

Shema Kolainu Breakfast



On Tuesday July 24, 2012, Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices, a school and center for children with autism, hosted its 10th Annual Legislative Breakfast at the Renaissance Ballroom in Brooklyn, New York.

L-R: Yidel Perlestein, Chairman CB 12; Rabbi Yitzchok Fleischer, office of Senator Diane Savino; Ezra Friedlander CEO - The Friedlander Group; Milton Weinstock, board member Shema Kolainu; Dr. Joshua Weinstein, founder of Shema Kolainu; NYC Public Advocate Bill deBlasio; Rabbi Yeruchim Silber, Executive Director Boro Park JCC; Peter Rebenwurzel, VP Shema Kolainu; Isaac Stern, President of Boro Park JCC; Menachem Lubinsky, MC - CEO of Lubicom.

Excess Medicaid Payments Cost NY \$33M

BY HAMODIA STAFF

ALBANY, N.Y. - The State Department of Health (DOH) made \$32.9 million in Medicaid overpayments during a five-year period, due mainly to the fact that multiple identification numbers had been issued to Medicaid recipients, according to two audits released yesterday by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli. A third audit found \$24 million in missed savings for physician-administered drugs.

"Due to a lack of basic oversight, overpayments such as these continue to plague the system," said DiNapoli. "There is no reason these problems should persist."

DiNapoli's office has issued numerous audits identifying problems with eMedNY - the DOH claims-processing system. Through eMedNY, Medicaid claims are subject to various automated checks that verify whether a claim is eligible for reimbursement. Auditors continue to find

cases where these essential filters are not working properly or have not been implemented.

The first audit found that, between 2005 and 2010, DOH made \$15.6 million in improper managed care payments on behalf of 14,899 foster- and long-term care recipients.

A second audit found that DOH overpaid Medicaid providers \$17.3 million from 2007 through 2010 because 9,848 enrollees had received more than one identification number.

New York has 58 local social-services districts, which cover residents in the counties throughout the state, except for New York City - whose five boroughs comprise one district. These districts determine Medicaid eligibility requirements and enroll recipients in fee-for-service or managed-care programs. Auditors found that nearly 90 percent of the instances of multiple identification numbers stemmed from the New York City Human Resources Administration.

In the third report, DiNapoli's auditors examined DOH records between 2008 and 2011 to determine if DOH maximized rebate collections through the physician-administered drug rebate program and was properly billed by providers through the federal discount prescription drug program.

The review found delays in DOH's implementation of automated system controls regarding the rebate program.

The comptroller's audits recommend that DOH move to recover funds where possible and take immediate steps to prevent the issuance of multiple identification numbers to Medicaid recipients. Additional recommendations include improving the oversight and monitoring of Medicaid managed-care enrollments; obtaining all available rebates on physician-administered drug claims; and developing reports that detail payments for a recipient with multiple identification numbers.

The Department of Health has reviewed these findings and has begun to implement a number of the comptroller's recommendations.

New York Debates Proposed Ban on Sugary Drinks

NEW YORK (AP/Hamodia) - Doctors lined up at a public hearing to speak in favor of a proposed ban on large sugary drinks in New York, saying sodas and other sweetened beverages are a leading factor in the nation's fat problem. Critics see the plan as an assault on personal freedom and as an economic hindrance.

New York faced the next step in a bitter battle over large sugary

drinks yesterday, with the soft-drink and restaurant industries protesting the mayor's proposed ban and the public lining up to have its say.

Since Mayor Michael Bloomberg's proposal in May, opponents have accused him of trying to institute a "nanny state" with government controls that infringe on individual choice.

City officials, meanwhile,

argue they are trying to save lives in the face of an obesity epidemic that is killing New Yorkers and costing \$4 billion a year.

"Soda in large amounts is metabolically toxic," Walter Willett, a professor of epidemiology and nutrition at Harvard School of Public Health, said before a public hearing yesterday on the proposal. "It's obvious that this is the right thing to do."

City Councilman Daniel Halloran III, a critic of the proposal, called it a "feel-good placebo" that would hurt profit margins at small businesses, while failing to



Councilman David G. Greenfield meets local residents during a recent visit to the Boro Park Y Senior Center as part of an ongoing tour of every senior center in his district.

Jewish Senior Centers Win Contracts, Continue Services

BROOKLYN, N.Y. - The New York City Department of the Aging released its list on Monday of senior centers throughout the five boroughs that have been approved for a new city contract, the first such RFP (request for proposals) in ten years.

Centers were rigorously vetted, said a department spokesman, based on such criteria as years of experience, level of organization, and fiscal soundness. In all, 73 facilities in Brooklyn were approved.

Council member David G. Greenfield (D-Brooklyn) Chairman of the City Council's Senior Center Committee announced yesterday that every senior center in his district is among those approved for a new city contract.

Councilman Greenfield has visited a number of centers in his district already to share the news about the funding and to meet his constituents. He plans to visit all of them during the summer months.

The City Council successfully restored more than \$17.1 million to the Department for the Aging (DFTA), including funding for Meals On Wheels, elder-abuse prevention, senior-center programs, transportation, case management and adult day-care programs. All of these were threatened by Mayor Bloomberg's proposed budget cuts. The City Council actually increased funding for case management and adult day care.

Councilman Greenfield also secured nearly \$140,000 in funding for more than a dozen local senior centers and community non-profit groups that support senior citizens, including the Brookdale Senior Center, AMICO Senior Center, the Edith and Carl Marks Jewish Community House

of Bensonhurst, Senior Citizens League of Flatbush, Boro Park Y Senior Center, Masbia Soup Kitchen, New York Association of Holocaust Survivors, Tomche Shabbos of Boro Park and Flatbush and the Medicare Rights Center, among others.

In his outreach visits to senior centers, Greenfield provides an overview of the city budget benefits that have been restored, and he meets with seniors and administrators to discuss issues he can assist them with. Constituents present cases that involve a wide range of city, state and federal agencies and issues.

"My support of seniors is simple," said the councilman. "It's *hakaros hatov* for all they have done for us. These centers are an integral part of the community, and our seniors deserve to have a safe, comfortable place to relax, enjoy a hot meal and socialize with friends."

Other efforts by Councilman Greenfield on behalf of the senior population include last week's meeting with DFTA Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli to discuss the city's plan to open "innovative centers," in Brooklyn. These often feature one or more services at an outstanding level.

At present, there are no innovative senior centers in Brooklyn, the DFTA representative explained, but this is expected to change.

"I am constantly looking for ways to improve the quality of life for every district resident. It was great to meet so many residents and learn more about each center, and I look forward to visiting every senior center before the end of summer. My thanks to all of the seniors and senior center staff members for their wonderful hospitality," added Greenfield.

improve anyone's health.

"With the weighty economic problems facing this city, I am ashamed that we need to be here today to discuss the size of fountain drinks," he said.

Halloran foresaw three main

negative effects of such a ban: First, the direct economic impact to our small and mid-sized businesses will be severe. "In a time when our city is facing 9.7% unemployment - almost 1.5%

Continued on page D21