



First Deputy Commissioner Patricia M. Smith Retires from HRA

HRA bid a fond farewell to First Deputy Commissioner Patricia M. Smith, who began her career in 1974 as a Supervising Clerk/Income Maintenance, and retired from the Agency on December 31, 2013. First Deputy Commissioner Smith was known throughout HRA for her wit and good humor, her editorial acumen and her vast knowledge of the Agency and the City – but most of all she was known for her tireless dedication to helping New Yorkers in need.

Advice to HRA Staff

Because of her strong leadership, First Deputy Commissioner Smith was a role model for HRA staff. Before departing the Agency, she shared some of her advice for staff on how best to serve New Yorkers in need.

“The most important thing to understand about working at HRA is that **the mission comes from the people in need**. It’s not a place where we wake up and wonder what we’re going to do.

We know what we have to do – **help those who need assistance in the best way possible.**”

“When you’re serving New Yorkers in need, remember to **be supportive and encouraging**, be helpful, **be responsible and clear about the responsibilities of everyone involved** – yours and the client’s. **Put yourself in the client’s position** and try to understand what they’re going through. When you have to say no, be professional and **explain the reasons**. Put one foot in front of the other. Always **make HRA a model of what an efficient organization should be.**”

Reflections on a Career in Public Service

First Deputy Commissioner Smith also shared some of the accomplishments that made her most proud, and the things that inspired her about working at HRA.

“Everything I’ve accomplished has been as a part of the team here at HRA. There are many things HRA has done I’m very proud of having been a part of- for example, what we did in the early days of AIDS to help those suffering with the disease. We were at the forefront of serving people no one else would serve. I’m also very proud to have been a part of the transformative welfare reform efforts. I spent the first half of my career helping people get assistance, and spent the second half going beyond that and helping them reach their maximum level of self-sufficiency.”



First Deputy Commissioner Patricia M. Smith

“The work that we did responding to disasters that have befallen the city is also something I recall proudly. The largest was of course responding to needs after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack. We set up a Family Assistance Center in the wake of the attack, but we went beyond that to help the area recover with targeted employment centers. HRA also played an important role responding to the 2006 blackout in Queens, and most recently Superstorm Sandy.”

“I found the people at HRA inspiring, both staff and clients. When our assistance helps someone get back on their feet it is incredibly inspiring. Overcoming the challenges many of our clients face isn’t easy, but when you see someone coming to our WeCARE program, for example, perhaps wanting to find a job but believing their medical problems prevent them from working – when we’re able to help them get treatment, and then help them find the job they never thought they could have – that’s inspiring.”

“Our staff are wonderful – HRA is full of unsung heroes. In Adult Protective Services (APS), for example, the clients often don’t think they need help, but they really do. Our staff are there to patiently assist in any way they can.”

First Deputy Commissioner Smith is looking forward to taking care of the things she’s put off for too long, and to exploring new possibilities in retirement.

“It’s also nice not having to come to work in the cold and snow,” she added.