May 2007

Staff Grows To Fulfill Your Needs

In March the Office of Student Disability Services hired a new staff member, Carlos Herrera, Assistant Director, to manage the growing technological needs of students registered with our office. Aside from assisting with the office's day-to-day operations, Mr. Herrera helps to coordinate all educational and assistive technological services, and reasonable accommodations for students.

Mr. Herrera received his degree from SUNY New Paltz and for over twenty years has worked with individuals with disabilities in a variety of settings. He is very knowledgeable about assistive technologies and techniques for making accommodations to workplaces and educational environments. With a wealth of experience in technology, job training, placement and career counseling, Mr. Herrera brings a comprehensive approach to the issues confronting persons and community constituents.

The panel was comprised of knowledgeable individuals who help families every day. Opening remarks by Ted Finkelstein, Director of Project Equal Access, NYC Commission on Human Rights, set the premise for the discussion when he touched upon people's right to obtain a home.

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A Social Worker on a Mission

Edward Sesay is a West African native from the Temne tribe in the country of Sierra Leone. He left his native home in 1990 and attended Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn. He is now just a few weeks away from graduating from Lehman College.

As a Sociology Major he has excelled in his studies achieving a 3.6 GPA. He was recently inducted into the Golden Key National Honor Society and has even appeared on the Dean’s List.

As a result from attending the Career Expo held in February, he has obtained a job at The Bridge, a non-profit organization that assists adults with mental health problems and substance abuse through counseling, rehabilitation, residential services and outreach centers. Many of the clients, are ex-convicts or homeless, and are provided assistance in vocational training.

Most clients live at one of the facilities throughout the City. Sesay’s responsibilities entail making monthly visits to clients’ apartments and assuring that they are doing well. He also inspects the apartment for cleanliness and safety.

Sesay acknowledges that his area of concentration earns him an modest living but he asserts that “I always wanted to work with a non-profit because they provide a service that is not about the salary (which is not that great). It’s more about helping the people help themselves. More effort is given by workers creating a stronger care component.” He feels so strongly in this field because he can empathize with the clients since he’s been in similar situations.

He plans to attend graduate school at Lehman College. He has submitted his application for the advanced standing program which is a one year MSW curriculum and feels confident he will be accepted, but has also prepared for the possibility of rejection. He plans to continue his work at the Bridge while pursuing his advanced degree.

Housing Forum Cont’d from page 1

Thomas Small, a lawyer and advocate for Disability Network NYC, spoke about the rights of persons with disabilities to reasonable accommodations in their homes. Audrey Tannen from Eviction Intervention Services urged anyone facing eviction to seek free counsel at her organization. Paul Feuerstein and Greg Bell spoke about their organizations and how they are helping persons with disabilities overcome obstacles. Feuerstein’s Barrier Free Living helps people live independently, while Bell’s Insight for New Housing is constructing housing tailored to persons who are blind or visually impaired. Paula Wolff and Robert Ortiz, both housing specialists at Independent Living Centers, touched upon programs that help to alleviate the cost of rent for low-income families. Jill Gerson, a member of the Lehman College faculty recounted a story from her new book, “Hopes Springs Maternal” about a woman who became homeless and her quest to educate her family.

A powerful speaker, Alexander Wood, Executive Director of Disability Network NYC, summed up the panel and gave strong concluding remarks. A robust Q&A session followed with students getting on the spot help with various housing problems.
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TO RECRUIT LEHMAN
STUDENTS FOR DISABILITY
MENTORING DAY

Disability Mentoring Day is a national program of the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) that promotes career development for students and job-seekers with disabilities through job shadowing and hands-on career exploration.

Students with disabilities (mentees) are matched with workplace mentors according to expressed career interests. Mentees experience a typical day on the job and learn how to prepare to enter the world of employment. Employers gain an increased awareness that people with disabilities represent an overlooked talent pool.

Lehman student Yvonne Atanacio, exudes enthusiasm about her participation in Disability Mentoring Day last October. Yvonne is legally blind.
Commencement 2007

Preparations for Lehman’s 35th Commencement Ceremony is well underway. Over 1,260 Lehman students are scheduled to receive degrees at the ceremony on May 31st at 10:30 a.m. More than thirty-one students affiliated with our office can be counted amongst those scheduled to receive degrees. Eighteen additional students received their degrees on January ‘07.

U.S. Congressman Charles Rangel is scheduled to be the graduation speaker at the ceremony which will take place on the baseball field.

Students registered with our office are invited to attend a reception in Shuster Hall 179 following the graduation ceremonies. For more information please call (718) 960-8441.

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and aspires to become a social worker so that she may help others with disabilities. She was paired up with Fed Cap Vocational Rehabilitation and had the opportunity to interact with workers with disabilities in a job training program. Yvonne’s determination and enduring optimism is quite evident as she used the experience to network and establish the relationships she will need to propel her career.

Commissioner Matthew Sapolin and Mkada Beach, from the Mayor’s Office of People with Disabilities promoted Disability Mentoring Day 2007 at a well attended meeting on May 2nd from 2:00-4:00pm in Lehman’s Access and Technology Center Library 215. Applications for the October 16th Mentoring Day Programs are available in Shuster 238.

Congratulations Seek Honorees

On April 26, 2007, SEEK held its Annual Honors Day Program and several students who are affiliated with our office received recognition and awards. SEEK special recognition awards were given to Arianny Ramirez (Junior), Kimberly Nunez (Grad) and Sujey Victoria (Freshman). Arianny Ramirez was also honored as the SEEK junior with the highest GPA and Elisa Gonzalez for her poetry.

Elisa Gonzalez, Shantel Padilla, Arianny Ramirez were admitted to the SEEK Honor Roll which requires a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher with more earned credits.

Monique McBride received Honorable mention as a SEEK freshman achieving a Cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher. Congratulations to the awardees!

Lehman to Host NYC Council Meeting on Accessible Transportation

Lehman College has been selected as one of two sites in the Bronx to host focus groups designed to find out what New Yorkers with disabilities really think about public transportation. The NYC Council in partnership with the City University of New York plans to hold meetings throughout the five boroughs. The meeting at Lehman will take place on Wednesday May 3rd at 6:00pm and a second meeting for Bronx residents will take place on May 7th at the American Cancer Society Regional Office at 2330 Eastchester Road.

These focus sessions are expected to help the NYC Council make informed decisions about transportation access for New Yorkers with Disabilities. For more information please contact May Chiang at the New York City Council at (212) 788-1779 or may.chiang@council.nyc.gov.

Meet the Staff

Office of Students Disability Services

Merrill D. Parra—Director
Carlos Herrera—Assistant Director
Doreen Patrick—Office College Assistant

Veronica Mason—Notetaker Services
Elizabeth Pereyra—Newsletter Editor
Francisco Valverde—Peer Educator

“Full Participation, Access and Opportunity”