

United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg

Fifth Annual Legislative Breakfast

By Reuven Borchardt

On Sunday, March 29, the United Jewish Organizations of Williamsburg's Fifth Annual Legislative Breakfast will take place at The Continental Ballroom in Williamsburg, located at 75 Rutledge Street, Brooklyn, New York.

The goal of the Legislative Breakfast is to bring together a distinguished array of communal, religious, political, governmental and civic leaders to express support for the thriving Williamsburg community and especially the crucial role UJO has played in facilitating this growth and success.

UJO will be honoring the Williamsburg NYCHA Tenants Associations with the Hakoras HaTov Appreciation Award; NYS Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli with the State Leadership Award; Dennis P. Whalen, Director of State Operations for Governor David A. Paterson, with the Community Appreciation Award; Hon. Joel I. Klein, Chancellor, New York City Department of Education, with the Public Service Award; Edward Skyler, Deputy Mayor for Operations, with the City Leadership Award; Vincent V.

Abate, Chair, Community Board #1, with the Community Tribute Award; and Gerald A. Esposito, District Manager, Community Board #1, with the Community Tribute Award.

William Rapfogel, CEO of Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, will serve as Breakfast Chairman.

Sponsors include: Health Plus, which has earned a reputation as an innovative not-for-profit healthcare plan committed to quality healthcare and dedicated to the health and well-being of our culturally diverse communities; Waste Management, for their commitment to the Williamsburg community; and Therapy Care of Williamsburg, a provider of physical and occupational therapy in the Williamsburg community, under the leadership of Dr. David Menche.

The United Jewish Organizations was established in 1966 to serve as an umbrella organization to provide and coordinate a vast range of social, educational, health, and housing services for the rapidly growing chassidische community of Greater Williamsburg. The UJO serves as the voice of all the various *kehillos* and community-based organiza-

tions. Since its establishment over 40 years ago, and during the past 20 years with Rabbi David Niederman at the helm, UJO has earned the respect of the residents of Williamsburg as well as its elected officials, for representing the community on quality-of-life issues and for successfully obtaining vital government assistance.

The UJO works closely with nearly 150 organizations and civic associations, connecting those they represent with information services that these institutions provide — such as health insurance, career training, crises care, legal assistance, Head Start programs — as well as numerous other vital programs. The UJO also formulates a consensus on policy matters pertaining to neighborhood concerns and has been at the forefront advocating for the rights of the Williamsburg community in its interaction with local, City, State, and Federal levels of government.

The Friedlander Group is coordinating this Breakfast. To place your reservation, please contact the Friedlander Group at 718-436-5555, extension 202, or UJORSVP@friedlandergroup.com.

Texans Receive Religious Accommodation

This week, families in Texas receiving federal assistance through the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (commonly known as WIC) were informed by the Texas Department of Health and Human Services (TDHHS) that Kosher and Cholov Yisrael milk and cheese will now be covered under the program in the state, beginning April 1, 2009.

A division of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), WIC ensures the health and nutrition of eligible expectant women, nursing women, and infants and children under the age of five. Currently, WIC serves 45% of all infants born in the United States.

Although most food staples included under WIC coverage, such as eggs, beans and juice, had never posed a problem to observant Jewish families, higher-standard kosher milk and cheese had until now been out of reach for WIC eligible families due to certain federal and state regulations. Rabbi Asher Block, Agudath Israel's Texas Regional director commented, "I am grateful to TDHHS for their many hours of hard work to ensure that the kosher needs of Jewish families throughout the state are acknowledged and accommodated."

The development resulted from extensive collaboration over the last several months between Rabbi Block, concerned parents from across the state and officials from TDHHS in Austin. The efforts involved working closely with supermarket franchises in the state that carry kosher dairy products, as well as with milk and cheese suppliers across the country, to ensure that adaptation and implementation of the new WIC-covered kosher products would run as smoothly as possible.

"Educating and sensitizing the public regarding the unique dietary concerns of our constituents was key during the entire process," said Rabbi Block. "Enabling these families to maximize their participation in this critical federal program will, we hope, help provide hard-strapped families financial relief, especially important during these times of economic uncertainty," noted Dr. Zev Munk, Advisory Board Chairman of Agudath Israel of Texas.

Rabbi Yehiel Kalish, National Director of Government Affairs for Agudath Israel noted that the breakthrough "will provide significant financial savings for families in our communities. Additionally it will hopefully open the door for religious accommodations of a similar nature by WIC state offices across the country."

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