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### EDUCATION PROFILE

## There's no place like KCC and there is no one like Judith Cohen

### *A profile of heart, wisdom and courage*

BY DR. CLAUDIA V. SCHRADER

The Wizard of Oz has their legendary Judy (Garland that is, in her role as Dorothy) and we have ours. For over 30 years, Judith Cohen (affectionately known as Judy) has called Kingsborough her home. Born a stone's throw from KCC, Judy spent her childhood years growing up in Coney Island with her twin brother, an older brother and a tribe of cousins who were close in age and lived close to her. A young Judy attended PS 80, Mark Twain and Lincoln High schools. She recalls that her mother and aunts were active in school activities, including the Parent-Teacher Association. It is not surprising that the same level of involvement would rub off on Judy as she too would go on to be active in her own daughters' school activities.

As I reflect on Judy and what I have learned about her formative years, it is

hard to say what influenced the person she has become. Is it her natural ability to work so well with groups (fostered by her spending time with her tribe of cousins); a genetic history of advocacy (her aunts and her mother's active involvement in school activities); or her time as a student (then graduate of Kingsborough, a college that has long had a history of preparing students to be civically engaged in their communities)?

While I can't say definitively what influenced her, what we do know for sure is that 24 years after coming to KCC as a part-time employee, 21 years after becoming a full-time staff member, and four years after earning her associate degree at KCC, Judy took up the leadership mantle like her mother and aunts before her and became the KCC Shop Steward of Local 384 of the DC 37 Union.

This step into leadership



On the campus of Kingsborough Community College, Judith (Judy) Cohen became the KCC Shop Steward of Local 384 of the DC 37 Union.

was a natural one, Judy would say, because she enjoys helping others and is deeply committed to the mission of the College. Judy takes her role as an advocate and conduit of information between the local union chapter and the KCC membership very seriously. She is not a leader who is content just sitting behind her desk; she is a leader that can be found at all college-wide meetings and events, sup-

porting colleagues, fundraisers for students and alumni gatherings. During this era of social distancing, Judy was a fixture on our Zoom screens, doing everything from celebrating KCC Employees of the Month; to actively participating as part of the Forward Committee, a dedicated group of faculty, staff and students charged with developing the plan that ensured the community's safe return to cam-

pus; and not surprisingly to doing what she does best, advocating for her members.

I've worked with Judy for over three years, and it is clear to me and everyone else who knows her that, like the Tin Man, Scarecrow and the Lion characters in the Wizard of Oz, Judy already has what it takes. Her heart is filled with a love for Kingsborough students, faculty, and staff who she calls her family. She leads with innate wisdom handed down from her mother and her aunts, and with admirable courage she continues to give voice to the voiceless and make a difference for our college community.

*Dr. Claudia V. Schrader is president of Kingsborough Community College (KCC), a 70-acre academic oasis in beautiful Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn. For information about Kingsborough Community College, visit the website at [www.kingsborough.edu](http://www.kingsborough.edu).*