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Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices 11th Annual Legislative Breakfast

The 11th Annual Legislative Breakfast hosted by Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices, the school and center for children with autism servicing all boroughs

of New York, was held Tuesday, July 9, at the Renaissance Ballroom in Brooklyn. This year, the breakfast honored members of the City Council as well as State Legislature, for their outstanding work in the autism community. The Friedlander Group coordinated the breakfast, with masters of ceremony Menachem

Lubinsky and Kalman Yeger.

Autism, as many are aware, is on the rise. Awareness, advocacy, and support are crucial. The honorees of the breakfast have gone above and beyond to assist in this mission. Among the attendees were community leaders, philanthropists, and elected officials.

This year's honorees included Preston Niblack, City Council finance director; City Legislative Leadership Award; Diana Williams, news anchor WABC-TV's Eyewitness News at 5:00, and Brad Gerstman, Esq.: Autism Awareness Appreciation Award; Chief Thomas M. Chan, New York City Police Department, chief of community affairs; Community Appreciation Award; Patti S. Lubin, senior advisor and senior counsel, office of Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand; National Autism Advocacy Award; Carolyn Gehl Fefferman, Esq., senior advisor, office of Senator Robert Menendez; National Autism Advocacy Award,



Ezra Friedlander (CEO of The Friedlander Group), Peter Rebenwurzel (Vice-President of Shema Kolainu), Dr. Joshua Weinstein (President and Founder of Shema Kolainu), Bill Thompson (former NYC Comptroller), Brad Gerstman, Esq.; Menachem Lubinsky (CEO of Lubicom), and Milton Weinstock (Board Member of Shema Kolainu)

and Pasha Elias Bikur Cholim D'Bobov: Hakaras Hatov Award.

Notable presenters included: Charles E. Meara, chief of staff to New York City Council Speaker Christine Quinn presented to Preston Niblack; Assemblyman David Weprin presented to Patti Lubin; and New York State Senator Daniel Squadron presented to Carolyn Gehl Fefferman. David Lobl, special assistant to Governor Cuomo, delivered greetings on behalf of Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Brad Gerstman gave an emotional speech about his involvement with the autism community and described his visit to Shema Kolainu.

Dr. Joshua Weinstein, president and founder of Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices, also expressed his deep appreciation to New York State Senator Simcha Felder and NYC City Council Members David Greenfield, Brad Lander, Melisa Mark-Viverito, Mark Weprin, and Inez Dickens for their support of the Autism Initiative.

Dr. Joshua Weinstein founded Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices with only three children. Now, hundreds of children

are serviced either at the center-based school in Brooklyn or home-based programs throughout New York. The 11th Annual Legislative Breakfast welcomed a diverse group of attendees, which is appropriate, as autism knows no cultural bounds. The support and advocacy for this population is important, and Shema Kolainu-Hear Our Voices would like to again thank those who are trying to help make a difference. ❖

Chesed Experience In Yerushalayim

By STJT Staff

One thing I have always taught my children is that although Israel is certainly a place with many touristy activities, it is not equivalent to a trip to Disney World. When the purpose of the trip was to help a sister recovering from childbirth, we did not need to look elsewhere for *chesed* options. However, when the visit was a vacation, we often volunteered at various organizations in Yerushalayim.

Today, we volunteered at the Yad Eliezer warehouse. A quick phone call in the morning and we were accepted for packing at 1:00 p.m. We were welcomed by Yossi and treated to a short video about the Yad Eliezer Adopt a Wedding Partnership, since my daughter will soon be in the "*parashah*." Yossi explained to us that it is a wonderful opportunity for a *chassan* and *kallah* to share their *simcha* by making a wedding in *Eretz Yisrael* in honor of their own happy day.

Then, we were put to work packing boxes. A friendly guide, Shalom, showed us by example exactly how to pack the boxes. We had a terrific time figuring out how to work together to maximize our output. As we put each item carefully in the box, we felt a connection to the anonymous families who would be receiving the packages. When the 20 boxes were half-full, we were allowed to choose from a bin of miscellaneous food items. There were staples as well as nosh. There were baking supplies and tea and coffee.

We realized that a lot of things we take for granted are only available to these families in care packages. We imagined what it would be like to a mom to be able to have a cup of coffee; or to be able to treat her children

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