9% respectively.
- Transportation leaders and professional experts are way out in the lead for interest in speakers, with elected officials and motivational speakers in the distance.
- 78.9% of respondents prefer to attend events in New York City. A few who expressed a preference for New Jersey requested events in central Jersey.
- 72% of respondents prefer dinner meetings.
- There is a broad range of professionals involved in WTS, with no one sector or age group dominating. Respondents to the survey were fairly equally split among the age groups, with 63% of the respondents falling in the 5 to 15 and 15 to 25 years of experience.

Thanks for telling us about the types of programs you would like to see. Here is a sample of the responses we received:

- Provide programs that discuss maritime issues
- Have speakers with more operations experience
- Cover international and national transportation projects
- Provide more brown bag lunches
- Provide more opportunities for professional development assistance for those starting out in their careers
- Include programs that discuss organizational development and culture issues.
Hole in One!

The 2nd Annual WTS Golf Outing, held on May 23, 2005 at Van Cortlandt Park, was a great success. Both members and non-members enjoyed a continental breakfast, a round of golf and a barbeque after the event at the course clubhouse. Players competed in fun contests, such as the Longest Drive, and took home wonderful raffle prizes and gift bag items donated by our generous sponsors. Congratulations to the winning foursome from the MTA – Martha Walther, John Santamaria, Tom Kropas, and Christine Stoddart. Great job!

Special thanks to all of our players for their participation and to our sponsors for several holes, including: Greenman-Pedersen, Inc., Amman-Whitney, Baker Engineering NY, Inc., Parsons Brinckerhoff, Clough Harbour & Associates, Gannett Fleming, Inc., DMJM Harris, HNTB and Titan Outdoor LLC.

Thanks again for taking the time to join us and making our Scholarship Fundraiser a success. Hope you will join us again next year!

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

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planning stages (contact Cheryl George)
■ Interested in leading? Have what it takes to be on a Board? Elections for your new Board and Committee Chairs will be taking place in the fall – succession planning is underway (contact Silvia Militello)
■ Share your ideas, comments, speakers – add to our survey responses, we are always interested in our members’ opinions (contact Felice Farber)

A very warm welcome and thanks to our new corporate partners – look for informative articles about their impact on our industry in future newsletters and look for job opportunities from direct links on our job bank site.
■ Michael Baker Corporation
■ Gilbert Tweed Associates
■ General Contractors Association of New York, Inc.
■ New Jersey Turnpike Authority
■ Booz Allen-Hamilton

Get highlights from the WTS Annual conference (Scottsdale Arizona in May) and Board Meeting from our own International Director Dédé Gonga. A couple of items of note:
■ Resources added to improve the website – three individuals responsible for various aspects to keep us all current and a new ‘webinar’ later in June to assist local chapters in keeping abreast of added functionality
■ Job Bank to be linked directly with CareerBuilder.com to increase the breadth and depth of job announcements and career building skills and advice for our members
■ Details and powerpoints from Conference keynote speaker to be posted on the website, click on Resources link

We regret that we have to say ‘so long’ and ‘thanks so much’ to our hardworking Treasurer Jani Nair who is moving to the west coast and getting married – all this month! She has been a tremendous asset to the Board, and we wish her all the best. Greater New York’s loss will be the San Francisco Chapter’s gain! Stepping in for the remainder of her term in office, Maria Garcia has accepted the challenge and will add ‘Treasurer’ to her duties as Job Bank Chair.

While our chapter was honored at the Annual Conference with the 2004 Largest Chapter award, there is no time to rest on our laurels. L.A. has moved up, and Boston is on the move as well, so go ahead and bring along a friend to the next program or activity you attend!

We wish everyone a safe and happy summer season. I hope to see you all soon.

Pippa Woods, President GNY Chapter
732-932-6812 x684
pwoods@rci.rutgers.edu

Clockwise from lower left:
From left to right: Frank Cooley, Giulio DiVirgilio, Lori Biscaglia, Charles Psaila and Chris Guinn of Triboro Coach Corporation.
From left to right: Debbie Chase (Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.), Joan McDonald (NYC Economic Development Corp.) and Denise Carter (Greenman-Pedersen, Inc.)
Mike Jones of Parsons Brinckerhoff
Update from L. Dédi Gonga, WTS International Director

Greetings, all! I hope this message finds you well. I am happy for the opportunity to update you on the WTS 2005 Annual conference, which was hosted by the Metropolitan Phoenix Chapter in Scottsdale, Arizona from May 25-28, as well as on several key initiatives underway. The conference was a fabulous event that brought together WTS members from around the country and abroad.

I also want to take this opportunity to say what a great experience it has been to serve on the International Board for the past year, and especially to be the International liaison to the Greater New York Chapter.

I am very impressed by your strong membership, vitality, and great programs! Congratulations to you for winning the award for having the most members in 2004. Please feel free to contact me if you need further information on any of the items below. I can be reached at dedi.gonga@nyct.com.

WTS International Board Meeting May 2005

The WTS International Board met in Scottsdale, Arizona during the WTS Annual Conference. The meeting began on Wednesday morning followed by the Chair Presidents’ and the Advisory Board meetings on Thursday. The International Board meeting reconvened on Saturday morning concluding at 4 pm. Several National Committee Chairs and Chapter Presidents attended.

Key issues included the following:

■ 2006 WTS conference in Dallas, TX – Mark your calendars May 17-19!
Conference Chair Wilma Smith provided an overview at the board meeting and a video highlighting the city’s great sights on Saturday at the annual Breakfast.

■ Treasurer’s report – Elaine Dezenski (WTS International Treasurer) reported that the first quarter financial statements indicate that WTS International has expended 24 percent of the budgeted amounts and has collected 79 percent of the revenues. Membership retention is low at about 70 percent compared to last year. Sunnie House, WTS International President, reminded the chapters to keep their eyes on the 2006 goal of 4000 members.

■ New International Director at Large – The International Board appointed Dina Potter from San Francisco as International Director at Large to replace Deirdre Gabbay who resigned from the board because she now works outside the transportation industry and is a new mother. Dina Potter will be the Board liaison to all six California Chapters.

■ Advisory Board Nominations – Several new members were appointed to the WTS Advisory Board including representatives from Canada and London as well as a representative of the educational community.

■ Task Force Reports – The different task forces provided the following updates:

  Hiring a WTS Executive Director Task Force – Ann Koby presented the report on hiring an Executive Director. She noted that the Metropolitan Group completed a Situation Analysis prior to initiating the Fundraising review and development of recommendations. After several meetings and information gathering on costs and impacts of hiring an Executive Director, the Task force recommended that WTS International pursue hiring an Executive Director. The task force believes that the Executive Director would better support WTS International and Chapters with membership, fundraising and other tasks. It was noted that the Executive Director would be directly accountable to WTS as an employee.

  Membership Strategies Task Force – KellyAnne Gallagher reported on the Task Force’s work on new member types and the analysis completed on the existing membership for underrepresented modes. She noted that the Task Force was recommending that bulk memberships be offered for public sector employers using a strategy that is currently used by COMTO. Many comments were provided by those in attendance including that costs need to be covered, excellent idea to get more public employees involved, and the Task Force is on track but something similar and easily managed should be provided for the private sector as well.

■ Committee Reports

  Nominations – Sheila Wray Given reported that the Nominations Task Force is recommending moving from Directors at Large to electing the Directors by region. The Task Force is also recommending increasing the number of International Directors to 7 or 8.

  Strategic Alignment – Pippa Woods reported that the Task Force had developed a matrix of responsibilities for WTS International Board, Chapters and for the APTA administrative staff. Copies of the draft matrix may be obtained from and comments provided to Karen Schilling.

  Website Update – The Website Chair provided an update and discussed many of the administrative changes to the website. Especially noted was the fact that the accounting and membership information reports needed by the WTS International staff were completed. A discussion ensued about the security of the website due to the use of zipcodes as a password. The board authorized funding to make the switch to a distinct password for each member to improve security.

  Appointments – Twenty-two chapters are taking part in the bi-monthly appointments conference calls. Several chapters are continued on page 6
Job Bank Update

The Greater NY Chapter now has a job bank available to all of our members. The job bank is a resource for posting and obtaining job opportunities not only in the regional area but internationally through our chapters worldwide.

The job bank committee also offers our new and existing corporate members the ability to be linked to the website with “up to the minute” job information. In addition, information related to each company will be advertised on the website.

Up and coming opportunities include the development of the Job Bank Tool Kit, a navigational menu that will allow members to get job leads, help with resumes and more. Please visit our chapter website for job bank information and stay tuned for more exciting developments!

UPDATE FROM L. DÉDI GONGA

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having high level appointees as speakers including Secretary or DOT Directors, a governor or other high level appointee. The Appointments Committee is also working on corporate board appointments. It hopes to have a WTS member placed on at least one board within the next year. They noted that networking is the single most effective way to be placed on a corporate board.

Fundraising – The Fundraising Committee with Metropolitan Group’s assistance has raised $250,000 through corporate partnerships. Next year’s goal is to raise $300,000. Metropolitan Group also summarized the fundraising recommendation for WTS International and Chapters. They are recommending joint “asks” for WTS International and Chapters and developing multiple year “asks.” They are also recommending special recognition for corporate partners who sponsor WTS International and Chapters. A timeline or solicitation calendar will be developed to formalize the process. Metropolitan Group also recommended WTS have the necessary infrastructure or staff to support the program including ensuring that partners receive their benefits in a timely manner. A tool kit with templates will be provided that can be used by Chapters including sponsorship levels with suggested benefits as well as draft communications such as thank you letters. The toolkit will also provide overall benefits of WTS sponsorship and talking points. The board will review the packet and take action at the August Board meeting.

Diversity Committee – The Diversity Committee has developed a draft Global Diversity Strategy for the Board’s consideration. The Committee also handed out “Diversity is for Everyone” buttons.

Job Bank – Toby Duffel gave an overview of the potential relationship between CareerBuilder and WTS using a power point presentation. The Board authorized Toby and the Job Bank committee to proceed with the contract between CareerBuilder and WTS pending the revisions suggested by the Board.

WTS 2004 Annual Reports – Chair Anna Lynn Smith (Philadelphia Chapter) distributed the beautifully produced annual reports at the conference to all attendees. It will be posted in pdf format on the web.

Awards – The following awards were presented at the conference:

- Membership Awards – At the Annual WTS International Business meeting, three WTS Chapters were recognized with special membership awards. The Greater New York Chapter was recognized as having the most members during 2004. The Heart of Texas Chapters was recognized as having 100 percent retention. The Phoenix Chapter was recognized for having the largest percent increase.

- Diversity – The first WTS International Diversity award was presented to Stella Houd-Benamaisa from the Boston chapter during the award’s banquet.

- New London Chapter

After a presentation was made by Toby Duffel on behalf of the London Chapter, the Board conditionally approved the Chapter pending completion of a one year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and presentation of the remaining documentation.

- Other

CALTRANS and California Chapters – The Board was advised that CALTRANS gave the six California WTS Chapters $4,999 in funding in exchange for their support and publication of CALTRANS “Slow for the cone zone” campaign. As part of the effort, each of the District or Regional directors was provided membership in the nearest Chapter.

Partnership Opportunities with Construction Management Association (CMAA) – The President of CMAA attended the WTS Board meeting to discuss partnering opportunities. He explained the details of the Association including that they have an Executive Director and 7-8 permanent

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Chapter Diversity Initiatives
BY CHERYL A. GEORGE

“Before the end of my tenure as president, my goal was to establish a Diversity Committee to highlight the diverse component of WTS Greater New York,” said L. Dédi Gonga, former president of the GNY Chapter. A Diversity Committee was formed and successfully turned her vision into reality. The Committee established criteria to select an individual and/or W/M/DBE who advocated the goals and programs of WTS, worked to increase chapter membership and promoted a diverse workforce or diversity in the workplace.

The first annual Diversity Award was presented to Barbara Thayer, President of Barbara Thayer PC, as W/M/DBE, and for the individual award, Gary Griggs of Parsons Brinckerhoff at a ceremony in Grand Central Station. Stephanie Pinson, President of Gilbert Tweed Associates, was the second W/M/DBE to receive this honor.

The program was so successful that WTS International used it as a model for their first diversity award program. Stella Hourd-Benamaisy, Massport Maritime Business Manager, was the first recipient of the WTS International Diversity Leadership Award, and she was honored at an awards banquet in Boston.

Now under the leadership of Pippa Woods, the Diversity Committee is embarking on yet another first, a “Diversity Conference” to be held in 2006. “Many members are unable to attend the Annual WTS Conference, and, therefore, miss a great professional development opportunity. By establishing a GNY Chapter mini-conference, we will reach more members, bringing home the information presented at the Annual conference and providing members with a broader view of the opportunities available through our International organization,” said Woods.

The Diversity Committee encourages members to join; member support is essential to infuse new and on-going energy. The Committee has been assisted by members Marilyn Gay, Jignasa Ray, Linda Travis, Sylvia Isabel, Rajani Nair, Maria Garcia, Yevgeniya Shpigel, Kathleen Massarelli, and Leila Weissling, all of whom have helped to make the Awards program a success. Many thanks go out to our program sponsors: MTA Arts for Transit, Music Under New York Program, MTA Metro-North Railroad, MTA Office of Civil Rights, Sam Schwartz Company, Barbara Thayer, P.C, El Taller Colaborativo, P.C, Munoz Engineering and Land Surveying, P.C., the Sam Schwartz Company, and Gilbert Tweed Associates. Without your support, our challenge would have been even greater.

As we move ahead, we look forward to expanding our vision. The Diversity Committee will meet new challenges in the years to come, as we look to increase our committee members and continue to recognize the many contributions of our WTS-GNY membership. To join our committee, please contact Cheryl George, Diversity Committee Chair at (646) 252-1379 or via email at CGeorge@MTAHQ.org.

International Diversity Committee Update

Sylvia Isabel, Director-at-Large, was recently appointed WTS International Diversity Committee Co-Chair. Isabel, of MTA NYC Transit, Corporate Communications, said, “It is a pivotal and very exciting time for WTS and diversity. We are stretching our international and global wings to take a fresh look at our strengths to develop new initiatives.”

The annual conference in Scottsdale, Arizona attracted over four hundred participants and marked the unveiling of some major WTS Diversity initiatives. Isabel and Jacki Wilkins, of the WTS Boston chapter, along with Committee Co-Chair Sherry Ways, FHWA, presented WTS’ first Diversity Fair. In collaboration with the Phoenix chapter, the Fair capped off the conference with a celebration of diversity within WTS and the Metro Phoenix area. Native American, Mayan and Aztec inspired Mexican and Hispanic artists, poets and writers were among the local multicultural vendors who shared and networked with us.

The WTS Diversity Affirmations Project made its debut as conference participants were able to sample some of the over three hundred written affirmations submitted by membership from around the globe. These affirming and women-focused words, quotations and proverbs from our membership will be published in a book and made available

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INTERATIONAL DIVERSITY  
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for purchase. The Committee also produced and released a Diversity Manual, which will be sent to all chapters. Highlights from the Committee’s Overview about Diversity were presented to the Board and may now be viewed on the national website’s Resource page.

The International Board has approved WTS’ new Global Diversity Strategy Statement. An excerpt states: “With the advent of becoming an international organization to advance transportation women, WTS International is keen to benchmark with other leading global diversity practitioners. WTS’ Global Diversity Strategy aims to bring together global and international professionals, to help them develop, renew and succeed. WTS understands that the best ideas come from teams of people and individuals with varied backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. This helps us to understand and serve our membership needs better than anyone. We know that our journey of diversity and inclusion is an ongoing one. Inspired by the efforts of our membership around the globe, we look to the discovery of advancing the world’s women in transportation.”

Other projects in the works include designing a new website, developing an international survey and recruiting Liaisons for new Executive Task Forces and Committees.

If interested, contact Sylvia Isabel at: pyisabe@nyct.com

Diversity Dialogue

Stephanie Pinson, who has been in the workforce diversity business from the beginning when it was considered simply ‘the right thing to do,’ sees vast improvement today. She says companies now see the business proposition: “We need to look like the customers we serve; we can’t afford not to. There’s more to be done of course, especially in the area of corporate boards, but there has been real progress in the last two decades,” she says.

When Pinson left academia in 1981 to join Gilbert Tweed Associates, a woman-owned executive search firm, she expected to be placing women and minorities in executive jobs. But she found the task difficult and frustrating because there were so few women and minorities in position to move to the executive positions. Most of her searches resulted in the placing of male candidates. Then, she recalls, around 1989 “something wonderful happened.”

“Corporate leadership began to recognize that the customer population was changing radically and they had few if any women or minorities in middle management,” said Pinson, President of Gilbert Tweed, recipient of the WTS-GNY 2004 Chapter Diversity Award, and member of the Advisory Board.

“Companies started to understand that in order to recruit for diversity you also had to target people within to serve as magnets to high potential newcomers to the company. People have to be comfortable professionally and personally or they won’t stay. They need to see people like themselves finding success.”

Creating diversity is very much about networking and mentoring, she said, noting that is very much what WTS is about. They were powerful tools in early diversity initiatives and remain essential today. Pinson recalled one company that was very committed to having a diverse management workforce and set aside a pool of money for that purpose, but in their part of the country there were no minorities. Pinson eventually recruited a number of minority executives but not before the company had networked within the community and the corporate community to ease the transition to the new location. Mentoring is also a critical tool to develop talent within a company or through professional associations like WTS.

Pinson notes that the good news is that today executive searches are no longer targeted to one group or another. “It’s a matter of course in every search across all industries that you will look at every kind of person,” says Pinson. “As time went on, the target searches became obsolete. We all realized that it is no more fair to do that than it was to have the previous narrow focus. Every search now is an inclusive search.” And looking at the impact of women in transportation she sees the difference.

“In transportation I see a change in all sectors, construction, engineering, transit, highways and bridge engineering. Women are coming to the top now. There are different people in positions of influence and they look at things differently. I see changes in transit marketing and public relations, and I see agencies becoming a little less militaristic and hierarchical. In personnel management I see more flexibility, more attention to benefits and to work/life issues. Work/life issues used to be thought of as working women’s issues but now there is a sense that they apply to everyone.”

The one cautionary note Pinson sounded was on the challenge of achieving a balance between work/life in certain situations. She said she is concerned that young women who want their careers and to have families should understand the realities of how difficult that is. “You can’t do and have everything at the same time,” she said. Careers are important, but so is family and personal life. We need to balance them.

“There is no question that the transportation industry understands that diversity is of huge importance,” says Pinson. “Look around at the big membership in WTS from major corporations. That’s because WTS is a talent pool and it behooves businesses to put their money where their mouth is. It’s an important signal that diversity has happened and it continues to happen, so foster it and mentor it.”

WTS’ First Diversity Fair, Scottsdale, Arizona.
Ahoy, Taxi!

At April’s dinner program, environmentalist Tom Fox spoke with WTS members about a new waterborne transportation system, New York Water Taxi.

Tom Fox, president of New York Water Taxi, launched the privately funded system in September 2002 to make short trips between Brooklyn and Manhattan. He wanted to make the Water Taxi a worthwhile alternative to ground transportation, especially for commuters who currently comprise eighty percent of the system’s 500 daily passengers. During rush hour, the boats run every 30-40 minutes, allowing commuters to travel between Fulton Ferry Landing in Brooklyn and three stops in the lower Manhattan financial district. The trip takes about 20 minutes, costs $4 and provides commuters with a scenic route to work. At its stops, water taxi passengers can also connect to New York Waterway and Staten Island ferries.

Fox feels that New Yorkers, especially those on the east side of the island, are not utilizing the harbor as much as they could be. He wants New Yorkers to experience the city from a different point of view and to take advantage of everything that the waterfront has to offer. NY Water Taxi is a great way to do this, as it offers a range of harbor and walking tours along its routes.

You can’t miss a NY Water Taxi when it’s on the go. Resembling old-fashioned Checker cabs, the Taxi boats are canary colored catamarans with black checkerboard trim. They travel at 28 miles per hour (24 knots), carry 74 passengers and have low-wave double hulls. “They’re Coast Guard certified for up to three miles offshore and the engines conform to 2005 emission standards,” said Fox. He also noted “Low-wave is important because we operate in the Hudson River Park, and we want minimal impact on the waterfront infrastructure and recreational boating.”

Fox has designed and implemented scores of successful park and waterfront projects and programs over the past 25 years. As a citizen member of the West Side Task Force, the West Side Waterfront Panel and as the first president of the Hudson River Park Conservancy he has played a leadership role in shaping the future of Manhattan’s West Side waterfront. He credits the success of the current water taxi venture to his partnership with Douglas Durst, a mid-town developer who is also a board director of the Friends of Hudson River Park.

The president of New York Water Taxi was introduced at the event by longtime friend, Chris Ward, President and CEO of American Stevedoring (ASI). Chris has been a great friend to WTS, in particular with the mentor program. He joined Lillian Borrone and Mike Della Rocca the last two years to discuss careers with the mentors and apprentices.

April’s program also featured Daniella Bernett, Research Specialist for STV Incorporated. Daniella signed copies of her brand-new volume of poetry, Timeless Allure, during the cocktail hour in celebration of National Poetry Month.

GNY, Largest in 2004

L. Dédi Gonga accepts the certificate awarded to the GNY Chapter from WTS Corporate President Sunnie House. The GNY Chapter was honored at the Annual Conference with the 2004 Largest Chapter Award.
RBP Awards

Pam Fischer, Vice President of Public Affairs for AAA New Jersey Automobile Club, presents the Transportation Person of the Year Award to Jack Lettiere, Commissioner of NJ Department of Transportation, at the recent Regional Business Partnerships’ Annual Transportation Awards. The event was held on May 20th, 2005 at the Newark Club in Newark, New Jersey. WTS-Greater New York Chapter supported the event.

IN MEMORIAM

Rachel Chen

Rachel Chen, an enthusiastic member of the Student Affairs and Professional Development Committees, recently passed away after a long illness. She was a structural engineer who was working for Edwards & Kelcey; prior to that, she worked for Barbara Thayer. A civil engineering graduate of Cooper Union, she demonstrated an impressive lust for life. She is remembered with great affection by her many friends, and they were and are many.

UPDATE FROM L. DÉDI GONGA

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staff. Their total budget is approximately $2 million. They have 26 chapters similar to WTS. Their Executive Director is responsible for visiting chapters, managing the national office, membership, professional development, conferences and certifications. They also act as an ambassador internally and to others outside the organization. CMAA currently has 16 board members who serve a maximum of two 3 year terms. Sunnie House will work with CMAA to develop a partnership agreement.

WTS Outreach Committees need you – volunteers to get the word out about all the positive news and happenings regarding women and transportation. We need volunteers for a wide range of Marketing, Media, Advertising, Website, Photography, Graphics and other Creative projects.

We also need everyone’s response to a new initiative for optimizing our media marketing plan. We believe that this effort offers a powerful proprietary approach. Please help us develop a new media list based on our own employer’s media contacts. Your effort would greatly lighten the load of our volunteers who would normally have to place hundreds of phone calls to everyone’s employer to request the information. Responding with your own employer’s media-marketing contact information is key to this project that will result in professional development benefits to you and your employer.

We are initiating transformational approaches that we believe will result in a more inspired, satisfying, effective and efficient organization. Everyone is encouraged to participate.

If your employer would welcome news in a variety of formats from WTS, please send your employer’s contact names and numbers to WTS-NY Media Optimization Plan c/o Nora Madonick, nmadonick@archstreetcommunications.com.

We will add your employer to the new WTS-NY media list to receive news and updates. Do you have other media contacts outside of your job? We would love to hear about your contacts in radio, TV broadcast, magazine, webpage, newsletter, or other news media.

To volunteer for any of the Outreach Committees or if you have questions, please call Sylvia Isabel, Director at Large, at 646-252-6886 or syisabe@nyct.com.

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