



TLC TIMES

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Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor

Matthew W. Daus, Commissioner/Chair

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2004 Driver Recognition Ceremony

The Taxi and Limousine Commission honored about 70 drivers for their outstanding service in the second annual Driver Recognition Ceremony. Held on August 4th at the Sheraton Hotel in midtown, the drivers came with their friends and family to celebrate their accomplishments as drivers to New York City residents and visitors.

Mayor Bloomberg kicked off the ceremony and honored Nestor Sulpico, who returned over \$70,000 in jewels to a very grateful customer. Members of the industry also attended and helped sponsor the event. The TLC would like to thank MTBOT, LOMTO, the Federation of

Taxi Drivers, United as One, Committee for Taxi Safety, and the Black Car Assistance Corporation. The TLC worked closely with NYC & Company to secure an event location and worked with other organizations, such as the New York State Restaurant Association, the Alex Hotel, the Brooklyn Cyclones, Running Press Book Publishers, Taxi Talk, Gundy's Restaurant and Cafe, the New York Ambulette Corporation, NY Sports Commission, the 2012 Committee, the New York Mets, and Yankees, to obtain gifts that were then raffled off to the drivers. Drivers also received a copy of the *Cabby Cookbook* by



Above: Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg presents honoree Nestor Sulpico with certificate

Mary Ellen Winston and a NYC 2012 hat. All of the drivers received commendations for going above and beyond the call of duty. Many drivers had been in the business for over 40 years and were still

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Commissioner's Corner



I begin this column with a personal note. As many of you know, the TLC family lost one of its own recently with the passing of Steven Brunetti, director of our Staten Island facility. While cataloguing all of the things that Steve meant to us would easily fill a book, I will just take this brief moment to say that his courage over the last year has inspired us, and his friendship will never be forgotten.

While many enjoyed a restful and somewhat uneventful summer season, everyone at the agency knows what a busy season it has been for us. First, I should mention the successful Driver Recognition Ceremony that we held on August 4th in partnership with NYC & Company, through which we were able to recognize over 100 taxicab and for-hire vehicle drivers for their exemplary work. Thanks to NYC and Co.'s President and CEO, Cristyne Nicholas, we were able to hold this fabulous event at the New York Sheraton Hotel and Towers. The amazing staff of the TLC and NYC & Co, as well as all of our private sector partners ensured a successful event. Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg was on hand to laud our chief honoree, the famed "Black Pearl Cabbie" Nestor Sulpico, as well as several other deserving award recipients. I am still getting phone calls from industry members who call to say what a positive event this was, and asking what they can do to help us get next year's celebration off the ground. I encourage you to visit the TLC web site to see all the photos of the event that are posted there.

I am also proud to announce that the TLC recently graduated a double-sized class of highly trained new inspectors, brought on to help the agency with such enforcement priorities as Operation Street Hail, and our ongoing efforts to rid New York City's hotels and airports of illegal hustlers.

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Fall '04 Medallion Sale Information

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

October 12 - October 14
9am - 5pm

40 Rector Street, 5th Floor
Accessible, Alternative Fuel,
Individual Medallion Bid
Acceptance
(by hand delivery only)

October 15
11am

40 Rector Street, 5th Floor
Accessible and Alternative
Fuel Medallion Bid Openings

October 18

11am 101 Murray Street
Saval Auditorium - St. John's
University Individual
Medallion Bid Opening

October 19 - October 21
9am - 5pm

40 Rector Street, 5th Floor
Corporate Medallion Bid
Acceptance
(hand delivery only)

October 22

11am 101 Murray Street
Saval Auditorium -
St. John's University
Corporate Medallion Bid
Opening

Commissioner's Corner

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It is safe to say that our efforts have come to notice, between the recent release of the Mayor's Management Report, which details the TLC's performance, and an article in the New York Post entitled "Livery Hail \$torm." The latter highlighted the more than 25% increase between Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004 in the number of summonses issued for illegal livery hails, as well as the equally impressive increase in the number of illegal bases closed. It is always gratifying when the media reports progress as well as it does problems.

Speaking of progress, we have made some headway in several other important areas, about which you will be reading in the coming month, including the issue of insurance. Whether it is the high cost of insurance for our livery licensees, or the lack of affordable – or even available – insurance on the voluntary market for wheelchair accessible vehicles, this is an issue that is crucial and central for the industries we regulate. Although the New York State Insurance Department regulates the insurance industry, the TLC is concerned about these issues and wishes to assist in any way that it can. It is for this

reason that the agency has scheduled a public hearing for October 25 that will focus exclusively on these important issues. Another event we are very excited about is the Informational Exchange Conference we have planned for October 14th. As you may know, the TLC promulgated regulations at the time of the fare increase that mandate service improvements for each of the city's medallion taxicabs as of November 2005. These improvements will include the ability for each taxicab to accept debit and credit cards as payment for a ride of any duration, as well as a communications system that will offer numerous benefits. This would include a map that will allow the passenger to follow trip progress, and the ability to communicate directly with individual taxicabs to facilitate the return of lost property as well as to notify drivers of business opportunities throughout the city. The data that we will potentially be able to receive will offer the TLC an analytical tool of unparalleled proportions. Now that the Request For Information (RFI) process has officially – and successfully – been concluded, the conference will provide the means by which we bring together the project's industry and governmental stakeholders

with the experts that will take us from vision to reality.

Following on the heels of the successful medallion sale we held last spring, we are deeply into planning our next medallion sale in the month of October. In order to ensure the successful sale of Accessible and Alternative Fuel Medallions, we will be auctioning them separately from the other medallion types on October 15 with an independent minimum upset, or bid price of \$219,000. Compared to the market-fair minimum bid prices of \$267,000 for Individual Medallions and \$630,000 for a lot of two Corporate Medallions, Accessible and Alternative Fuel Medallions are attractively discounted and should inspire spirited bidding. Also, for the first time, individual owner/operators can purchase and own more than one medallion, if it is an accessible or alternative fuel medallion.

I know we have only scratched the surface of things to mention, but that only makes me look all the more forward to writing again soon. Until next time, enjoy the crisp coming of autumn.



RNC Week's Smooth Ride

New York City proudly welcomed the Republican National Convention (RNC) from Monday, August 30, 2004 through Thursday, September 2, 2004. The Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) worked closely with the Department of Transportation to provide its licensees with up to date traffic information. In addition, the TLC informed licensees of various areas in need of additional taxi service. The TLC did not



experience an increase in complaints against drivers, in fact, there was a decrease in driver complaints during that week. The licensees did their part to contribute to an extremely successful hosting job by New York City. "I am pleased to acknowledge and thank all those taxicab drivers who have represented our city so wonderfully well and so positively during the RNC and we know that this is just one more indication of the quality service that riders receive throughout the year. We were confident in the ability of our licensees to help the Big Apple shine during that historic week and they delivered," said Commissioner Daus.

Medallion Website Updated

The TLC recently revised and re-launched a companion website specifically devoted to the medallion sale, to assist potential medallion buyers in learning about the auction process.

The website can be found at www.nyc.gov/taxi and contains everything one will need to purchase a taxicab medallion, from lists of lenders and brokers who can assist in financing the purchase of a medallion, to frequently asked questions regarding the process, to the types of vehicles authorized to be taxicabs, to the requirements for medallion ownership, the new website offers information for all those with a medallion in their future. The website also contains an e-mail link where you can send any medallion sale related questions you may have to the TLC. There are also links available to download copies of the Medallion Sale Brochure, or the Medallion Sale Information Kit.

So if you would like to learn more about this truly unique opportunity, please visit www.nyc.gov/taxi.



Fall 2004 Medallion Sale

Following a successful spring medallion sale, the Taxi and Limousine Commission will be selling up to 300 additional medallions this October. The fall 2004 medallion sale is the second part of the 900 medallions



Above: Mini-Fleet medallion owner Jackie Barth shares her thoughts about taxi investment opportunities from an owner's perspective. Ms. Barth bought her medallions in the Spring 2004 medallion sale.

that the City approved for sale over three fiscal years. Based on the high interest from the first sale, the City decided to schedule the second sale soon after to give those who were not successful or who did not submit a bid the opportunity to become an owner, and with the hope of getting more cabs on the road for the busy holiday season in New York City.

The Commission set up four medallion sale seminars, two in each borough, in Manhattan and Queens. The seminars provided drivers with the basics for medallion ownership and the medallion sale process. It also included a panel of TLC senior staff who held a question and answer period after the presentation. The Commission also worked with the industry and invited 5 owners to the seminars to give a first-hand experience of what it is like to be a medallion owner.

Four individual owners and one corporate owner, all with different

backgrounds and ownership experience, were able to join the TLC. Jackie Barth talked about her experience as a corporate owner and explained why she believed medallion ownership is a unique investment opportunity. As she explained, "Based upon historical performance and the positive outlook for the New York City economy, I believe the expected return to

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Below: TLC Employees Daniel Felicies, Carmen Garcia and Michael Crouthers staff the sign in table for the Medallion Sale Seminar at Pace University.



TLC's Staten Island Director of Operations Succumbs After Long Illness

by Allan J. Fromberg

Many thousands of businesspeople have filtered through the doors of the New York City Taxi and Limousine Commission's Staten Island licensing and adjudication facility, coming to expect and enjoy the welcoming smile and helpful manner of the facility's director of operations, Steven Brunetti. Today, that smile is just one of the many things about which family, friends and co-workers reminisced in the shadow of his loss. Steven Brunetti passed away in Brooklyn, the borough of his birth, at the age of 50 on June 24, 2004 after a yearlong illness.

At a moving and well attended memorial service held at St. Francis de Sales Church in Belle Harbour, Mr. Brunetti was remembered as a mediator, a man whose presence promoted harmony and who sought to bring people together. He was also remembered as someone who prized order almost as much as he cherished his family and his many close and lasting friendships. "His office was an oasis of calm and spirituality," said



Steven Brunetti

one eulogist. "Whenever the stress of the day reached a high point, I knew I could go to Steve's office, with its dim lights and incense, and refocus."

Mr. Brunetti was remembered as a man of great sensitivity, who was deeply affected by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. To express himself on the loss of our hero firefighters and police officers, Mr. Brunetti wrote an epic length poem that admirers say spoke with characteristic eloquence for those who shared his patriotism, and his sense of loss for all the lives that were lost that day.

A public service success story, Mr. Brunetti began his career with the

City of New York as a Taxi and Limousine Commission Inspector, one of "New York's Proudest," in February of 1987. Mr. Brunetti was promoted to Lieutenant just a short year later and then again to the rank of Captain in July 1988, serving at that high rank until November 1997. Having garnered a reputation as a consummate professional, Mr. Brunetti was promoted to Director in December 1997, a capacity in which he served until his passing. Prior to his work with the TLC, Mr. Brunetti also distinguished himself in the security industry and was a noted and passionate instructor whose specialty was in steering youths away from the dangers of drug abuse.

He is survived by his wife, Jo Ann; sisters Ann, Barbara, Marilyn and Linda; brother Michael; stepchildren Anthony Theresa and Robert; grandchildren Vincent, Sammy, Isabella, Gabriella, Kristine, Tony, Nick and Tom; nieces Robin, Francine, Ken and Fran; nephew Rick; great-nieces Ashley, Alexa, Nicole; and great-nephew Rick Kelly.

2005 Service Improvements

When TLC enacted the fare adjustment this past spring, it was agreed that levels of service would also be increased in the yellow medallion taxi cabs. The goal of the Service Improvement Project is to bring that promise to fruition.

There are four components to the service improvements: credit/debit card acceptance, text messaging, a passenger information system, and electronic capture of trip sheet information.

Service Improvement Project Manager Tom Stiles states, "This is an exciting and challenging project. It will move New York City to the forefront of applying new technology to improve customer service." The

TLC issued a Request For Information (RFI) to gauge levels of interest from potential providers of this service. There were 60 responses to the RFI.

The next major event in the project is an Information Summit Meeting that will be held on October 14, 2004. This summit will bring together key technology providers and industry representatives to share information and discuss their concerns.

The rollout of the service is anticipated to begin in November of 2005.



Fall Medallion Sale

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be quite favorable when compared to the stock market and other investment opportunities". Sixty-seven interested bidders attended the morning session in Manhattan and 107 attended in the evening. In Queens, 98 people attended the morning session and 103 people were at the evening event for a total of 375 attendees.

The bid openings for the medallion sale will be held at three separate times. For the alternative fuel and accessible medallions, the opening will be at 40 Rector St. on the 5th Floor on Oct. 15, 2004. The individual medallions will be opened on Oct. 18, 2004 at St. John's University, 101 Murray St., in Manhattan. On Oct. 22, 2004, the opening for the corporate medallions will be held at St. John's University, 101 Murray St., in Manhattan. For more information on the sale, please log onto our website, www.nyc.gov. Good luck to all bidders!

NYC's Proudest Expands

The TLC welcomed more than thirty-six new inspectors into its family when they were sworn in at a ceremony held at One Centre Street on August 13th.

"This class went through a seven-week training course. They began with an orientation that provided them information on employee benefits, NYC / TLC policies, and had guest lecturers from the Department of Investigation, Conflict of Interest Board, and the Disciplinary Units," said Karen Lucas, Executive Director of Training.

New inspectors were taught TLC rules and regulations concentrating on FHV's (owners, drivers, bases) and Medallions (owners, drivers, meters), summons and notice writing, car stop procedures. They had the opportunity to go on field patrol to observe seasoned inspectors. They also received practice in the adjudications process (observing actual hearing and practicing mock trials).

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Commissioner Daus congratulated the graduates and wished them luck on their tours. "The staff of the TLC joins me in welcoming you," Commissioner Daus said.



Above: Chairman Daus, Deputy Comm. Midolo, and First Deputy Comm. Salkin conferred shields and certificates upon each of the graduates and promotees.

Driver Recognition Ceremony

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driving. Another driver pulled his taxicab over in inclement weather to assist a couple whose car had broken down. Some were honored for their work on the job, while others were recognized for their good will in the New York City community. The event was a great way to pay tribute to one of the hardest working groups in New York City. "Professional taxicab and for-hire vehicle drivers play an important role in keeping New York City moving," said Mayor Bloomberg. "Today we honor those who provide an invaluable service to this City. Taxi drivers do more than move New Yorkers, they are part of our urban environment and they distinguish our City and with their work ethic and commitment to New York." The success of the ceremony has ensured that it will become an annual event for the TLC.



Left: TLC Chairman Matthew Daus with Eli Resnick a.k.a. 'The Candyman'.



Above: From l. to r. : Honorees Michael Acerno, Pedro Heredia, Anatoli Tenchikov with his daughter, Elena Tenchikova.