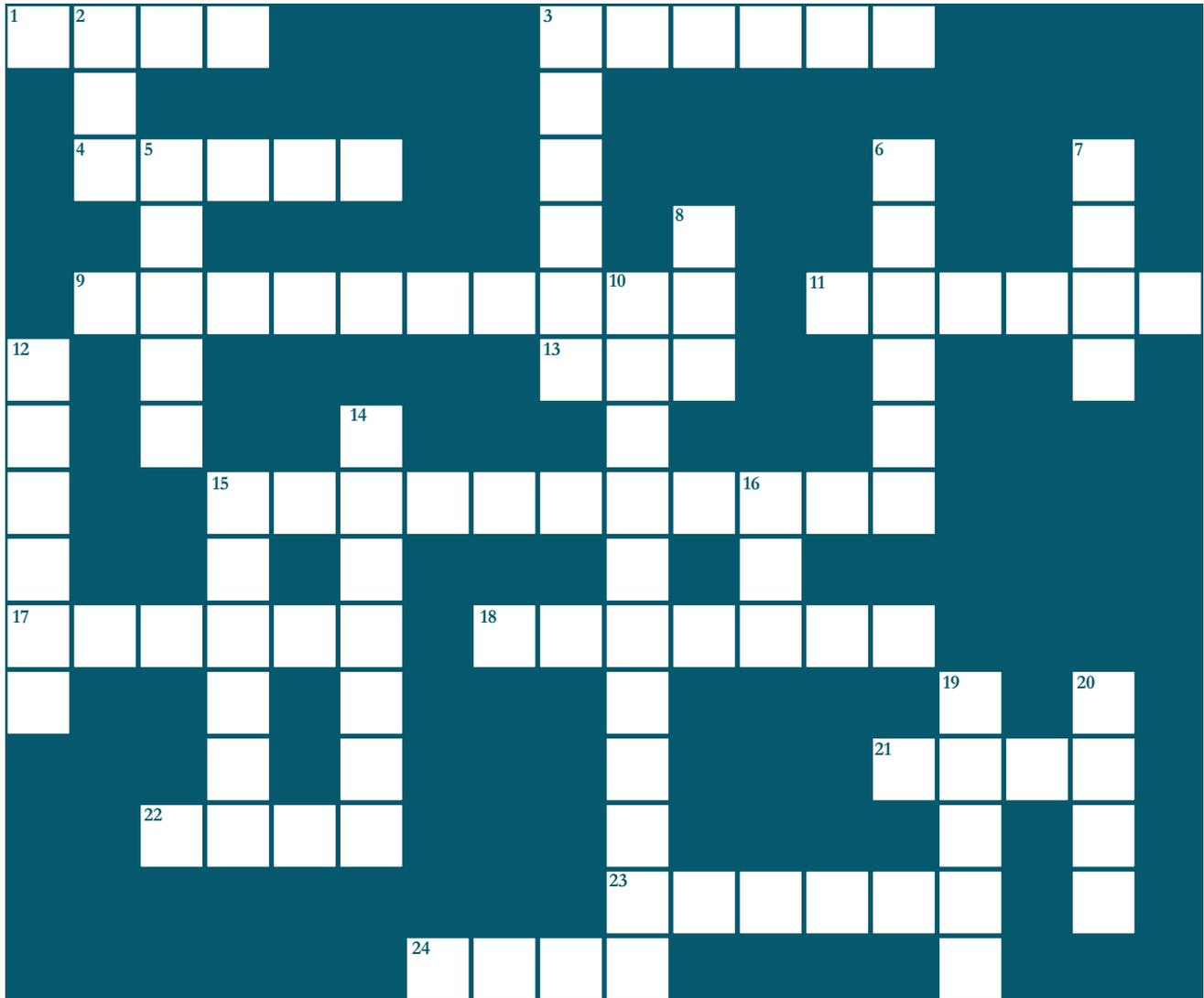


URBAN FELLOWS NEWSLETTER

Crossword Puzzle



ACROSS

- 1 Kathleen's Placement
- 3 Who Gwen wants to meet in NYC
- 4 Lydia's pop culture expertise
- 9 One of Swetha's big projects
- 11 Kadeem's favorite weekend activity
- 13 Pronouns of most cohort members
- 15 Can usually find them eating dumplings
- 17 Probably won't wake Sofiya up
- 18 Rachel's home town
- 21 Who to call in an emergency
- 22 Group chat's most active participant
- 23 South Brooklyn born & raised
- 24 Two fellows were placed here

DOWN

- 2 May be in the next FDNY calendar
- 3 Belen's last name
- 5 Fellow who is moving to Melbourne
- 6 HPD's Fellow
- 7 Christa's Placement
- 8 No one is placed here but they educate our youth
- 10 Cristina's home state
- 12 Will help you get a deal on your lunch
- 14 Katie's favorite sport
- 15 NUMTOT Ambassador
- 16 Our fearless leader
- 19 Irish Dance is her passion
- 20 Amarachi's nickname

Answers on p.g. 6

Urban Fellows Memories



MARTHA ISAACS

“I loved going to the Newtown Creek Wastewater Treatment Facility with the whole cohort at the beginning of the fellowship, singing karaoke for Kathleen’s birthday, going to a lecture at the Center for Architecture with Rachel, watching the Nets with Cristina and Sam, attending an Urban Fellow group interview with Lexi, learning a stew recipe from Mimi, meeting Gwen’s mom, appreciating Kacey Musgraves with Lydia and Haley, visiting the Design Trust for Public Space with Erika, doing the Hope Count with Sofiya, having lunches with Mary in a privately owned public space on Wall Street, singing in the streets of DC with Aarati, eating my first latke made by Jake, getting lost in the Oculus with Swetha, hearing about Kadeem’s philosophical views after book club, visiting the Rubin with Gavi, eating cheez doodles with Nicole, attending the Amazon policy session at SEGL with Katie, sharing cashews during the Mental Health First Aid Training with Belen, learning about Astoria from Morgan, and hugging Christa because she is so nice to hug!”



CRISTINA DAN

“I had such an amazing time traveling and laughing and learning in D.C. with our cohort! Loved the seminars, the happy hours, the memes, and the mems - there’s no group with whom I’d rather get Gatorade thrown on me during the NYC Marathon!”



MARY RUSSO

“I really loved all of the urban-planning related elements of the fellowship. With no prior background in planning myself, it was great to get such a deep background from seminars and the work of my fellow fellows! I feel that my understanding of the many-layered nature of City work has been deepened by exposure to the more technical (but always political) aspects of City planning.”



LYDIA GHUMAN

“One of my favorite moments of the fellowship is when all of the fellows volunteered for the first time together at a community farm in Red Hook. It was great to get involved in the community outside of our jobs and was wonderful to do so while bonding through funny stories and contemplative conversations with all of the fellows as we sifted through wood chips and shoveled mulch. I learned a lot about an aspect of environmental justice in Brooklyn that day, but also so much about my fellow fellows.”



MORGAN GERAGHTY

“I loved learning what it was like to work full time in a city government office! I also really enjoyed our time together in DC learning and hanging out!”

Urban Fellows Hit D.C.

On Wednesday, April 24th, the Urban Fellows set off from 1 Centre Street to our nation's capital, Washington D.C! After an early start (6:30 AM—eek) we stopped at a rest stop in Delaware for some coffee and snacks (thanks DCAS!) and hit D.C. right around midday.

Our first stop was [Smart Growth America](#), an organization that works with all stakeholders involved in the process of urban planning and development to think strategically about building better and more viable towns and cities. We learned about form-based codes and the intersections of built environment, policy, and culture. It was enlightening to see how, by working with municipal planning projects, Smart Growth America responds to policies that have encouraged sprawl and made inefficient planning profitable for developers.

For our second session, we met with Julian Noisecat, a Urban Fellows alum who works at [350.org](#), an organization doing incredible work in the climate justice space. Julian talked about his experience as an Urban Fellow at HPD, as well as what he's been up to since then, including lots of freelance journalism and advocacy. Julian will be starting a new position soon at [Data for Progress](#), where he'll be leading their Green New Deal policy work. Congrats, Julian!



JULIAN NOISECAT

Thursday was jam-packed. We started off at [Democracy Forward](#), an organization that was founded two years ago to act as a legal check on the executive branch of the federal government by bringing lawsuits on behalf of cities whose citizens are adversely impacted by executive policies. We discussed the work that their attorneys are doing to combat the Trump administration's efforts to undermine the Affordable Care Act. Really cool stuff – a lot of the cohort's future lawyers are interested in carrying on this work!

The [Human Rights Campaign](#) was up next. We learned about their [State](#) and [Municipal Equality Indexes](#): scorecards that HRC uses to track how cities and states commit to legally protecting LGBTQI rights. The presenters from HRC shared the complexities of how cities or states increase their scores. For example, small cities with fewer people in conservative areas can sometimes score higher than their larger and more liberal counterparts because of hyperlocal accountability mechanisms: lots of one-on-one interactions between representatives and constituents that bring the impacts of policy on LGBTQI residents directly to lawmakers.



At the [United States Conference of Mayors](#), we learned that their organization was founded in 1933 when mayors across the country came together to petition the federal government for aid during the Great Depression. Today, the Conference serves as a hub for ideas on the cutting edge of urban policy, sharing various cities' best practices and scaling up (or down) successful policies across cities. Their theme for the next two years is "infrastructure, innovation, and inclusion." We wish we could attend their annual meeting in Honolulu! Maybe one day...

Kadeem & Mimi at the Mayor's Office of Federal Affairs

Urban Fellows Hit D.C.

Next, Alfonso Lopez, a legislative representative at the Mayor's Office of Federal Affairs, detailed the importance of the census on municipal policy, particularly in places with a large number of immigrant residents such as New York. While the Office of Federal Affairs is small, they do a lot of important work coordinating with the federal government on issues of homeland security and emergency management. Despite living in D.C., Alfonso admitted that he prefers New York and gave us some great pizza recommendations!

On Friday, we wrapped up with two great sessions. We started at the Office of Representative Yvette D. Clarke, who represents the state's 9th Congressional District – a section of Brooklyn where many of the fellows live. Earl Ash, a legislative aide in the office, spoke with us about the challenges facing the district as well as the creative methods the congresswoman uses to prioritize her constituents' interests in a complex and multilayered political landscape. We also got to walk around underground in the many tunnels and hallways of Congress!



Gwen listens to Earl Ash, a legislative aide for Yvette D. Clarke

Our seminars were fantastic, but we were also lucky to have some great after-hours moments together that gave us plenty of time to reflect on our year. We hung out in front of the Capitol building for a perfect golden hour photoshoot and ate a delicious seafood dinner together at GrillFish. We also really enjoyed spending our mornings at Bread Furst, the wonderful bakery next to our hotel Connecticut Ave.

All in all, we had a fantastic trip to D.C. We are so grateful to Ewa, our D.C. trip planning group, and all of our speakers. We definitely returned to New York with a better understanding of the work being done by governments and nonprofits to ensure federal accountability, build better municipal governments, and strengthen communities. But as much as we liked D.C., the newsletter team speaks for the entire cohort in saying that we still prefer living in and working for New York!

Our last stop was the School for Ethics and Global Leadership, a semester-long program for high school juniors who are interested in government and public service. Fellows led discussion groups with students that focused on Amazon, education policy, and criminal justice reform. We were all so impressed with the students' drive and intelligence and really enjoyed sharing our experiences working in the City with some younger folks interested in public service.



Fellows leading discussions at the School for Ethics and Global Leadership

Reflection

Lydia Ghuman was selected by the cohort to represent our class at the 2018-2019 Urban Fellows graduation ceremony. In the piece below, she reflects on her experience



LYDIA GHUMAN

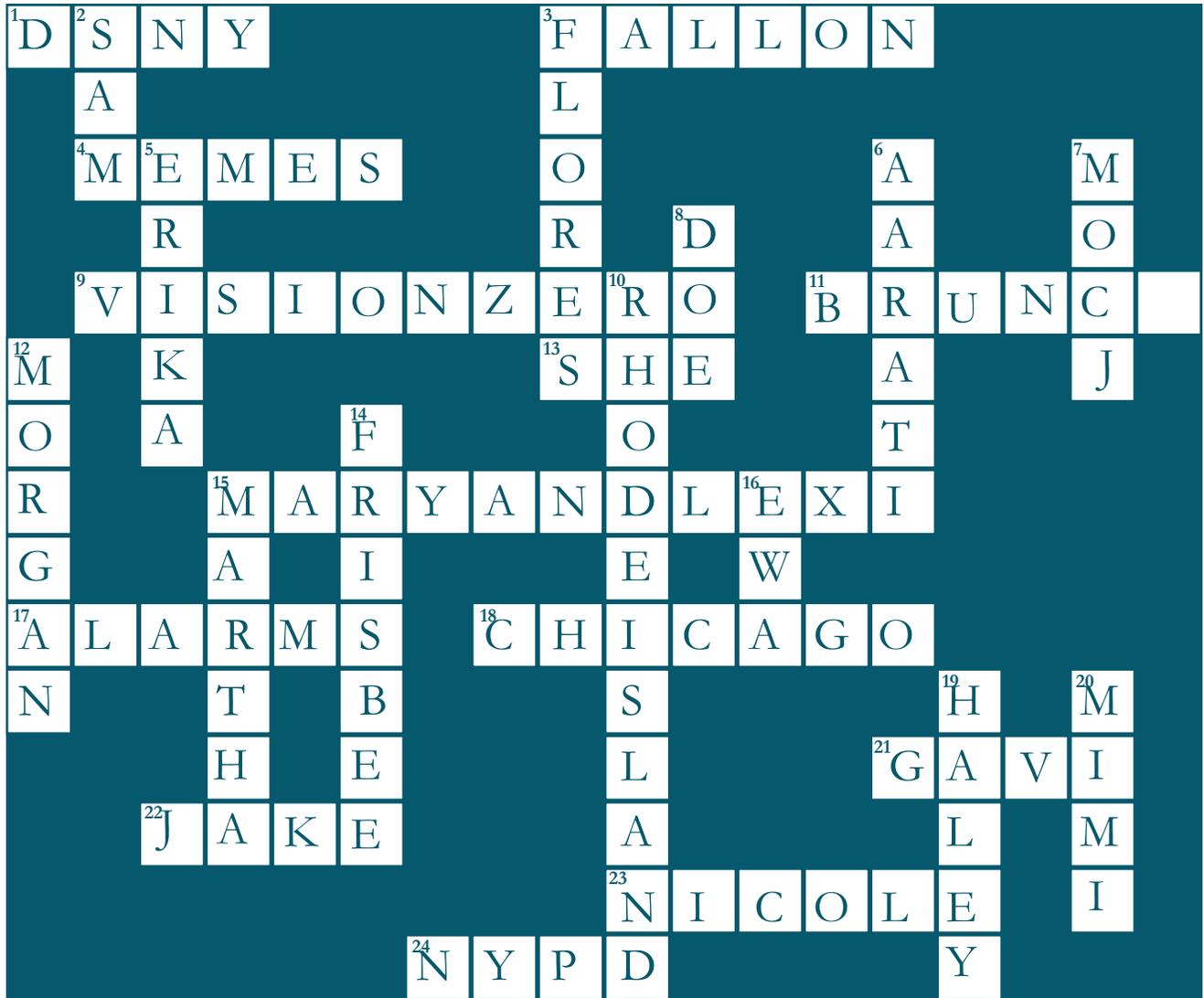
When I moved to New York City for the Urban Fellows Program, I knew there would be stark differences between life in New York and the life I was living in Cincinnati, Ohio prior to the fellowship. There were the quintessential differences that come with a move to New York: towering skyscrapers, accessibility to any type of food at any hour, and stereotypes seemingly coming to life straight off the silver screen - I have heard more people emphatically shouting “fuhgeddaboutit” than I would have expected. While the prospect of new experiences makes the city an alluring place to live for myself and many others, I was primarily excited to learn more about what had compelled me to apply to the Urban Fellows Program: namely, the differences between New York City and Midwestern cities like Cincinnati in the realm of policy.

In Cincinnati, activists have been working for years to convince legislators to pass a comprehensive law that will protect LGBTQIA individuals from discrimination in the workplace. In New York City, comprehensive workplace protections for LGBTQIA individuals have existed since 2003. In Cincinnati, the city government oversees 300,000 constituents and relies on a task force composed of just twelve volunteers to work on immigrant affairs. In New York City, we have an entire mayoral office dedicated to protecting immigrants’ rights. Cincinnati’s city budget is \$1.9 billion, whereas the budget for New York City’s Department of Social Services alone is \$10.2 billion. I don’t mention these details to disparage Cincinnati’s approach to governing, but instead to show the appeal of New York City’s capacity for making policy to someone who has spent the entirety of her life in the Midwest. Policy operates uniquely in a city as large and robust as New York City, and I wanted to learn the intricacies of all of it. What legislative complexities exist in a city that is able to pass so many comprehensive and equitable laws? What more could I learn about how to utilize policy to ensure justice in a city that already seems to employ policy to its full extent?

My placement on the Intergovernmental and Legislative Affairs team at the Department of Social Services (DSS) exposed me to the complexities of city government and provided me with a nuanced understanding of policymaking. One of my responsibilities as a fellow included identifying and analyzing proposed city and state legislation that could alter the way social services are administered and taking part in meetings that strategized how to either push forward or halt legislation. Through this work, I attended meetings with commissioners and chiefs of staff and was exposed to the state, city, and federal collaboration necessary to ensure that legislation is properly implemented. I also saw the complications that bureaucratic limitations, budget cuts, and differing opinions create when it comes to drafting legislation. I learned how to identify weaknesses in the legal language of progressive legislation and how to make this legislation more inclusive and effective. This experience transformed policymaking from an abstract process to something composed of a multitude of vivid moments. To me, policy is no longer just a set of written laws and rules; it includes the phone calls from constituents, the protests held by advocates, the time and resources agencies spend analyzing the minutiae of legal language, the one-on-one hearings held between agencies and council members after hearings, and the work of fellows and interns throughout the city who pour their energy into projects that may never be completed.

The Urban Fellows Program is transformative not only because it allows fellows to observe policy and civic change, but because it also allows them to play an active role in these processes. I was able to see what makes the New York City policymaking process unique, but also learned about its most important similarity to other cities, Cincinnati included: New York, just like any other city, is only as strong as the voices of its constituents and the dedication of its public servants. I know that, no matter which cities I and the other Urban Fellows find ourselves in, this fellowship will have equipped us to critically engage with policy and holistically serve our constituents.

Answer Key



Newsletter Team:
 Aarati Cohly, Katie Fallon,
 Mary Russo, & Jake Seidman