

# NYC Customer Service Newsletter

We are proud to introduce the first issue of the NYC Customer Service Newsletter. Through the newsletter we will keep City managers and staff informed of the latest customer service news in the City of New York. If you have any ideas for topics to cover, please feel free to contact us at: customerservice@cityhall.nyc.gov.

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*Prepared by the Customer Service Group, Mayor's Office of Operations*

## Mayor Bloomberg Signs Customer Service Week Proclamation

On October 6, 2008 Mayor Bloomberg issued a proclamation which honors all City workers who daily serve City customers. It marks the week of October 6th through the 10th as Customer Service Week in New York City.

National Customer Service Week was created in 1984 by the International Customer Service Association, a non-profit organization

comprised of members from the service industry. In 1992 the federal government officially proclaimed the first full week in October National Customer Service Week.

New York City agencies will participate in Customer Service Week by recognizing and rewarding outstanding customer service staff, and by holding a variety of events that promote

excellence in customer service for the City's customers.

In addition to the proclamation, 20 agencies will participate in Customer Service Week with a wide variety of events. Many agencies will also participate in the inaugural *Citywide Excellence in Customer Service Awards and Recognition Program* (see below).

## CSG Announces Inaugural Citywide Excellence in Customer Service Awards and Recognition Program

The Customer Service Group (CSG) in the Mayor's Office of Operations announced the first annual *Citywide Excellence in Customer Service Awards and Recognition Program* to acknowledge front-line customer service employees. City agencies were invited to nominate employees who have demonstrated outstanding service when interacting with customers (whether in-person, by phone, web or email) during the past year. CSG reviewed all nominations and selected

one individual from each agency to be honored at an awards ceremony at City Hall at the conclusion of Customer Service Week.

All City employees who have demonstrated outstanding service in customer service were eligible for nomination. Self-nominations were accepted.

While CSG selected one nominee from each agency to recognize at the awards program, agencies had the option to

nominate two or more employees. In such cases, CSG rated the nominations based on how well nominees met the award criteria. The top-rated nominee was selected for recognition at the awards program. The award criteria were as follows: timeliness and respect, first contact resolution, response accuracy, fairness, and consistency.

Awardees are listed on page 6. Contact: Jeff Roth, Customer Service Group, 212.788.1672; [iroth@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:iroth@cityhall.nyc.gov)

**10 Agency practices you can try at your center:**

1. Greet customers as they walk in, and immediately inquiring about their issues
2. Walk customers through complicated forms and hand them easy-to-follow instruction sheets
3. Offer appointments to customers if wait times are excessive
4. Check your center's signs for misspellings, graffiti, duct tape or unsightly rips or tears
5. Make your environment inviting. Play areas for children, or even a television for waiting customers can change the tone of your center
6. Use the internet and "tip sheets" to prepare customers for their visits
7. Staff trained bi-lingual employees during peak hours, in languages appropriate for the surrounding customer base
8. Invite your customers to give you feedback, and use their recommendations to improve your centers
9. Give customers a single point of contact for follow up visits, include the name and direct line
10. Make follow up calls after the visit to check-up on the service request



**Greeter station with internet access and multiple pieces of literature**

## **Secret Shopper Program Identifies Challenges, Best Practices and Service Stars at Walk-In Sites**

The *Customers Observing and Researching Experiences* (CORE) program was a secret shopping program implemented in the City of New York during the summer of 2008; it was the largest municipal initiative of its kind. Secret shopping is widely used by businesses to assess and improve customer service, as well as by many government entities (including several City of New York agencies).

Mayor's Office staff and interns visited 308 of the

713 walk-in centers which serve the public directly. CSG applauds the efforts of city staff for delivering quality customer service to the millions of New Yorkers that count on our services, day in and day out. While the CORE program found challenges in multiple locations, the majority of walk-in centers are delivering professional, excellent customer service. Across the City, 29 staff members from 14 agencies were lauded for providing exceptional customer service. We thank them

for their efforts. Citywide survey results are available on NYC.gov.



**Multilingual sign has clean design and clear directions**

## **Department of Small Business Services Upgrades Intranet to Improve Language Access and Internal Customer Service**

SBS is further expanding its intranet, called the *SBS Work Organization & Management Tool* (WOMT), to enhance customer service agency-wide.

The WOMT system is being built out with new features, similar to those of the current Language Bank program. SBS employees will be able to search for needed foreign language skills among other SBS staff. Each SBS employee will be in the database, along with their foreign language skills and proficiency in reading, writing, and speaking. SBS staff will be able to search for specific skills—such as "Spanish,

writing, advanced"—and get a list of qualified SBS staff and their contact information. The searches can be general, such as "Portuguese"; more specific, such as "Japanese, reading"; or most specific, such as "Arabic, speaking, advanced." This initiative will help SBS reach the citywide language access goals mandated in Executive Order 120.

In addition, WOMT will be further enhanced through the posting of well-organized, rich content describing SBS services; topics include Business Services, Jobseeker Services, and District Development Services. All

SBS staff will be able to quickly and accurately route customers to the most appropriate programmatic staff.

WOMT will also feature a special "Customer Service Center Staff" section that contains script supported questions, key files and their descriptions, transfer protocols, cross-selling tips, and lead generating support. This will allow for better integration of the Customer Service Center staff into SBS' primary service delivery.

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## DYCD Launches Youth Connect to Reach New York City Youth via Email

The Department of Youth and Community Development's (DYCD) *YouthLine* was established in 1992 as a confidential and toll-free hotline for New York City youth. Since its creation, *YouthLine*'s call volume has grown to over 45,000 phone calls annually. *YouthLine* provides information and referrals for services related to employment, education, family conflict, and at-risk youth.

In October 2008, DYCD relaunched *YouthLine*

as *Youth Connect*, an interactive online resource. The *Youth Connect E-Blast*, will introduce approximately 40,000 Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) applicants to other DYCD programs. Recipients will be invited to visit DYCD's website or email Youth Connect through an anonymous online form.

"Young people today stay connected through email, text messaging and social networking websites," said Anthony Ramirez II,

Director of DYCD's Youth Connect. "The *Youth Connect* email blast is designed to engage young people on their terms while connecting them to real-world City services. DYCD is committed to making *Youth Connect* a trusted interactive resource for young people and parents in all five boroughs."

For more information on DYCD and *Youth Connect* visit <http://www.nyc.gov/dycd> or call 1-800-246-4646.

### 20 City Agencies Participate In Customer Service Week

Twenty agencies participated this year to emphasize the importance of providing excellent customer service and to honor staff who work daily with customers. Some examples:

- DOF offered free coffee and cookies in the morning to customers
- Senior staff at MOFTB worked the front lines and assisted production companies to get permits
- SBS held a "lunch and learn" forum hosted by Commissioner Walsh
- DCA hosted a staff appreciation breakfast

## Department of Transportation Uses Innovative Tools to Reach a New Audience: Web 2.0

In a growing trend among City agencies, DOT leveraged the power of the Internet to market new programs and reach new audiences. Unlike traditional media, such as print advertisements and press releases, the Internet has the potential to reach a wider and younger audience. DOT used the Internet to market *Summer Streets*, a summer event that opened City streets to pedestrians and cyclists. DOT also created the *CityRacks* Design blog, which hosted an open source design competition that invited site-visitors to submit designs for new bike racks.

"To reach a younger or more independent crowd, DOT needed to use

modern, fresh methods of communicating about their cutting edge programs," said DOT Chief of Staff Margaret Newman.

The impact of this strategy can be seen in the results: the *CityRacks* Design competition received 200 submissions, along with over 151,685 views from web users who used the blog to ask questions about design requirements, comment on DOT postings, and view submissions. Site users will be able to comment on the 10 finalists' designs before the final selection scheduled for October 17.

DOT also used the power of the Internet to promote its *Summer Streets* program on YouTube

(3,500 views) and via the Streetfilms website (over 30,000 views). By leveraging the calendar events feature on the popular social networking sites MySpace and Facebook (almost 1,000 calendar invites), DOT was able to post events on public forums where users can share those events with friends and family.

By providing informative, accessible content to "wired" audiences, DOT engaged customers in a new and innovative manner. What was the key to DOT's web 2.0 success? "We provided fresh content, clean designs, and a communication vehicle for customers to engage with the agency and each

other," said DOT Director of Strategic Communications Dani Simons.

For more info contact Margaret Newman: [mnewman@dot.nyc.gov](mailto:mnewman@dot.nyc.gov).

View the sites:  
*CityRacks*:  
<http://nycityracks.wordpress.com>  
*Summer Streets*:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fBsKEKxm4R4>; or  
<http://www.streetfilms.org/archives/summer-streets-2008-nyc/>

Facebook:  
<http://www.new.facebook.com/event.php?eid=26187486263&ref=mf>; or  
<http://www.new.facebook.com/apps/application.php?id=22266704479>

## Got A Complaint? Send a Picture or Video to 311 via NYC.gov

In September 2008, the City launched the *311 and NYC.gov Picture/Video Submission Program*, which allows users to send photos and videos to the city through online forms, which have also been optimized for use on select web-enabled smartphones. The online forms enable users to submit pictures, audio and/or video files related to quality of life complaints to the City. The submitted files further enhance the City's ability to serve the public.

When accessing NYC.gov on a mobile device, (<http://www.NYC.gov/pixvid>), users can report the following problems and submit related pictures, audio and video files: potholes; street, highway, and sidewalk construction complaints; graffiti in City parks; ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) complaints in parks; dirty vacant lots; broken/defaced public pay phones; and missing or damaged street signs.

By calling 311 (or outside of NYC, 212-639-9675), the public can report a problem and receive the link to the picture/video submission form from the operator via email. Users can submit pictures, audio and video files related to the following types of 311 service requests: Muni meter, parking meter, or parking card problems; street and sidewalk conditions; problems in City parks; and potholes.

## Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Reaches Out to Teens on MySpace



DOHMH's Web Site  
MindSpace on  
MySpace.com

Most parents or teachers would testify that teenagers are an elusive audience. So when the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) wanted to address mental health issues among teens, they knew they needed to create a resource that teens would actually consider using. The department decided to connect with teens on their home turf – the Internet.

Mental health problems affect one out of five youth between the ages of 9 and 17, but less than 20% of those who need mental health treatment get it. To reach this audience, DOHMH wanted to tap into youth culture and new media. To connect with

these teens and make it easier for them to seek help, DOHMH created a website on MySpace.com, a wildly popular social networking site (80% of 12- to 17-year-olds use MySpace at least weekly). Their site, *NYC Teen Mindspace*, was launched on June 23, 2008. It features youth-friendly graphics, quizzes, games and a blog featuring the real-world scenarios and problem-solving approaches of a cast of fictional characters confronted with mental health issues. *NYC Teen Mindspace* is also cross-promoted through other sites frequented by teens, such as Facebook and YouTube.

NYC Teen Mindspace

involved a great deal of collaboration. Adolescent advisory groups, teen focus groups, media consultants and senior management all lent a hand to the site's development. Overall, DOHMH's first foray into social networking has been deemed a success. On MySpace, *NYC Teen Mindspace* has had over 20,000 page views and also has over 300 "friends." It has helped DOHMH reach its target audience: 15% of the site's users are under 13 years of age, 52% are between 14 and 18, and 13% are over 19. DOHMH hopes to update and expand the site in the year ahead.

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## The Parks Department Addresses Customer Service from Many Angles

Under the leadership of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Commissioner Adrian Benepe, The Department of Parks & Recreation has placed customer service at the forefront of its priorities.

In 2002, Parks began surveying customers at parks, playgrounds, recreation centers, pools, marinas, golf courses and more. In person and online, Parks has conducted over 30,000 surveys. Customer survey results are an important complement to the Park Inspection Program and

are presented at Parkstat and in managerial meetings.

Parks is also promoting excellence in customer service through the *Going the Extra Mile* (GEM) training and awards program, and through *Eyes on Parks*, where all staff report any issues they see in parks so that they can be corrected before the public reports them.

Parks has also begun a Greeter program with 70 staff citywide. Each summer, Park Greeters welcome the public to

Park's flagship parks and beaches, answer questions, provide directions, and give out information about park events. Parks also installed over 500 new information boards on park buildings and comfort stations citywide. The boards display the Parks Post Newsletters, promote volunteer opportunities with Partnerships for Parks, and let customers know what's going on at their local park.



**Parks Greeter assists customers at Coney Island**

Contact:

[Keith.Kerman@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:Keith.Kerman@parks.nyc.gov)

## NYCHA: Improving the Customer Experience

In 2007, the New York City Housing Authority launched a major multi-year initiative called *NYCHA Improving the Customer Experience* (NICE) to transform the way NYCHA conducts business by improving the customer experience and operational efficiency.

NICE will directly improve agency services for a myriad of New Yorkers, including those applying for public housing and Section 8 housing; public housing residents requesting maintenance; and all Section 8 tenants and landlords.

*NICE* is part technology implementation and part process and organizational change. Through *NICE*, many manual processes will be automated and many business operations will be streamlined. The improvements the *NICE* program will bring to NYCHA and its customers include:

- Timely and reliable information to customers via walk-in centers, a centralized call center and an online service portal
- A unified customer relationship and residential property management

system for universal content management that replaces outdated departmental systems

- Additional tools and training available to employees to help them more efficiently perform their jobs with cutting edge technologies and provide improved customer service.

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## **City Agencies Work to Implement Language Access Executive Order**

On July 22, 2008, Mayor Michael Bloomberg signed Executive Order 120, which mandated that all City agencies provide language access services to New York City's Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. This Executive Order supports our city's population needs, as nearly half of New Yorkers speak a language other than English at home, and about 1.8 million New Yorkers (1/4 of the city's population) are identified as LEP.

The Executive Order emphasizes Spanish, Chinese (including Cantonese and Mandarin), Russian,

Korean, Italian, as the top six languages spoken by the City's LEP population.

Each agency has since appointed a Language Access Coordinator who works closely with CSG and the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) to develop and implement their agency's language access plan. Standards are also being developed through the Customer Service Group Steering Committee and will be published in the 2009 Mayor's Management Report (MMR).

CSG, MOIA and city agencies are working in partnership to support this

ground-breaking initiative. CSG will provide guidance on acquiring translation and interpretation services, and developing, in conjunction with DOITT, a strategy for providing language access online via NYC.gov.

CSG will also assist in the creation of a citywide language bank of bilingual employees, develop signage alerting customers of the availability of free interpretation services for walk-in facilities, and incorporate census data from the Department of City Planning to assess the City's LEP population.

## **Customer Service Awards and Recognition Program Awardees (continued)**

### **Congratulations to this year's award winners!**

- LaVerne Parker (ACS)
- Yvonne Babb (BIC)
- Jordana Zizmor (CAU)
- Sarah Ho (CCRB)
- Jeanette Megna (DCAS)
- Helen Rhodes (DEP)
- Nickie Cheng (DFTA)
- Michael Jefferson (DHS)
- Adrian Foster-Cumberbatch (DJJ)
- Christine Vidal (DOB)
- Laurie Kilpatrick (DOF)
- Kelly Belgrave (DOHMH)
- James Felipe (DoITT / 311)
- Barbara Hibbert (DORIS)
- Kathy Walcott (DOT)
- Christopher Rodriguez (DPR)
- Evelyn Astacio (DSNY)
- Meka Nurse (DYCD)
- Tamara Saakian (FDNY)
- Patricia Jordan (HPD)
- Phyllis Hayes (HRA)
- Emily Rich (LPC)
- Ava Laughman (MOC)
- Stephanie Canteen (Mayor's Office of Correspondence)
- Celina Sze (MOFTB)
- Thomas Walsh (NYCHA)
- Samantha Watson (SBS)
- Frances Studivent (TLC)

### **About the Customer Service Group**

The Customer Service Group (CSG) was established by Mayor Bloomberg's Executive Order 115 to ensure that every customer who interacts with City agencies receives the best customer service possible. CSG is part of the Mayor's Office of Operations.