

HARLEM COMMONWEALTH NEWSLETTER

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Summer 2006

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Publisher's Note

Dr. Joseph L. Tait, President and CEO

Back in the early 1980s I was asked in an interview what I believed must be done to improve the quality of life in the Harlem community. My response was as follows: "At the risk of sounding like an elitist, I think that those of us active in Harlem affairs will have to make young people our highest priority. The opportunities that are opening up will be of no value if our youngsters don't get a better education in public schools."

"I also think it would be of tremendous value to have young black professionals come back to Harlem to live and work. Our community is like a colony where all the educated and talented young people leave and seldom return or call. It's too high a price to pay for 'success'. Harlem needs the vigor and talent of its young, bright minds."

It is even more important today to make our youngsters our top priority and to assist them in every way we can. That is why HCC has launched initiatives that will provide scholarship assistance and internships for bright, talented committed young people who are striving for academic excellence and who have strong connections to the Harlem community.

By doing so we are acting on a cogent, perceptive observation made by Martin Luther King, Jr. in his 1967 book, WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE: CHAOS OR COMMUNITY? Wrote Dr. King in words that we should all memorize, "Education without social action is a one-sided value because it has no true power potential. Social action without education is a weak expression of pure energy. Deeds uninformed by educated thought can take false directions. When we go into action and confront our adversaries we must be as armed with knowledge as they are. Our policies should have the strength of deep analysis beneath them to be able to challenge the clever sophistries of our opponents."



Dr. Joseph L. Tait
President and CEO

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HARLEM COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

By DR. JOAN O. DAWSON
E. Randy Dupree, Scholarship
and Internship Committee Chair

Internship programs have long been a mark of the history of Harlem Commonwealth Council when apprentices were placed in manufacturing plants, hotels and other businesses owned by HCC. Today, HCC, one of the oldest community-based non-profit organizations, is proud to continue reaching out to serve the Harlem community by launching its student internship program. This program will target Harlem based high school students and college freshmen to be placed in businesses that are privately owned and that vary considerably in their products and services.

The Public School System in New York City, through its teachers, administrators, counselors and educators, are finding it difficult, if not impossible, to fulfill the needs of some students to find ways of enhancing the educational experience through paid summer internship programs. When students find jobs without assistance, many times, they are ill-prepared and have no expectations or goals established for the work experience, except "making extra money". This is a formula for failure at a first job experience.



Students that interviewed for the
HCC 2006 Summer Internship Program

(Left to Right: Erica Padilla, Cheryl Perry, Rodney Jean, Davia Steeley, Joselin Jimenez, Shatique Waiters, Sophia Mohammed, Johnetta Cuff, Makeeda Marshall)

This fact, coupled with the concerns of many businesses that high school students are not prepared and sometimes not willing to do minimal work requirements, prompted Harlem Commonwealth Council to launch a quality internship program.

Harlem Commonwealth Council has established relationships with various businesses, including *Inner City Broadcasting Company, Van Wagner Communications, LLC, City National Bank of New Jersey, Cogswell Reality Group, LLC, Danforth Development Partners, LLC, F.W. Honerkamp Co., Inc.* and others who are not only willing, but eager to work with HCC in its outreach to specific high schools and first year college students for interns. These business partners have committed to HCC the placement of at least one or more students for the 2006 summer paid internship program. These are not internships without responsibility for student performance. These businesses have specified work related requirements for students who are placed with them.

Businesses are very specific. Some are requiring that interns are equipped with above average computer skills and are goal oriented, pro-active, resourceful, approachable, trustworthy and energetic.

Other specific responsibilities requested from businesses are the presence of enhanced communication skills, working knowledge in spread sheet development and knowledge of mathematics. One particular business, a real estate firm, requested some knowledge of real estate and construction. *A most important attribute sought after by businesses is a thirst for knowledge and an interest in the industry.*

In preparation for the necessary assurance of success on the job, HCC staff is working closely with school counselors, student advisors and school administrators. HCC requires prospective interns to fill out a rigorous application form, to submit a resume, write a two-hundred fifty word essay, and go through an interview with the HCC Board Committee. HCC will follow this with a four-hour seminar for all accepted applicants. The seminar will focus on business etiquette in the work place. Interns will be engaged in such topics as: presenting yourself with polish; written and unwritten rules; respect, courtesy and consideration of others on the job; being on time; appropriate dress; and other general rules for success. High school students must be in their junior or senior years.

Dr. Martin Luther King's Legacy Celebrated in Song, Dance and Spoken Word at HCC



The Steppers



Kenny Anderson Quartet



Asha Herbert



Ishangi Family African Dancers



HARLEM

By **GABRIELLE ROBINSON**
Student, Thurgood Marshall Academy, Harlem

"I am afraid despite my intentions, that in some instances commentators have tended to overemphasize what they believed to be the social elements in my work. But while my response to certain elements is as obvious as it is inevitable, I am so pleased to note that upon reflection many persons have formed that they were as much concerned with the aesthetic implications of my paintings as with what may possibly be my human compassion." - Romare Bearden

At the peak of the 1900s, African American literature, music, dance and culture flourished. It sparked the unique and innovative ideas that would ultimately shape and mold a place where African Americans could embrace their heritage and each other as a whole. Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, W. E. B. DuBois, Billie Holiday, Josephine Baker, and Romare Bearden were just a few of the anchors and pioneers of this movement. Not only did they spark the imaginations of their people, they truly inspired each other's talents and encouraged others to be just as creative.

That Harlem back in the days was so rich in spirit and soul, but it is now an illusion of an effervescent picture-perfect society compared to today's Harlem. That is my truth because I believe we have dissipated the creativity, values, and standards that we had once set in place for ourselves. These days in Harlem, men bare the burden of having to always look over their shoulders and wonder if they will get stopped by the police or arrested because of mistaken identity. Teenage women are expected to drop out and become young mothers.

On each street corner it saddens me to witness the harsh reality of how drugs can turn a person's bright future into a dark alley of "shoulda," "coulda," "woulda's." Yet, the expectations I have for the place I rest my head every night are beyond the stars. As a Harlemit, I know where we came from and where we can ultimately end up if we sleep, breathe, and disseminate everything that our elders have put their sweat, blood and tears into, everything that is Harlem. My Harlem is the epitome of harsh, dark, mean streets. A glistening star in the dark gloomy night sky. A contradiction in the eyes of many of its inhabitants. My Harlem is the color of grimy hands and feet. This is why Harlem is everything inside of me.



Gabrielle Robinson

Publisher's Note:

As part of its dual mission of providing useful information and encouraging our young people to pursue educational excellence, each issue of our newsletter will feature uncensored articles by Harlem-based high school students.

FastTrac® at Work:

HCC Boardroom Participant Providing Quality Overnight Childcare, "IT TAKES A VILLAGE"

By **TRACEY MILHOUSE, Harlem Commonwealth Council, Inc.**

After attending the HCC Boardroom-FastTrac® program (now called the HCC New Venture Program), Audrey Harden was able to realize her dream of opening a quality overnight childcare center, "It Takes a Village".

As a city employee Ms. Harden recognized the need for providing children with a safe haven and parents with peace of mind; knowing they are able to leave their children in the caring hands of qualified individuals. In addition to quality overnight care Ms. Harden's center will provide martial arts training and will staff a college professor with a Master's Degree in Education.

Although opening a center of this sort posed many challenges, Ms. Harden says that after attending the HCC Boardroom-FastTrac® program, she was provided with a wealth of information that equipped her with the tools and resources needed to grow a successful business.

HARLEM COMMONWEALTH COUNCIL'S INITIATIVES

- DEVELOPING HARLEM'S HUMAN RESOURCES
- THE HARLEM SELF-SUFFICIENCY JOB READINESS PROGRAM
- HCC "GET OUT THE VOTE" CAMPAIGN
- SCHOLARSHIP AND INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS
- HCC NEW VENTURE PROGRAM FOR ENTREPRENEURS
- ALICE KORNEGAY COMPUTER LEARNING CENTER

The Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute Moves to Harlem

By DR. LORRAINE MONROE and DR. LONNETTA M. GAINES, Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute

The Harlem Commonwealth Council Board of Directors is pleased to welcome the Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute (LMLI), a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, to the second floor of the HCC building on 125th Street. "The work of LMLI is highly compatible with the mission of the Harlem Commonwealth Council," Dr. Tait stated. "We are looking forward to the possibility of future collaborations."

The mission of the Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute is to develop and support public school leaders who view solid education as a necessity for transforming children's lives and who are committed to leading consistently high-achieving schools where all students, beginning with kindergarten, are prepared to enter and graduate from college.

The Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute (founded in 1997 as the School Leadership Academy at the Career Education Institute (CEI) is an outgrowth of the groundbreaking work of Dr. Lorraine Monroe, a national and international expert in education, who founded and served as principal of the Frederick Douglass Academy in Central Harlem and whose work has been featured extensively in national and international media. Dr. Monroe is joined in this important work by Dr. Lonnetta M. Gaines, Vice

President, Ms. Judith S. Mutunga, Executive Assistant and Events Coordinator, Ms. Kim McCrae, Program Assistant, and other consultants, including Ms. Carrie Simpson, Ms. Ursula Davis, and Ms. Cleo Lucas.

LMLI chose to move its offices to Harlem from its former location downtown on Park Avenue in order to better serve its major program, the Harlem Demonstration Dream Schools Program, which is in its second full school year.

The LMLI Harlem Demonstration Dream Schools Program serves eight selected schools in Central Harlem and one in the Bronx. The Harlem Demonstration Dream Schools program trains and coaches principals and leadership teams in nine public schools to serve as instructional leaders, thus increasing performance on standardized examinations by students in their schools. In addition to working with school leaders, LMLI also conducts workshops and seminars for teachers, student leaders, and parents in order to assist leaders in creating a school culture where excellence is an expectation and where students' lives are enriched.

"LMLI is dedicated to training principals and leaders to prepare their students for admission to the best colleges in America," said Dr. Monroe, "We think

that our move to Harlem will help us significantly in achieving this goal."



**Dr. Lorraine Monroe
and
Dr. Lonnetta M. Gaines
LMLI**

**Congratulations to
Mildred Isaac for
30 years of
service!**



**Job Well Done
&
Happy Retirement!**

**HCC Board Member
2006 Recipient
NY Governor's Salute
to
Harriet Tubman Spirit
Award**



Dr. Joan O. Dawson

By TRACEY MILHOUSE,
Harlem Commonwealth Council, Inc.

Congratulations to HCC Board member Dr. Joan O. Dawson for being selected as a 2006 recipient of the State of New York's Governor's Salute to Harriet Tubman Spirit Award.

The Spirit Award pays tribute to individuals whose accomplishments depict the spirit of Harriet Tubman. It recognizes those who have made significant accomplishments in various areas and who have laid the foundation for present and future leaders in the battle for human rights.

Dr. Dawson has served on the Harlem Commonwealth Council, Inc. Board of Directors for the past two years and has been instrumental in the launching of our scholarship and internship programs as well as being a contributing writer to the HCC Newsletter.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Dawson for being an inspiration and role model to the Harlem Community.

Interested in becoming an entrepreneur? Register for the HCC NEW VENTURE PROGRAM by contacting Tracey Milhouse at 212 749-0900 Ext. 22 or by visiting our website; www.harlemcommonwealth.org.

There is limited space so sign up now! Classes are scheduled to begin in September of 2006.

Identity Theft and Ways to Avoid It

By TERRANCE MORRIS, Citibank

Identity Theft occurs when an individual acquires private elements of a person's identifying information (account numbers, passwords, Social Security Numbers, date of birth, etc.) to ultimately commit fraud or theft utilizing that person's name and identity.

In today's technological society one has to be ever vigilant in securing one's private information from e-mails requesting personal information (which we seem to readily give) or telephone fraud scams.

There are no other methods available today to secure your private information, most notably, broken/unlocked mail boxes, stolen wallets or pocketbooks and/or a trusted acquaintance or family member who has access to your account information.

Pretext calling is another method used by identity thieves to secure personal and financial related information from unsuspecting individuals.

They may pretend to be an official from a bank or a government agency or a law enforcement agency, or a community group. Some may claim to be the customer.

These thefts raise their ugly heads primarily in two ways;

- 1) Fraudulent Application - An individual applies for credit utilizing someone else's stolen personal information.
- 2) Account Takeover - Assuming an existing account relationship utilizing someone else's stolen personal information, etc.

Some basic hints that may secure your personal information are:

- Shred all bank/credit card statements whenever

possible or utilize a pair of scissors to destroy all documents. Place them in different receptacles when discarding

- Do not leave deposit or withdrawal receipts or, my personal favorite, pay stubs containing all personal information on your bank's writing desk.

Consider utilizing paperless statements whenever offered by companies. Promptly open your monthly statements and question any unusual transactions immediately, because what you don't know can hurt you.

If you have second thoughts about who is requesting the information, ask yourself why do they need this information?

- If it does not feel right, STOP, THINK and then make a decision.

For more information visit www.citibank.com.

And Then Came Harlem Commonwealth Council Part Two

By ISAIAH ROBINSON, JR., Founding Member

Funding to the amount of \$350,000 was approved after filing corporate documents in 1967. For the next two years \$300,000 went to the two professors at Columbia and the New School for Social Research with only \$50,000 coming to HCC for salaries and rent. It became apparent to the Board of Directors that our quarterly meetings with our research professors were not producing the kind of results expected. Accordingly, the Board moved to take control of the money and to hire a professional business manager. This strategy succeeded and the first professional staff was hired. James Dowdy was voted on the board to replace the business position. Everything seemed to be coming up roses.

And then it happened. Our treasurer, Kenneth Marshall, while auditing the books, discovered embezzlement throughout the agency. An emergency meeting was called where the Board voted to discharge the entire professional staff. The newest board member, James Dowdy, was the only one with the available time to re-organize a professional staff, develop a strategy and plan for the future of Harlem Commonwealth Council.

Within six months Dowdy and staff had gone far beyond the Board's expectation. He presented, and the Board approved, a "Conglomerate Business Model" under the banner "OWN A PIECE OF THE BLOCK," plus HCC's first acquisition - ACME FOUNDRY. This meager beginning saved HCC as one of the eight models across the country that survived the Carter Administration's budget cuts. Moreover, HCC continues to be self sustaining until this day.



Stan Weeks



Isaiah Robinson, Jr.

Managing Your Credit Part Two

By STAN WEEKS, City National Bank of NJ

Credit Scoring

Once you have established a budget, developed the discipline to manage your expenses and establish a regular savings plan, you are on your way to creating and maintaining a good credit history. Your credit history is a measure that others use to judge how well you manage your financial affairs. The most common measure used is the credit score. A credit score is a proprietary mathematical system utilized by the three reporting agencies, Equifax, Trans Union, and Experian, to evaluate an individual's credit history. While the system is proprietary the factors that can adversely affect your credit score are not. Your credit score can be adversely affected first and foremost by your payment history. Do you pay your bills on time? Timely payments of your bills is essential to creating and maintaining a good credit history.

Secondly, a credit score can be adversely affected by the amount of your total available credit compared to actual amount of outstanding credit. Are you maxed-out on your credit cards? Regardless of how timely you are with your payments, when your outstanding credit is high in relationship to your total available credit it will have a negative effect on your credit score. By managing your spending with a budget process such as the one outlined you will be able to curtail spontaneous spending on your wants which typically result in higher outstanding credit balances that negatively affect your credit score.

The third factor that can adversely affect your credit score is the number of inquiries made by creditors. This is usually a problem for those individuals who are not disciplined and don't have an effective budget. As a result they tend to overspend. Their overspending often leaves them hard pressed to make ends meet. Subsequently, they have a poor payment history, which can lead them on a

continuous search for credit to cover their budget shortfalls. You should monitor each of these factors as well as your credit score on a periodic basis. The Fair Credit Reporting Act now makes it possible for everyone to obtain a free copy of their free credit report from each of the credit reporting agencies every year. To obtain yours you may go to FreeCreditReport.com or other related sites on the internet. I encourage you to review your report at least annually, if not more often. In doing so you will have a tool to assist you in becoming more disciplined, and in managing your budget to control the factors that can adversely affect your credit score.

Credit Repair

A good credit history is essential. Some individuals, however, have managed their credit so badly that it is in need of repair. There is no quick fix to repairing credit. Repairing credit is most often a lengthy process. Many organizations exist and advertise that can instantly correct credit problems. While there are some non-profit organizations that can be of help in preparing a strategy to improve your credit, the truth is only time and your personal effort will improve your credit.

The same discipline that is required to maintain your credit, such as sticking to a budget and making regular payments is a must to repairing your credit. Often your income may be so over extended that making even minimum payments on consumer loans may be very difficult. If the opportunity exists, increasing your income and directing that income towards decreasing your consumer loans will help you make timely payments and accelerate or eliminate them. For some increasing income is not an option. In this instance it is important that you contact your creditor and attempt to work out a payment plan that is more in line with your budget. Most creditors will be open to such a conversation.

In some instances you may want to consider a debt consolidation loan. This will enable you to combine your consumer debt under one loan most often resulting in a decrease in your monthly loan payments. Debt consolidation, however, requires a commitment on your part to not use the available credit it creates.

A good credit history is essential and requires a disciplined effort on your part to maintain. Consider establishing a budget. Review your credit and most of all be disciplined.

In Memoriam

Edith Cecile Reid Edmonds, MD
July 26, 1925 to February 11, 2006

Wife of past *Commonwealth Holding Company, Inc.* Chairman, *John L. Edmonds, Esq.* passed away February 11, 2006.

Dr. Reid practiced medicine in Queens, New York for over forty years. She was a founding member of the Carter Community Health Center in Jamaica, Queens; an active member of the Queens Clinical Society; Chairman of the Internal Medicine Section and member of the Board of Trustees of the National Medical Association. She was also Chairman of Region I of the N.M.A. Her active community works were manifested by her service on the Boards of Greater Jamaica Development Corporation; Southern Queens Park Association; and the Jamaica Hospital Department of Cardiology. She was a golden member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and a member of the St. Albans Congregational Church for many years until her illness.

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

The following is a listing of all elected officials representing Harlem residents:

George Pataki
Governor
(518) 474-8390

Michael Bloomberg
Mayor
(212) 788-9600

Charles Rangel
Congressman
(212) 663-3900

David Paterson
New York State Senate
(212) 222-7315

Eric T. Schneiderman
New York State Senate
(212) 928-5578

Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Senate- NY
(212) 688-6262

Charles Schumer
United States Senate- NY
(212) 486-4430

Inez Dickens
Councilwoman- District 9
(212) 788-7397

Robert Jackson
Councilman- District 7
(212) 928-1322

Adam Clayton Powell IV
State Assemblyman
(212) 828-3953

Keith Wright
State Assemblyman
(212) 866-5809

Scott Stringer
Manhattan Borough President
(212) 669-8300

Dial 311 for non-emergency government information and services.

Tenants of 361 West 125th Street, New York, NY 10027

Harlem Commonwealth Council, Inc.- Dr. Joseph L. Tait, President/ CEO (212) 749-0900

Inner City Broadcasting Company- Percy Sutton, Chairman (212) 866-8300

Lorraine Monroe Leadership Institute- Dr. Lorraine Monroe, Executive Director (212) 808-6547

Figure Skating in Harlem- Sharon Cohen, Founder and Executive Director (646) 698-3440

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www.harlemcommonwealth.org