Starting the Year Off Right

BY JESSICA KAVOULAKIS

More than 300 people celebrated WTS-GNY’s 26th Annual Meeting and 9th Annual M/W/DBE Expo on January 31st at Club 101 in New York City. The highlights of the Annual Meeting included the installation of the 2006-2008 Board, award presentations and a keynote address by Martha Walther.

Michael Baker Corporation was recognized as Employer of the Year, and Gail Spears, Empire State Development Corp., received the Member of the Year award. Gregory Bradley of MTA Metro-North Railroad and L. Dédi Gongä of MTA New York City Transit were honored as recipients of the Rosa Parks Diversity Award. Dédi gave a stirring acceptance speech that encouraged everyone in the audience to “stand up and make a difference.”

Featured speaker Martha Walther, executive vice president at the MTA, presented “Crossing the Rivers: Current Plans for MTA Bridges & Tunnels.” She addressed many of the agency’s initiatives in security, technology and capital investments with special emphasis on disaster preparedness. “From the days of Robert Moses, our assets – the toll bridges and tunnels that cross the rivers within the City of New York – have remained the same, but our mission has greatly expanded. No longer are we charged solely with preserving its seven bridges and two tunnels; we’re also engaged more than ever in protecting these structures.”

Martha also discussed how her agency has become increasingly diverse since she arrived in 1988. That year, female Bridge and Tunnel continued on page 2

FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK

Welcome to the 2006-2008 Board. I am honored to take the helm of Greater New York Chapter and to be working with so many terrific folks. The year is off to a great start. We’ve developed a strategic plan to grow and demonstrate that the WTS Greater New York Chapter is the premier transportation organization in the metropolitan area. I emphasize the word metropolitan because this chapter serves both New York and New Jersey. To demonstrate our commitment to better serving our New Jersey members we are expanding our programs and outreach efforts in that state. Our first New Jersey program of the year was held in Newark in February and highlighted the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey’s current and future market outlook, as well as the agency’s plan for handling tomorrow’s freight cargo needs. Next, we are bringing our programs to central Jersey with a joint program with ITE in Princeton on April 18th featuring the recently appointed New Jersey DOT Deputy Commissioner Stephen Dilts, who will discuss what’s ahead for transportation in New Jersey.

We recognize that our members come from every level and field in the transportation industry. We are developing programs to address those varied needs and backgrounds. On March 31st, we held the first continued on page 6
officers comprised only eight percent of the 800+ workforce. Today, they represent 23 percent. In fact, 54 percent of all Bridge and Tunnel officers are women or minorities. Similarly, in 1988, only two women were engineers or architects in the agency; today, 12 women serve as in-house experts in these technical fields. Notably, half of the agency’s upper level management staff that report directly to the president are women. Diversity has strengthened MTA Bridges & Tunnels – its workforce reflects the city and the customers it serves.

Corporate Sponsor Spotlight

WTS would like to give our corporate sponsors an opportunity to tell everyone about themselves. In this issue, we feature PBS&J.

PBS&J is a national firm providing local service. PBS&J, a recognized industry leader, is consistently ranked among the top 10 percent of U.S. design and transportation firms. We are known for finding solutions to today’s complex urban transportation problems. PBS&J provides a wide range of transportation services to public and private clients throughout the country, including planning; design; program management; construction oversight for electronic payment systems; congestion management; intelligent transportation systems for toll roads, highways, bridges, transit systems, ports, harbors and airports.

Four decades of serving clients has allowed us to develop a diverse project portfolio and a way of doing business that benefits our clients through greater efficiency and creative approaches to difficult problems. As a full service organization, PBS&J’s capabilities in transportation, environmental disciplines, construction and information technology mean that we provide single-source solutions to most projects. And with local project managers empowered to draw from the resources of the entire 3,700-member firm, we can provide world-class service to every project.

For more information about PBS&J contact Rena Barta, associate vice president of National Tolls Technologies, 201-342-9374.

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Cambridge Systematics
CH2M Hill
Gilbert Tweed
Parsons Brinckerhoff
PBS&J
Siemens Transportation Systems, Inc
Sam Schwartz Company

A Drum Roll for the Newest Additions to Our Ranks...
Welcome One and All!

The list reflects the new members that joined the chapter up until press time.

Lisa Horchos
Laynie Weaver
Marta Perez
Glennessa Gordon
Gayathri Dharmavaram
Huajing Shi
Brenda A. McIntosh
Tara A. Silverman
Joanne Conti
Cassandra Gibbon
Susan Gibson
Amy Sokalski
Deborah Siegel Baker
Cathy Pfeiffenberger
Mark Yedlin
ABT Products & Services
Graduate Student
Hatch Mott MacDonald
Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
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New York City Transit
MTA Bridges & Tunnels
MTA Bridges & Tunnels
MTA Bridges & Tunnels
Michael Baker Corporation
NYC DOT
Skanska USA
KLD Associates, Inc.

Tamara Herrera
Mary L. Connell
Juliet Hurtado
Miriam Williams
Rich Aquino
Tresa Horney
Karla Quintero
Keri Tyler
Claire Weisz
Deborah Henry
Ivy Tzur
Wendy Fitzgerald
Dani Simons
Amy Pfeiffer
Sandra Forero
Weidlinger Associates Inc.
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Weidlinger Associates Inc.
MTA Bridges & Tunnels
Washington Group International
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Rutgers
Weisz + Yoes Studio
Engineer
Parsons
DY Consultants
Transportation Alternatives
Transportation Alternatives
Weidlinger Associates Inc.
Targeting Diversity and Professional Development

BY CHERYL GEORGE

The Greater New York Chapter held its first annual Diversity and Professional Development Conference on March 31st at the MTA’s offices at 2 Broadway. Over 100 members enjoyed a continental breakfast and what proved to be an exciting and informative exchange of ideas. The purpose of the conference was to provide members with first hand information from transportation industry leaders on such subjects as effective communication, leadership skills and career planning and development.

In her opening remarks, GNY Chapter President Felice Farber welcomed the members and panelists and expressed her appreciation to them for making the conference a success. Felice summarized some of the Chapter’s new initiatives and encouraged attendees to become more active and to bring new ideas to the Chapter. She then introduced Gregory Bradley, vice president of Human Resources and Diversity for MTA Metro-North Railroad, who served as moderator. Bradley’s presentation established the themes of the conference and its workshops. Using current and projected census data, he described the demographic changes that would occur within the next ten years which would have major impacts on the domestic and international workforce.

The topics of the three workshops were Communication and Leadership – How They Connect; Career Planning and Navigating the Glass Ceiling. Each workshop had several distinguished public- and private-sector speakers representing a variety of transportation modes. After each session there were numerous questions and a stimulating interactive dialogue between the speakers and attendees. Speakers included: Frank Lombardi, chief engineer, PANY&NJ; Allison DeCerrenal, co-director, NYU-Wagner Rudin Center for Transportation Policy and Management; Poire Saika-Espen, chief architect, MTA NYC Transit; Felicia Jones, Customer Relations manager and instructor, MTA NYC Transit; Stephanie Pinson, president, Gilbert Tweed Associates, Inc.; Cruz Russell, deputy chief of Strategic Planning, PANY&NJ; Gail Chandler, manager of Administrative Training and Development, MTA Long Island Bus; Deborah Wathen Finn, senior vice president/director of Transit & Rail, CH2M Hill; Laura Toole, assistant vice president, Baker Engineering; and Cosema Crawford, senior vice president and chief engineer, MTA NYC Transit.

The conference culminated with an inspiring keynote address by Martha Walther, executive vice president of Operations, MTA Bridges & Tunnels. She shared stories of her past experiences in the Marine Corps and the 1991 Gulf War, and how she applied the leadership skills she learned in the military in her successful civilian career. Martha challenged and encouraged members “to take risks, to be fair in managing your staff – and equally important – to surround yourself with a qualified team.”

WTS Honors New City Council Speaker

BY DANIELLA BERNETT

In a departure from the Greater New York Chapter’s more formal events, on February 15th WTS hosted an intimate gathering to honor the new City Council Speaker, Christine Quinn.

Quinn was elected as a council member in 1999 and in January she was overwhelmingly elected Speaker, the first woman to hold the post. She represents Chelsea, the West Village, Clinton, and parts of Soho and Murray Hill.

Quinn has been an advocate for rezoning that balances the goals of developers and the needs of neighborhoods. At the meeting she expressed her support for the Second Avenue subway and East Side Access projects. In addition, using her neighborhood of Clinton as an example, she discussed the need to reduce truck traffic in the city. She welcomed suggestions from the audience on ways to address this problem. Dani Simons from Transportation Alternatives, an advocacy group that promotes cycling, walking and public transit to cut down on automobile use and raise environmental awareness, asked whether the city would create more bicycle and pedestrian paths. Quinn admitted that she was not an expert in the matter and urged Simons to forward any recommendations to her office.

Quinn also praised WTS and the organization’s efforts to promote women in the transportation industry. She stressed the need for more women to become involved in government. “It’s important to have a voice, to be in a position to do things that make a difference.”

WTS President Greater New York Chapter Felice Farber with City Council Speaker Christine Quinn.

WTS President Greater New York Chapter Newsletter Spring 2006
Mentoring: The Path to Career Success
BY MARIA GARCIA AND LINDA TRAVIS

It was wonderful to see past graduates of the Mentoring Program present to support the incoming participants at the March 15th kickoff meeting. The program opened with the introduction of guest speaker, Dr. Betty Spence, author of several books including, “Be Your Own Mentor: Strategies from Top Women on the Secrets of Success.” Dr. Spence’s speech focused on the mentor-apprentice relationship.

Tips for apprentices included: Who is your mentor? Learn about his/her career path, education and life; Working with your mentor; Remember mentors take pride and satisfaction in watching you develop; reward them with information about your progress and accomplishments; credit your mentor when possible!

Mentors learned about: patience, availability, confidentiality, esteem building observations and honest evaluations. General guidelines for a successful pairing included: stress the value of the contract for establishing a basis for how your relationship will work.

Apprentices and mentors both have strengths and preferences. Voicing these at the outset will enable the pair to focus on strategies that will produce better results in less time.

“This is an opportunity.” Dr. Spence stressed, “to expand your network, increase your exposure, learn something and grow! Make the most of it, but relax and enjoy the journey!

“I could have benefited from having someone show me the way, to avoid the pitfalls in my career path. Every professional woman that I met at the meeting pointed to a mentor and/or mentor relationship as having been critical to her career success.”

At the meeting, biography packets were distributed and mentor-apprentice pairs were announced. Pairs were asked to write up contracts that included three main goals to be worked on throughout the program.

The committee was exhausted coming into the meeting, but soon infectious enthusiasm created an electricity in the room. At the end of the program, everyone had to be gently reminded that it was getting late. But not to worry, there would be another meeting next month. The year ahead promises to be filled with excitement for all!

Member in the News

In celebration of Women’s History Month, the Manhattan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce in association with the National Minority Business Council and the New York City District Council of Carpenters launched the Minority/Women Business Enterprise Certification Program on March 30th and honored “Women Building New York City!” WTS Director-at-Large Maria Garcia was among the recipients of the Excellence Awards.

From left to right: Monica Foster, president F & R Installers; Maria Garcia G.A., conformity coordinator, New York Metropolitan Transportation Council; Maria Alvarez Castro, founding president and CEO of the Manhattan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Inc.; Laura Osorio, deputy Manhattan Borough Commissioner, who also accepted for Hon. Patricia Lancaster, Commissioner, New York City Department of Buildings; Dominic Fonti, vice president Nightingale Construction accepted for the firm’s president, Maria E. Pina; Hon. Amanda M. Burden, chair of the New York City Planning Commission; Sandra Wilkin, Bradford Construction, accepted for Hon. Iris Weinshall, Commissioner, New York City Department of Transportation.
FROM THE PRESIDENT’S DESK
continued from page 1

annual free members-only diversity and professional development conference to help our members to boost and advance their careers. It was evident from the participation and the excitement throughout the day that this conference was a resounding success, thanks to all who made it possible.

We are demonstrating that GNY brings access to the movers and shakers in the transportation industry. In January, Executive Vice President of Operations at MTA Bridges and Tunnels and longtime WTS supporter Martha Walther was the keynote speaker at our Annual Awards dinner and M/W/DBE expo. In February, newly-elected City Council Speaker Christine Quinn spoke at an intimate reception.

WTS is successful because our members are our volunteers. Throughout all of these events it is the time we spend with one another talking, planning, learning and living that makes WTS the place to be active. I cordially invite you to get more involved in WTS and serve on a committee or a task force, or simply help out on a specific project, please contact me.

Keep in touch, as there is so much more to come in 2006!

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SAVE THE DATE

Third Annual Golf Outing
Friday, June 9, 2006
Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx, NY

2006 Annual Awards Dinner
Thursday, October 5, 2006
Bridgewaters
South Street Seaport

Honoree of the Year is
Jane Chmielinski
CEO of DMJM Harris

2006 Scholarship Recipients will be announced.