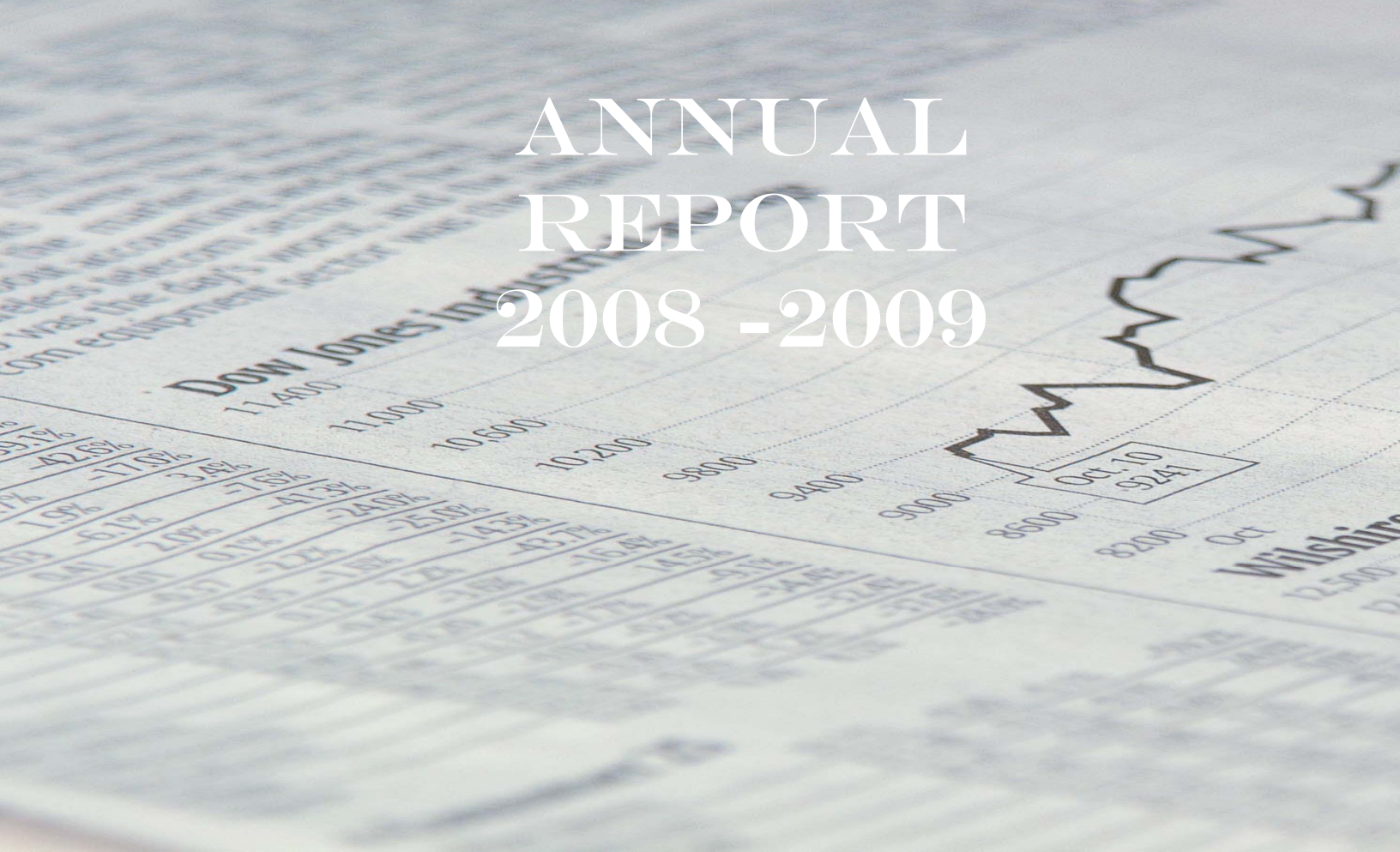




**AFRICAN AMERICAN**  
**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
WESTCHESTER & ROCKLAND COUNTIES INC.



# ANNUAL REPORT 2008 - 2009





## Mission Statement

The *African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester and Rockland Counties, Inc. (Chamber or AACCW)* was established June 28, 1996 as an independent not-for-profit agency to aid, counsel and protect the interests of African American businesses. Our mission is to preserve competitive enterprise and to maintain and strengthen the overall economy of Westchester and Rockland Counties.

### 2009 BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Ms. Robin L. Douglas, President/CEO/Founder

#### DIRECTORS:

Mr. Bruce Jackson, Esq., Microsoft

Mrs. Joan Parrott-Fonseca, Esq., Jpf & associates

Dr. Anita Underwood, Partner Design Group

Ms. Debra White, New York Power Authority

### CORPORATE ADVISORY BOARD 2009:

Mrs. Rosa Barksdale, Barksdale Healthcare Service

Mrs. Jeannine Blanco, State Farm Insurance

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Ms. Suzanne Veira, SCA

Black Enterprise Magazine

### Chamber Counsel:

Mr. Bruce Bozeman, Esq.

Mr. John S. Savage, Esq., Bozeman & Savage

Mr. Raymond Saylor, CPA, Saylor and Associates

100 Stevens Avenue, Suite 202 \* Mount Vernon, NY 10550  
(914) 699-9050 ph \* (914) 699-6279 fax  
[www.aaccnys.org](http://www.aaccnys.org)

## SEPTEMBER 2008

SEPTEMBER 6, 2008 THRU SEPTEMBER 27, 2008

### AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER AND THE MTA HOLD WORKSHOPS FOR DISADVANTAGED/MINORITY & WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES

Mount Vernon, NY - The African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester and Rockland Counties and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) calibrated to present workshops for disadvantaged, minority, or women-owned businesses. The four-day, 32-hour program has been successfully launched in other areas of the state to help business owners compete successfully for contracts with the MTA and other government agencies. Historically, 76% of participants are awarded contracts.

The "Hudson Valley PREP (Preparing for Profit)" course was offered **Saturday, September 6, 2008 thru September 27, 2008**. Among the subjects covered in the course (funded by the MTA and the Chamber) are marketing, cost estimating, accounting and navigating through a bureaucracy. The PREP course was held at the Chamber office in Mount Vernon, NY from 9:00am - 5:00pm, continental breakfast and lunch was served.

"The Metropolitan Transportation Authority joined efforts with the Chamber to assist the Hudson Valley minority and small business community to effectively compete for MTA and other government agency contracts. We believe the PREP Program is an effective mechanism to facilitate this objective," said Kenneth A. Neal, director of the MTA's Civil Rights office.

"We are excited about bringing this opportunity to local businesses," said Robin Douglas of the African American Chamber of Commerce. "There are millions of dollars worth of contracts out there subject to competitive bidding, and these workshops help people find the keys to success in winning those contracts," she said. The MTA and other government agencies purchase a variety of services ranging from computers to landscaping, and printing to uniforms.

The program's corporate and community sponsors included: The MTA and the African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester and Rockland Counties, Inc.

## NOVEMBER 2008

NOVEMBER 21, 2008

### AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER STARTS TV SHOW

White Plains, NY - The Chamber launched an informative television show, "*The Chamber Reports*," on Friday, November 21, 2008. The show is designed to inform the public about the many valuable services that the Chamber provides and will also introduce people who will talk about their professions. It can be seen on White Plains CableVision on channel 76 or Verizon Cable on channel 45 at 9:30 P.M.

The Chamber is very excited about the launching of this program, especially at this time when the economy is in a downturn. Robin L. Douglas, founder and president, feels that it is a good time to inform the public of what kinds of employment is available and how to prepare for future employment.

The first guest was Moselle Goodwin, owner of Goodwin Consultants, who discussed the benefits she has received as a Chamber member for a little over a year. In addition, she has become an avid Chamber supporter and a volunteer.

## **DECEMBER 2008**

### **DECEMBER 4, 2009**

#### **BUSINESS & COMMUNITY LEADERS HONORED AT 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AWARDS DINNER RESCHEDULED**

Peekskill, NY – The Chamber hosted its 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Dinner which was rescheduled to take place Thursday, December 4, 2009 at 6:00 pm at the Crystal Bay, located at 5 John Walsh Blvd. in Peekskill, NY with a cocktail reception followed by the awards and dinner at 7:00 pm. Local political and business leaders in six categories were honored for their contributions to the African American small business community.

“We are thrilled to honor such exemplary community and business leaders in Westchester and Rockland County who continue to serve as role models not only in the minority community but the business community as a whole” said Robin L. Douglas, President of the Chamber.

The 2008 dinner honorees included: Mr. Michael H. Jones-Bey, Executive Director NYS Minority & Women’s Business Development M/WBE Advocate of the Year; Mr. Christopher Knox, Director, Supplier Diversity PepsiCo, Inc., Corporate Partner of the Year; Hon. William J. Ryan, Chair of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, Westchester Political Leader of the Year; Hon. Patricia Caldwell, Chairwoman of the Spring Valley Democratic Committee, Rockland Political Leader of the Year; Mr. Abiodun Coker, President/CEO Coker Electrics, Inc, Westchester Business Leader of the Year; Mr. Timothy D. Scott, President/CEO, Tee’s Fish Chips-N-More LLC, Rockland Business Leader of the Year.

The 2008 dinner was sponsored by: PepsiCo, Inc, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc., Enterprise rent-a-car, Con Edison, New York Power Authority and supporter, Greyston Baker.

## **JANUARY 2009**

### **JANUARY 2009**

#### **AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OFFERS STIMULOUS PACKAGE 2 for 1 MEMBERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN ADVOCACY**

Mount Vernon, NY - The Chamber offered a two at the price of one membership to individuals and small businesses. We invited colleagues of the same classification (small business and a small business or an individual and an individual), to join.

The Chamber extended this offer with the two-fold purpose of helping to elevate the financial devastation of keeping a small business afloat in this failing economy and to increase the Chamber's membership base, thereby strengthening its ability to help advance the success of the membership.

"Realizing that there is great strength in numbers, it is the Chamber's daily pursuit to be a stronger advocate for our membership," said Chamber President, Robin L. Douglas. "We empathize with the small business owner and invite them to come aboard at the 2 for 1 charge to show that we understand."

Local individuals and small business were encouraged to take advantage of this one-time offer for 2 at the price of 1 membership by Friday, January 23, 2009. The membership is good for one full year.

## **FEBRUARY 2009**

**FEBRUARY 14, 2009**

### **CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND BUSINESS ASSOCIATION SALUTE MEMBERS OF THE NYS BLACK AND PUERTO RICAN LEGISLATIVE CAUCUS**

Albany, NY - The Caribbean American Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Inc. & the African American Chamber of Commerce Of Westchester and Rockland Counties, Inc. along with Community Partners: 100 Black Men, Inc., the Jamaica Business Resource Center, the NYS Chapter of the National Assoc. of Minority Contractors, the Association of Minority Enterprises of NY, Inc. and the Harlem Business Alliance invited weekend attendees to our 10<sup>th</sup> annual business networking reception and salute to the members of the NYS Black and Puerto Rican Legislative Caucus, for their tireless pursuit of fairness for minority business persons and minority business development.

The event took place at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albany, NY Saturday, February 14, 2009 from 5:00pm until 7:00pm. The reception was sponsored by the NYC School Construction Authority and partnering organizations.

**FEBRUARY 14, 2009**

### **JOIN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND SUPPORT THE STROKE OF HOPE FOUNDATION**

Peekskill, NY - New Member offer. Small Business owners and Individuals who joined the Chamber before February 12, 2009 were invited to attend the Stroke of Hope Foundation's Valentines Day concert and reception FREE. The concert took place Saturday, February 14, 2009 at the Paramount Center for the Arts, 1000 Brown Street, Peekskill, NY; at 8:00pm; featuring Kirk Whalum and friends. The concert was followed by a reception at Crystal Bay on the Hudson located at 5 John Walsh Blvd., Peekskill, NY at 10:00pm.

"Realizing that there is great strength in numbers, it is the Chamber's daily pursuit to be a stronger advocate for our membership," said Chamber President, Robin L.

Douglas.

## MARCH 2009

**MARCH 26, 2009**

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE COUNTIES, INC. 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS EXCHANGE**

Mount Vernon, NY - The Chamber invited the small business community to attend its 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Business-to-Business Exchange (B2B) on Thursday, March 26, 2009 at the Yonkers Public Library at One Larkin Center, Yonkers, NY from 10:00am until 2:00pm.

A goal of the Chamber's Supplier Diversity Program is to encourage an effective collaboration between qualified minority and women owned suppliers and large buying organizations. The B2B is an exciting and effective program which has produced significant contacts and contracts.

For 10 years the Chamber's B2B has provided an excellent environment for suppliers to gather and exchange information and procurement opportunities with each other.

Participating vendors included purchasing representatives from trade associations, state agencies and authorities and corporate entities.

The B2B has proven to be a powerful networking event to attend. This year there was no fee associated with the event.

Participating companies included: NYPA, Con Edison, NY/NJ Supplier Development Council, DASNY, SCA, ESDC, Enterprise Rent- A- Car, Thruway Authority, NYS Comptrollers Office and the County of Westchester to name a few.

## APRIL 2009

**APRIL 9, 2009**

### **LEGISLATOR WILLIAMS TO HOST FORUM ON THE IMPACT OF THE NYS EXCEL BOND AND THE FEDERAL STIMULUS ON MWBE'S**

Mount Vernon, NY - In this challenging economic climate, it is important that we share information on opportunities that could reduce unemployment and improve the lives of residents of our city. For this reason, County Legislator Lyndon D. Williams, Esq. hosted a public forum to discuss the potential impact of the New York State EXCEL Bond funding for repairs and improvements to Mount Vernon Schools and the Federal Stimulus Funding Programs on minority and women owned businesses in our community. Both of these programs are designed to create jobs in the construction industry and could create great opportunities local businesses and workers.

Legislator Williams assembled a group of panelists who provided insight and suggestions on prospective opportunities.

The panelists included representatives from:

- New York State Empire Development Corporation
- The African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester & Rockland
- The Westchester County Office of African American Affairs
- Mount Vernon City School District Board of Trustees
- United Association of Contractors and Developers
- Rapid Start Training Program
- Westchester-Putnam Central Labor Body
- IBEW Local # 3
- Local Businesses

The Forum took place Thursday, April 9, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the Mount Vernon City Council Chambers, City Hall, Mount Vernon, New York.

**APRIL 23, 2009**

**ATTORNEY GENERAL ANDREW M. CUOMO'S OFFICE PRESENTS PROJECT SUNLIGHT**

Yonkers, NY - Attorney General Andrew M. Cuomo Invited member of the community to attend "Project Sunlight Presentation" meeting.

Project Sunlight Presentation a state government openness and transparency initiative was held Wednesday, April 29, 2009 at the Yonkers Public Library at 1 Larkin Center, Yonkers, NY at 1:00 P.M.

The free, open to the public, meeting was designed for attendees to come hear a discussion on how the Attorney General's Office is restoring transparency and accountability to government.

The 2009 meeting was Co-sponsored by the African American Chamber of Commerce of Westchester and Rockland Counties. Refreshments were served.

**MAY 2009**

**MAY 15 AND 16, 2009**

**WESTCHESTER ROCKLAND AFRICAN AMERICAN BOOK FESTIVAL  
INAUGURAL EVENT IN MOUNT VERNON  
(PRESS RELEASE)**

Mount Vernon, NY - Through a joint effort of the Chamber and the QBR/The Black Book Review, sponsor of the Harlem Book Fair, the City of Mount Vernon, NY was host to the West/Rock Book Fair, May 15 and 16, 2009 at City Hall Plaza, One Roosevelt Square.

Max Rodriguez, publisher and creative founder of the Harlem Book Fair has partnered with Robin L. Douglas, founder and Executive Director of the Chamber, to bring writers, publishers and other exhibitors together to celebrate their crafts

and to share them with the community. The Book Fair is designed to feature the works of the African American, Caribbean and the African Diaspora experience. The honorary co-chairs for the West/Rock Book Fair were Mrs. Evelyn Young, a retired school teacher and the mother of Clinton I. Young, Jr., Mayor of Mount Vernon, Anne Young-Berkeley, his sister, who is a special reading teacher at Mandela High School and Dawna Michele Fields, National Program Manager for Colgate's Bright Smiles, Bright Futures. Musical entertainment was provided by Reggie Woods *Workin' Music*. Honoree at the VIP Reception included Dr. Bettye Perkins, Executive Director of Today's Students, Tomorrows Teachers and Mrs. Opal Brown Lindsay, Director of the Mount Vernon Public Library.

One of the most important events of the Harlem Book Fair is the HBF Wheatley Award, named for Phyllis Wheatley who was born a slave and who grew up to become a famous poet. This year's award will honor the poets, the people who have long told their story in poetic form, such as Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni and The Last Poets. Among the awardees this year are The Last Poets who, along with Gil Scott-Heron, are credited as being major influences on the development of hip hop and performance poetry and John Franklin Hope, author and historian, who will be honored posthumously.

In honoring these poets the HBF seeks to reinvent a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Black Culture, in honor of Barack Obama and the Black community. It is expected that the West/Rock Book Fair will follow the same theme. The West/Rock Book Fair will make the community aware of local writers. It will impress upon the children that this is something they can do. Young adults can learn about the various employment opportunities in the world of publishing and writing. The Book Fair masks a lot of education in an entertaining way. For detailed information please visit the Chamber's website [www.aaccnys.org](http://www.aaccnys.org).

Some of the benefits of a Book Fair in the community are that books are available at very discounted prices, people become aware of and can interact with the writers of the community, and it becomes a hands-on learning experience, especially for young people. There will be workshops for young people to explore many of the facets of writing and publishing. The Book Fair will feature readings by authors of their works and panel discussions by authors, as well as entertainment.

Writing is done in a solitary environment, so a book fair is an opportunity for authors to meet and interact with one another and provide "edutainment" for their readers. Mr. Rodriguez states that aside from the fun, the educational value, the creative community empowerment, there is an economic value to the local community.

A *New York Times* Arts and Cultural editor noted that of all the areas of publishing, the African American publishing is the most profitable. Still, it is expected that the economic condition of the country may have some effect on the Book Fair. There may be fewer exhibitors due to the cost of traveling and staying in a host city.

The Harlem Book Fair, in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, started on West 125<sup>th</sup> St. at the State Office Bldg. with 43 exhibitors and has grown to need a 3-block area near the



Schomburg Library. There were no African American Book Fairs in the United States prior to the Harlem Book Fair. There are now Book Fairs hosted by a number of cities across the country, such as Boston, Los Angeles, Long Island and other cities. It is hoped that these book fairs reflect the culture of the host city.

The Harlem Book Fair is managed by a very small paid staff and about one hundred and fifty volunteers. The book fairs are primarily sponsored by the large traditional publishers such as Simon & Shuster, Random House, etc. There are also corporate sponsors such as Starbucks, Commerce/TD Bank, who want to brand into the African American reader.

Although Mr. Rodriguez is a published author, he says he has many more books in him and hopes someday to get them down on paper and published. His interest in the writings of Black authors was raised in college.

Mr. Rodriguez says that all of us should explore the writing experience, even if it is just to tell our family story which is important to pass on. One of the key functions of a Book Fair is to reach teens, to create a bridge to inform them, to create a viable and accessible community for the future. He has been successful in introducing a course in teen writing and publishing throughout the Dallas Public Library system and hopes to be able to do this for the Westchester/Rockland communities.

## JUNE 2009

**JUNE 18 THROUGH JUNE 21, 2009**

### **AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER HOST THE 10<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL OFFICIAL JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION**

Westchester County, NY - The Annual Juneteenth Celebration for Westchester County, presented by The Chamber, took place June 18 through June 21, 2009. The theme is From Sharecroppers to Share Holders (a quote by Dorothy Pittman-Hughes). The first event was a Business to Business Reception honoring The Ten Most Influential Blacks at Doubletree Hotel in Tarrytown, NY on Thursday, June 18th beginning at 6:00pm. New 12 correspondent Frank Holland served as Master of Ceremony and Randel Tucker, Senior Project Manager of Diversity for Starwoods Hotels and Resorts brought greeting on behalf of the participating sponsors.

2009 "10 INFLUENTIAL BLACKS" honorees include: Mrs. Rosa Barksdale, CEO, Barksdale Health Care; Ms. Helen Blackwood, Corporation Council, City of Mount Vernon; Mr. Melvin Burruss, President, African American Men of Westchester, Mr. Anthony Epps, Sr. Partner, Epps Financial Group; Rev. Dr. Adolphus C. Lacey, Pastor, Mount Olivet Baptist Church; Ms. Paula Redd Zeman, Commissioner, Westchester County Human Resources; Mr. Julius Walls, CEO, Greyston Bakery; Mr. Paul T. Williams, Executive Director, NYS Dormitory Authority; Mr. Keith Wyche, President, US Operation for Pitney Bows Management Services; Hon. Clinton I. Young, Jr., Mayor, City of Mount Vernon.

During the reception there was a silent auction and the members of the Association of Black Alcohol Beverage Companies were hand with samples.

On Friday, June 20th there was be a free Jazz with the stars "Salute to Black Music Month" hosted by City of Mount Vernon at 1 Roosevelt Square in Mount Vernon NY at 6:00pm. The free open air Jazz entertainment was provided by Woody Woods Workin Music.com's Jazz ensemble. Robin Bell-Stevens, President/CEO of infamous Jazzmobile and Dorothy Johnson, board member of PJSjazz Society were among those saluted at the concert.

The crowning event of the Celebration will be the Annual Celebrity Salute to the Players of the Negro Baseball League Games, featuring teams made up of local celebrities and anyone else who wants to come out and have a good time playing ball. This event will take place on the rain day in August at Brush Park in Mount Vernon at 5:00pm the pre game show will begin at 4:30pm. Everyone is invited to sign on as players/sponsors/spectators. We encourage all members of little league team to sport their colors by wearing their little league uniform.

The weekend culminated with a worship service at Trinity Church, 335 South Fourth Avenue in Mount Vernon where Rev. Dr. Joel Nafuma is the pastor.

The Juneteenth Celebration commemorates the date – June 19, 1865 – when the slaves in Galveston, TX first received the word of the Emancipation Proclamation abolishing slavery which was originally issued by Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863. Today, Juneteenth is a celebration of freedom which emphasizes education and achievement. Resolutions have been unanimously passed in the United States House of Representative and in the Senate encouraging the observance of Juneteenth with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs across the country, and asking that President Bush issue a Juneteenth Independence Day Proclamation.

Other major sponsors included: Starwoods Hotels and Resorts, NYS Dormitory Authority, the City of Mount Vernon, Benchmark Title Agency, LLC and A'vatar Foundation, newly created to promote the arts in Westchester County.

**June 18, 2009**  
**NEW YORK POWER AUTHORITY**  
**19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PURCHASING EXCHANGE**

White Plains, NY - On Thursday, June 18, 2009 NEW YORK POWER AUTHORITY host its 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Purchasing Exchange at 123 Main Street – Jaguar Center, White Plains, NY 10601 from 12:00 Noon – 4:00 p.m.

A goal of the Authority's Supplier Diversity Program is to encourage an effective collaboration between qualified minority and women owned suppliers and large buying organizations. The Purchasing Exchange is an exciting and effective mean which has produced significant contacts and contracts.

For 19 years the Purchasing Exchange has provided an excellent environment for suppliers to gather and exchange information and procurement opportunities with each other and pursue contract opportunities with purchasing representatives from NYPA, other utilities, Trade Associations, State Agencies and Authorities, and from corporate entities. Participants include such notables as the Chamber, the Council, Hertz, MTA, Colgate Palmolive, JP County of Westchester, KeySpan, Con Edison, LIPA, HHC, School Construction Authority, Hudson River, PEPSI, NJ Transit, DOT, Dormitory and Port Authorities. We expect them and many, many more!

The exchange has proven to be a powerful networking event and all are encouraged to attend. There is no fee associated with this event.

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