

## Organizational Developments

The first and most significant development is that Zalenda Cyrille will no longer have day-to-day involvement and responsibilities with IT'S TIME. Zalenda and I first had the idea that eventually became IT'S TIME nearly 5 years ago. What started as a casual conversation developed into serious discussions outlining our business plan, to finally seeing our concept to fruition. Through it all, her commitment to our students and mission has been invaluable. Since officially opening our doors in January 2009, Zalenda, in addition to personal and corporate responsibilities, has on average devoted up to 20 hours per week to IT'S TIME. Considering her responsibilities as a Deputy Manager in the Defense Industry, the time and effort she dedicated to IT'S TIME is all the more impressive. Understandably, due to her corporate obligations and other personal commitments, she has decided to limit her role in the organization. She will continue to serve on the executive board, but will no longer be involved in IT'S TIME's daily operations, effective July 1, 2011. How do we plan to replace someone who has brought so much to our organization? It would have been futile to try to find a single person to fill the void - so we found three.

We are fortunate to welcome new staff members Rebecca Farnum and Monique Akers. They will be taking over as the Public Speaking instructors for the 2011-2012 school year.

Rebecca is a middle school teacher at Sidwell Friends School – Malia and Sasha Obama's current school. Rebecca not only has classroom experience at one of our area's best institutions, but she also has years of experience teaching public speaking to young students. Monique, a successful business and social entrepreneur, was our first ever Power Lunch guest and set the bar extremely high for future participants. She is an excellent communicator and kept our students so engaged during her talk, that she was at the top of our list for new staff. The third member of the trio is a familiar name – Phelisha Midy.

As an intern for the past two semesters, she has assisted us with managing the logistics of every part of our programming. Moving forward, Phelisha will take a more significant role. Phelisha has matured a great deal during her time with us. Since joining IT'S TIME as a college freshman at Howard University and assisting us with managing the logistics of every part of our programming, Phelisha has shown the talent, dedication and expertise to discharge the duties expected of her. Featured in the July 2011 issue of *Ebony* and on PBS for the relief work she recently coordinated in Haiti, Phelisha is a great example for our young people, and we are extremely proud of her! You can read more about Rebecca, Monique and Phelisha on our website.

## Letter from the President, Keith Beverly

It has been more than 6 months since the last issue of *The Dial*. Our extended editorial absence was not due to a lack of activity. On the contrary, we have been extremely busy soliciting feedback from stakeholders, refining our model, honing how we frame our value proposition and addressing capacity issues. The work has not been easy, but it was necessary. We have been operating long enough to know what has worked and what has not. As we move forward, we intend to direct more resources to the former and improve or discard the latter. We are excited about the adjustments we have made and what is to come.

*Keith Beverly*  
President,  
IT'S TIME



## Letter from Zalenda Cyrille

To volunteers, donors and parents, I would like to advise you of my pending resignation from IT'S TIME and from my positions as Financial Director and Director of Operations, effective July 1, 2011. It is with profound gratitude and appreciation that I thank you for the ongoing support and encouragement you have shown the organization. With your help, the venue IT'S TIME provides for middle school students to embrace scholarship, strive for excellence and develop a proactive community leadership mindset will continue. The public speaking, financial literacy and interactive lunchtime programs provide, without question, a valuable adjunct to the DC school system. The challenges in providing urban youth with quality education can be daunting and it is with that in mind that I am so very proud of IT'S TIME's contribution to the community.



My association with IT'S TIME was most rewarding. There are so many memories I will cherish: meeting Miss Black USA DC; seeing our students compete in two speaking competitions; watching the young people develop corporations; hearing the creativity expressed through storytelling; and meeting the Honorable Eleanor Holmes-Norton. I will always treasure working toward its vision and the realization of its mission. Because of increasing time constraints caused by other commitments, I will not be able to perform my organizational duties adequately at this time. Armed with the knowledge that IT'S TIME is operationally and financially viable, I decided this would be the optimal time for my departure. I am confident in Keith Beverly's leadership of IT'S TIME as we enter into our growth phase. Once again I would like to thank everyone. Your commitment has been, and will continue to be, the driving force behind this dynamic organization. It has been an honor and pleasure to have played a role in its formation and its operation for the last 5 years.

## Refining our Model

One important change we have made to our model is deciding to have two instructors teaching per semester. Each instructor will lead five sessions per semester for a total of ten during a school year. I will continue to lead half of the financial literacy sessions and will be joined by newcomer, Winnie Yeung. Winnie graduated cum laude from Harvard University in 2008 and currently works as a management consultant for Dalberg.

Also, after speaking with our most engaged parents, we recognized that their greatest concern in middle school is ensuring their child is accept-

ed to a great high school. We heeded their words when making the following changes to our programming model:

- Power Lunch speakers will be split evenly between representatives of the best high schools in the DC area and other working professionals.
- During the first semester of 8th grade, we will provide interview preparation and essay workshops.
- We will subsidize the PSAT for certain students with outstanding attendance and participation.

## Marketing Efforts

If you have not visited our website recently, please do so. We worked with 1226 Studios, a professional design firm, to give our site a complete overhaul. We expect the new site will impress prospective parents/students and move them to contact us.

For regular visitors, you will find the new site easier to navigate and filled with more information about the activities that our young people are participating in on their way to becoming better students. Along with the new site, we also redesigned our newsletter layout and revamped our

brochure. We will be delivering them to schools, libraries, churches and community centers in the area.

In the midst of change, we remain grounded by our singular objective – to make a powerful impact on the next generation. There is much work to do as we enter the height of our recruitment season. We are confident with the strategic direction we have set and the new team in place. As always, your support is appreciated, and we will continue to keep you abreast of our achievements.

# Recent Field Trips

On March 26th, IT'S TIME students visited the National Museum of American History. The first stop on our visit was the Spark!Lab, which provided a hands-on opportunity to discover more about the process of invention and to learn more about the history of inventions. At a station in the Spark!Lab, students were asked to sort fruit juice and soda beverages based on the amount of sugar in the particular drink. They were very accurate in their predictions and surprised to see the amount of actual sugar in each drink.

After the visit to the Spark!Lab, students explored several exhibits throughout the museum. They learned more about the American Presidents and watched a short documentary describing life inside the White House. They also visited the exhibit on the First Ladies and were thrilled to take pictures beside First Lady Michelle

Obama's inaugural gown. Students got a taste of the history of pop culture as they photographed Michael Jackson's famous fedora and stood next to the Muppets. The final stop at the museum was the African-American history exhibit. The incredible artwork and insightful documentaries made the history come to life. The diverse exhibits provided an up close view of history.

## ***From Tennessee to DC: Our Students Learn How our Nation Works***

On April 18, IT'S TIME organized a field trip to congress. Students and their parents had the pleasure of meeting Washington, DC representative Eleanor Holmes Norton (D). They were also given a tour of the Capitol by the staff of Congressman Steve Cohen (TN). Being afforded the opportunity to visit their offices was very exciting. Congresswoman Norton told the students, among other things, how much she enjoys her job because of the many opportunities she is given to help people, and how important it was for them to continue to pursue their academic studies. She also shared personal stories with the students about



*Ja'Nay McCray at the African-American history exhibit.*

her grandfather, one of the first black firefighters in DC, whose picture hung on her office wall. It was truly an honor to spend some time with this iconic figure within our community.

Congressman Cohen's staff explained the inner workings of Capitol Hill, Congress' structure and the requirements necessary for someone to serve. Most interesting to some of our students was the information they received about what it takes to become a Congressional page. The staff was very responsive to the myriad of questions our young students and their parents posed, and shared stories about their own career paths. Congressman Cohen's staff also talked about the need for scholastic excellence, developing a good work ethic, being active in the community, being determined, and forging ahead with confidence and vision in the face of challenges. This was certainly a memorable trip and one that hopefully will have a lasting impact.



*IT'S TIME Students: Nashae, Makayla, Ja'Nay, Victoria, Sarah and Na'Daija and Parent Chaperone: Sumayya Lane*