

Shema Kolainu Celebrates 20th Anniversary at Annual Legislative Breakfast



L-R: Mr. Menachem Lubinsky, Dr. Joshua Weinstein, NYS Senator Michael Gianaris (receiving award), NYC Councilmember Kalman Yeger, Mr. Peter Rebenwurzel, and Mr. Ezra Friedlander.



L-R: Mr. Abe Eisner, Mr. Menachem Lubinsky, Dr. Joshua Weinstein, Mr. Peter Rebenwurzel, Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams, NYC Councilmember Kalman Yeger, and Mr. Ezra Friedlander.

THE FRIEDLANDER GROUP

This year, as Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices is celebrating its 20th anniversary, it hosted its annual legislative breakfast featuring prominent community and lay leaders and a wide array of elected officials.

Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices was founded in 1998 by Dr. Joshua Weinstein, in response to the growing need in the New York metropolitan area's education system for programs that effectively fill the learning and emotional requirements of children with autism.

Dr. Joshua Weinstein declared, "We have come a long way to becoming a model school and are honored to have so many wonderful years filled with growth and gratitude."

The legislative breakfast was once again emceed by Councilmember Kalman Yeger and Mr. Menachem Lubinsky, coordinated by The Friedlander Group and sponsored by ALMA Bank and The Williamsburg Hotel where the breakfast was held.

As emcee, Mr. Menachem Lubinsky proclaimed, "Could you imagine that 20 years have passed since a revolutionary, by the name of Joshua Weinstein said, 'We need to take autism out of

the closet. We need to treat autism, not as a forgotten disease, but as a challenge that we can deal with, that we must deal with; we can change lives, we can change the lives of people, we can change the lives of families, we can change the lives of communities.'"

NYC Public Advocate Letitia James focused on the importance of understanding children with autism. "It's incumbent upon all of us to reach out to those children and to find their voice and to hear their voice, and that's why we are here today with this wonderful organization to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Shema Kolainu." She thanked Dr. Weinstein for 20 years of unwavering dedication and for spearheading a diverse and inclusive autistic education program.

Queens Borough President Melinda Katz proclaimed, "We need organizations like Shema Kolainu who say to the community, 'These are our kids, these are kids that will make a difference one day.'"

Former NYS Governor David Paterson commended, "All of you who have cleaved together over this period of time, help young people and to get people to understand the difference between autism as it is perceived and as it really is."

NYS Senator Michael Gianaris was presented with the Appreciation Award; a picture painted by the students of Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices. He urged them to create job training and services for adults who are on the spectrum, to help them become productive members of society.

Vice President of Shema Kolainu, Mr. Peter Rebenwurzel, presented Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams with the Appreciation Award and expressed Shema Kolainu's gratitude for his support to the school and center. The Borough President also emphasized "overseeing the well-being of the children" and underlined the importance of caring for individuals with autism as they age.

NYS Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul was presented with the State Leadership Award, "A gift that I treasure for the rest of my life because it represents the manifestation of love from our G-d through the actions of the people at Shema Kolainu."

Co-emcee Councilmember Kalman Yeger recognized participating elected officials including NYS Senator Simcha Felder, NYS Senator Marisol Alcantara, and NYS Assemblymember David Weprin, who was acknowledged along with his brother, Mr. Mark

Weprin, both of whom were instrumental in funding the NYC Council Autism Initiative. Brooklyn DA Eric Gonzalez also addressed the crowd. Proclamations were presented by the office of Mayor de Blasio, and NYC Comptroller Stringer.

Councilman Yeger saluted Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz Jr. and Shema Kolainu as an incredible organization that has no borders. "We serve 500 children in the Bronx and [Bronx Borough President Rubén Díaz Jr.] helped us create that," calling him a fierce advocate of the children of Shema Kolainu.

In his closing remarks, Dr. Weinstein thanked the staff of Shema Kolainu, as he shared, "Our children continue to amaze us every day, accomplishing more and inspiring us all. These 'small miracles' as we call them, are major blessings.

"These achievements could not be possible without the dedication and support of our outstanding teaching staff. Thank you for your continued support as we work together to stand behind our blessed children as they make new strides along their journey. We look forward to the next 20 years of making a difference in the lives of our children."

They Love Me Just Like My Father Did

S. FISHER

"Two years ago my father called me and my siblings into his room. He blessed us with *Birchot Habanim*; that was the last time I saw him... I felt so alone."

This is the story of one of the orphans who is a member of ZELAZE.

ZELAZE has provided a personal support system for thousands of widows and orphans from every part of Eretz Yisrael. From the moment of loss, ZELAZE

works tirelessly to provide for every need of the freshly bereaved widows and orphans. They are there, with open arms and open hearts, 24 hours a day.

ZELAZE organizes many programs throughout the year: weekend getaways, bas mitzvah groups, Yom Tov events and much more. One of their most ambitious undertakings is a summer camp for hundreds of orphaned girls.

"This year ZELAZE is planning a camp for me and all my friends. Please help me raise the money so we can all go to the camp this year! At ZELAZE camp I

feel like there is someone close to me, someone who loves me just as my father did."

Help ZELAZE help her go to camp with all her friends. Be a part of realizing this young orphan's dream.

Please open your hearts, and donate to help one more orphan go to camp.

You can also donate by mailing your tax-deductible donation to: American Friends of ZeLaze: 1731 56th Street, Brooklyn, NY, 11204 or call U.S. Number: 904-606-6146 or 407-890-1322.