



(L-R) Ohio Gov. John Kasich, a Republican presidential candidate, visits Shema Koleinu in Boro Park Tuesday, with Ezra Friedlander, Dr. Josh Weinstein and Joseph Stamm.

## De Blasio Merges All Welfare Agencies

**NEW YORK** (AP) – New York City is merging its homeless services and welfare agencies in an effort to better help those sleeping on the city's streets.

Mayor Bill de Blasio announced that Steven Banks, commissioner of the Human Resources Administration, the welfare agency, will run the combined department.

Banks has essentially been running both agencies since the homelessness commissioner resigned in December.

The resignation came amid a surge in homelessness in New York, which became a prickly political problem for de Blasio.

According to statistics released Tuesday, about 58,000 people are currently living in the city's shelters. That's up from 53,000 when de Blasio took office in January 2014. Another 3,000 to 4,000 live on the streets.

## Greenfield Hosting Tree Giveaway

**BROOKLYN** (Hamodia) – Councilman David Greenfield is hosting a tree giveaway this Sunday at the Midwood Public Library on Avenue J. The event will be from 1:30 p.m. until 3:30 p.m. or until the 150 available trees have been distributed.

"Trees are good for the environment and they beautify our neighborhoods," Greenfield noted.

Sunday's event is limited to one tree per household. The tree must be planted on private property within New York City and cannot be planted along streets, in city parks, in containers or on rooftops.

## Audit: Riders Spend More Time Waiting for Trains

**NEW YORK** (AP) – The amount of time New York City subway riders spend waiting between trains is getting longer, according to an audit by state Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli.

The MTA's "wait assessment" showed a decline in performance. It got worse on 16 lines and improved on five.

The MTA denounced the find-

ings. In a statement, it said the audit includes "misunderstandings" and "outright misrepresentations."

The agency added that the audit is "bereft of any substantive suggestions to make life better for subway customers."

It says its capital plan includes steps to address the wait times such as new infrastructure and more subways.

## NY Health Department: Treat Smoking as an Addiction

**ALBANY** (AP) – Public health officials in New York state say the health care community needs to change the way it looks at smoking and treat it as an addiction rather than a bad habit.

The state's Department of Health on Friday said it's launching a new campaign encouraging doctors and other health care providers to recommend medication and counseling

to smokers looking to quit.

Health Commissioner Howard Zucker says that 2.1 million New Yorkers continue to smoke, though the overall smoking rate is at its lowest point in history.

The state says medication and counseling are the two best tools to help people quit. Medication includes nicotine replacement therapies like nicotine gum and patches.

## NYC Unveils \$2 Million Mental Health Ad Campaign

**NEW YORK** (AP) – New York City launched a \$2 million advertising campaign Monday to get people thinking and talking about mental health problems.

City first lady Chirlane McCray unveiled the broadcast, print, online and subway and bus ads featuring people talking about their experiences with bipolar disorder, depression, anxiety and addiction.

McCray says the campaign aims to "change the mindset around the mind" by showing that mental illness isn't shameful and recovery is possible. She's spearheading a broad city effort to expand access to mental health care and change attitudes about it.

The city Health Department is paying for the ads, which will appear through June 30.

## Regional Briefs

### Llama Thanks Students for Taking Common Core Tests

**COHOES, N.Y.** – A llama paid a surprise visit to the 3rd grade at Abram Lansing Elementary School on Thursday, the *Albany Times-Union* reported. Pastiche the llama wanted to thank students for taking the Common Core tests.

### TD Bank Pulls Coin Counters After Accuracy Questioned

**CHERRY HILL, N.J.** – TD Bank is taking all of its coin counting machines out of service after reports indicated that the machines were miscalculating deposits by nearly \$50, WPVI reported. Tests at coin-counters at 17 locations found that just one was accurate to the penny.

### Tickets for Texting While Driving Continue To Increase

**ALBANY** – The number of tickets for talking while driving is dropping in New York – though more people than ever are caught texting behind the wheel, Gov. Andrew Cuomo said. There were 132,000 tickets in 2015 for talking, down from 250,000 in 2011. But fines for texting shot up from 9,000 to 85,000.

### Lawsuit Against Christie Over Security Spending Tossed

**TRENTON** – A lawsuit against Gov. Chris Christie for using taxpayer dollars to pay for his security detail as he ran for president was dismissed, The Associated Press reported. The plaintiffs accused the Republican of violating his financial responsibilities to the state by forcing taxpayers to cover the cost.

### Woman Who Falsely Reported Car Theft Sentenced

**TRENTON** – A Newark woman who falsely reported her car had been stolen so she could get an insurance settlement received a three-year prison term, The Associated Press reported. Janette Bautista, 58, got a \$6,686.50 insurance settlement before an investigation determined that she had abandoned the vehicle.