

Employees Take Center Stage at ‘State of the Port Authority’

“We’re just ordinary people at the Port Authority, but we do extraordinary things. And we’ve been doing it for 103 years,” said Chairman **Kevin O’Toole**. “Every day is an adventure, a challenge, and a joy, because of the people. Great things are being done every day, because of people like you. I thank you.”

That was the theme the morning of Tuesday, April 30, during the 2024 State of the Port Authority Employee Town Hall, where hundreds of employees from the PA family spanning across departments and functions came together in person and online to celebrate collective achievements and lay the groundwork for future success. The program was held at the National Museum of the American Indian, a short walk away from 4 WTC.



Clockwise from top left: Tony Vero and Sarah McKeon. Hersh Parekh and Kristen Figaro. Annesa Lau and Chris Wolff. Rick Cotton, Kevin O’Toole, and Connie Lee.

Photos: Conrad Barbery

[continued on page 2 >](#)

Agency Kids Get Glimpse of a Day at the PA

On Thursday, April 25, facilities and departments throughout the agency took part in *Take Our Children to Work Day*, giving these promising young PA kids a chance to see all the work that the Port Authority does to keep the region moving.

Departments came up with all sorts of fun and engaging activities to show these PA children all about what we do every day. From scavenger hunts, arts and crafts, puzzles, meet and greets with PAPD officers and K-9s, live demonstrations, and guided tours, there was plenty of fun and interactive learning to be had by all.

[continued on page 2 >](#)



QUICK LINKS

- [CALENDAR](#) >
- [IN MEMORIAM](#) >
- [STAFF NEWS](#) >

IN THIS EDITION

- [Airport Community Watch Awards Presented](#)
- [Vote for the PA’s Airports in the Condé Nast Traveler Awards!](#)
- [Congrats to Bowling League Doubles Champs](#)

Brazilian Railroad Execs Tour PATH, View New Tech Projects

A delegation of Brazilian rail executives seeking to modernize their technology was in the market for a U.S. transit agency that could provide a high level of expertise in pursuit of their mission. Their travels brought them to PATH.

For the 10-member delegation, comprising seven different regional and national associations in Brazil, it was an opportunity to learn about digital and service optimization as they expand their own commuter rail systems. The visit was part of a trade mission sponsored by the U.S. Trade and Development Agency to introduce American railroad operators to their peers in other countries.

The participants were treated to a tour by PATH Director **Clairelle DeGraffe**, Senior Reliability Engineer **Marco Gonzalez**, and other PATH managers. Under Gonzalez’s

[continued on page 2 >](#)



CALENDAR

PA-AAA: AAPI Heritage Month Celebration

Tuesday, May 7, 8:30 to 11 a.m., The Studio at 7 WTC, 10th floor. The Port Authority Asian American Association (PA-AAA) will host its annual Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebration, with the theme Diverse Cultures and Shared Experiences – Elevating the Diversity of Asian Cultures. For information and to register, complete [this form](#) by May 3.

NBE Police Appreciation Week: Behind the Badge

Tuesday, May 14 from noon to 01:30 p.m., Port Authority Tech Center, located at 241 Erie Street, Jersey City, NJ. Join The Network of Black Employees (NBE) in-person and virtually for a special 3 Cs With the Chiefs featuring Deputy Chief Security Officer **Danielle Outlaw**, Chief **Gloria Frank**, and Chief **Michael Brown**, who will speak on their career journeys in law enforcement. Gain insight into the daily lives, challenges, and achievements of PAPD officers beyond their uniforms. All NBE members will receive a calendar invitation. For non-members to RSVP, email NBE@panynj.gov.

Employees Take Center Stage

[continued from page 1 >](#)

“The state of the Port Authority is strong,” said Executive Director **Rick Cotton**. “You are hitting it out of the park.”

Emcee **Connie Lee** of Human Resources then handed over the podium to colleagues representing agency departments and programs: **Sarah McKeon** and **Tony Vero** for Aviation; **Hersh Parekh** and **Kristen Figaro** from Government and Community Relations; **Annesa Lau** from the Office of the Chief Operating Officer and **Chris Wolff** and **Becca Rivera** from Human Resources.

As part of the program’s employee recognition theme, a special shout out was given to all of the recipients of the PA Applause award from

Brazilian Railroad Execs Tour PATH, View Projects

[continued from page 1 >](#)

direction, numerous technology innovations have been developed and brought online over the past two years.

DeGraffe welcomed the entourage and offered an overview of PATH’s own mission before embarking on a tour of the PATH WTC station and a visit to the fare collection lab at Journal Square operated by program managers for the Total Access PATH Payment, or TAPP, which is rolling out across the PATH system.

Two other cutting-edge projects using artificial intelligence to improve maintenance, operations, safety, and security were on display. PATH presented real-time remote railcar diagnostics (Witronix) capabilities, which incorporate AI for customer experience, safety, and training. Also shared was a presentation of track intrusion detection techniques (BriefCam), driven by AI.

Hosting international transportation delegations is nothing new for PATH leadership. In 2022, PATH played host to a group of transportation executives from Thailand to learn about the demands of a busy regional commuter rail line and how the PATH team responds to its daily challenges.

“We feel a connection to our national and global rail partners,” DeGraffe said. “If there is knowledge we can share with them about the advances we’re making in the maintenance and operation of our system, we’re thrilled to have the opportunity to do so.”

Overall, the Brazilian delegation expressed appreciation for the visit and for how they can apply these innovations to successful system upgrades back home.

Agency Kids Get Glimpse

[continued from page 1 >](#)



For more photos, see the [PA News website](#).

over the past year. In addition, agency leadership also reflected on recent accolades and successes, including at our region’s airports, seaports, and transportation infrastructure. Further, there was also a focus on the host of programs and growth opportunities available to employees, including the all-new On-the-Spot Reward program.

It was a fitting celebration since April 30 is also the Port Authority’s birthday,

as it was on that date in 1921 when the Compact was signed in the Great Hall of the New York State Chamber of Commerce Building on Liberty Street, which formed the bistate agency.

If you were unable to attend or would like to view it again, a recording of the Town Hall is available on the [PA YouTube channel](#).

Airport Community Watch Awards Presented

On April 23, Chief Security Officer **Gregory Ehrie**, Security Operations Department Director **Michael Harpster** and Assistant Director of Aviation Security **Margaret Taylor-Finucane** presented Airport Community Watch Awards to three airport employees whose actions led to the quick apprehension of an unauthorized individual entering a restricted area at a Port Authority airport.



Pictured (left to right) JFK Airport Security Manager Steven Brocchini, Assistant Director of Aviation Security Margaret Taylor-Finucane, Port Authority Police Deputy Inspector Nicholas Yum, JFK Deputy General Manager John Arancio, DHL employee Raul Pascal (award recipient) CSO Ehrie, Director Harpster, Airport Security Agent Anthony Jackson (award recipient), Joshua Ruiz Intercon Security, Airport Security Agent Idvil Vilpigue (award recipient), Jariel Felton Intercon Security Project Manager, and Intercon VP Geoff Noble.

IN MEMORIAM

Shawn P. Gibbons

His friends and colleagues at the Port Authority and PATH were saddened to learn of the passing of **Shawn P. Gibbons**, a dedicated 25-year veteran of PATH/Rail Transit known to lighten the mood with his sense of humor and smile.



Shawn joined the agency on August 31, 1998, as a Passenger Information Agent in the PATH Transportation Division, and shortly thereafter was promoted to the position of Train Conductor. In April 2002, Shawn received a promotion to Engineer, a position he held for the remainder of his time with the agency.

Shawn's co-workers will miss a wonderful colleague and great friend who took pride in his kids' accomplishments.

Shawn is survived by his wife, Michele, and two children, Sean and Kaylyn.

We ask that you please keep Shawn and his family, friends, and colleagues in your thoughts and hearts during this difficult time.

STAFF NEWS

Kristen Figaro

Kristen Figaro has been named Director of Government & Community Relations-New Jersey (GOCOR-NJ), effective immediately.

Kristen has served in this role in an interim capacity since December 2023, overseeing the agency's legislative and community affairs programs for the state of New Jersey as well as leading GOCOR-NJ staff. She first joined GOCOR-NJ in 2019, holding progressively more responsible roles. Prior to being named interim Director, Kristen served as General Manager for GOCOR-NJ, providing strategic guidance related to government, community, political, and public issues to support the advancement of the agency's mission.

She began her career journey with the Port Authority in 2007 as a consultant in the Project Management Office (PMO). Over the next seven years, she supported several departments through her work, including Tunnels, Bridges & Terminals, Security Project Management, PATH, and World Trade Center Construction, and in 2014, she became an agency employee with the PMO. Following that, Kristen spent several years in the Port Department. Kristen is a graduate of the University of Delaware and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science & International Relations.



Vote for the PA's Airports in the Condé Nast Traveler Awards!

The buzz around the transformation of the agency's airports continues — and now John F. Kennedy International Airport, LaGuardia Airport, and Newark Liberty International Airport are nominees in the Airport category for the 2024 [Condé Nast Traveler Readers Choice Awards](#).

[Vote now](#) through June 30, 2024 to show your support. Results will be featured in the November 2024 issue and on the *Condé Nast Traveler* website. All votes — from subscribers and non-subscribers alike — are welcome and counted. And feel free to share the survey with family and friends — let's show off the world-class transformation of our region's airports fueled by PA employees' dedication and expertise.



Congrats to Bowling League Doubles Champs

The PA Bowling League congratulates this year's First Place Doubles Champions **Larry Hicks** and **Hassan Walker!**

For any questions about the PA Bowling League, contact [Kathleen O'Connor](#).

