

## Shema Kolainu to Hold Legislative Breakfast Marking Ten Years

By Esther Birnbaum

On Tuesday morning, August 5, Shema Kolainu—Hear Our Voices, a school and center for children with autism, will host its annual legislative breakfast in the Renaissance Ballroom in Brooklyn, N.Y., celebrating its tenth anniversary.

President and founder Joshua Weinstein discussed the remarkable progress the organization has made in the last decade: "Ten years ago Shema Kolainu, the first school and center of its kind, opened its doors to three school-age children. Today, we serve about 50 children in our preschool and primary-school programs, and over 800 children through home-based services. It is a totally remarkable feat, accomplished with Hashem's help and guidance."

A primary goal of this event is to educate legislators about the urgent need for autism care and research, to raise support and awareness, and to share ideas about working to combat autism through effective public policy and legislation. In addition, the event will pay tribute to several outstanding public officials and community leaders for their dedication to Shema Kolainu.

New York State Senators Charles E. Schumer and Hillary Rodham Clinton will serve as honorary chairs of the breakfast.

John A. Catsimatidis, chairman and CEO of Red Apple Group, Inc., will serve as breakfast chair. Menachem Lubinsky, president and CEO of Lubicom Marketing Consulting, will serve as master of ceremonies. The event is generously sponsored by Gristedes and coordinated by The Friedlander Group.

Shema Kolainu—Hear Our Voices looks forward to expressing its gratitude to several honorees. New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli will receive the State Leadership Award for his commitment to the cause and ideals of Shema Kolainu. New York State Senate Democratic Leader Malcolm A. Smith will receive the Legislative Leadership Award for his tireless efforts to create and pass legislation to meet the needs of our community. For his efforts to support and sponsor the Autism Initiative, which has raised funds for research on autism, the Shema Kolainu Autism Leadership Award will go to David I. Weprin, chair of the New York City Council Finance Committee.

The Legislative Leadership Award will be given to New York City Council member Bill de Blasio for his dedication to the community. For his endless support of community initiatives, Charles J. Antonucci, CEO and president of the Park Avenue

Bank, will receive the Shema Kolainu Appreciation Award. Yitzchok (Jules) Fleischer, the community liaison to State Senator Diane Savino, will receive the Community Tribute Award for his service to the community, and Bruce Rudolph, director of NYC Department of Design and Construction, will be given the Shema Kolainu Hakaras Hatov Award.

State Senator Kevin S. Parker will address the audience, and greetings will be delivered by Councilman Simcha Felder.

Shema Kolainu, founded by Joshua Weinstein, opened in Brooklyn in 1998. It is a non-profit, non-denominational organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of children with autism in the five boroughs of New York. Renowned for its unique and pioneering approach, based on the science of applied behavior analysis, it offers education and other services in the field of autism care.

Statistics confirm that autism has risen in epidemic proportions. Expenses for care, education, and resources are staggering. Shema Kolainu hopes to build awareness and support, enabling more children and families to benefit from the school's essential services and programs.

For more information on Shema Kolainu or to RSVP, please call (718) 436-5555.

## "Chickens for Shabbos": Food for Families in Israel

By Yaakov Begun

The community of Kew Gardens Hills has created a dynamic charity organization that raises money to provide chickens, fruits, and vegetables to the most destitute families in Israel, amassing nearly \$4 million in just over four years.

Chickens for Shabbos, as it is affectionately known, was started four and a half years ago under the auspices of Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld, longtime Rav of the Young Israel of Kew Gardens Hills, and Rabbi Doniel Lander, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Ohr Hachaim. All the money collected goes directly to needy families; there are no administrative fees, no salaries to pay, and no costs to cover.

Due to the recent fiscal cutbacks, which have affected large families in particular, the situation in Israel has become desperate. Large religious families are stretched to the limit financially, often finding it impossible to acquire the basic necessities of life. Many families that receive money from Chickens for Shabbos are single-parent households, and many are devastated by illness, whether physical or psychological.

"We step in where the financial gap leaves households lacking bare necessities," said one of the organizers. "Parents and chil-

dren can't function normally without the basic nutritional necessities of food and drink in the home."

There is not a synagogue, *shtiebel*, or yeshiva in Kew Gardens Hills that is not visited by representatives of this charity group, who deliver impassioned pleas for support. From the earliest morning *minyanim* to the latest *Maariv* in the neighborhood, Chickens for Shabbos is brought to the awareness of everyone in the community.

Mr. Robbie Neuman appealed for help late one Thursday evening in a local yeshiva. "We have over 10,000 Jews per month who benefit," he told listeners, "and the vast majority are children, including hundreds of orphans who are nourished through your contributions."

Through the tireless efforts of the organizers, a steady flow of money sustains these families in Yerushalayim, Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, Ramot, Ashdod, Ofakim, Tzfas Netivot, Beit Shemesh, Emanuel, Rechasim, Tifrach, Tel Tzion, and Zichron Yaakov.

Over 10,000 parents and children are monthly beneficiaries of the charity. They rely on regular shipments of chickens each month and wait with excitement

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