

# In Rockland, Hosted by Hamaspik, State Comptroller DiNapoli Mingles with Buoyed Consumers and Staff

*Visits Day Hab Center, meets with agency staffers*

Career public servant and current New York State Comptroller Thomas DiNapoli visited Hamaspik of Rockland County on Monday, September 13.

DiNapoli first toured Hamaspik's new Day Habilitation Center at 78 S. Main St., where consumers presented him with homemade honey cookies. The Comptroller spent over 30 minutes observing the daily proceedings and interacting with staff and consumers alike.

"He was impressed by the brand-new building," said Hamaspik of Rockland County Director of Day Programs Zishe Lowy. "It was a very nice person-to-person visit."

Included in those personal interactions was an exchange between DiNapoli and consumer Elazar Friedrich, Hamaspik's resident political authority. Mr. Friedrich buttonholed the Comptroller on term limits and voting machines.

The Comptroller then met with Hamaspik's administrative staffers and East Ramapo School Board members at its Route 59 offices.

"It's an honor and a privilege to have him here with us," said Hamaspik Executive Director Meyer Wertheimer in introducing the Comptroller to the crowd. Mr. Wertheimer also acknowledged the East Ramapo School Board members present.

Aaron Wieder, Vice President of the East Ramapo School Board shared a few words, and DiNapoli then took the floor.

The Comptroller shared his guarded optimism on the state of New York's economy. "There are some signs of recovery, but the signs



**What's baking?** DiNapoli greets consumers

are very tentative," he said, explaining that while Wall Street seemed to be doing better, "the Main Streets have not really recovered yet" with state unemployment remaining high.

He then offered an insider's tip on government contract approval from the man at the top: "If you are depending on a state contract or state grant and you don't even get the paperwork, or you put in your vouchers... but you don't get your reimbursement, that causes tremendous difficulty for you," said DiNapoli. "What we are trying to do is get the agencies to recognize that they have to abide by New York law and they have to do a much better job of prompt contracting... if you ever have a state contract that is stuck in the process, feel free to give

me a call. Let me know. Usually, the agency will say, 'It's sitting in



**Doing lunch:** DiNapoli with community, Hamaspik leaders

the Comptroller's Office.' It's usually not sitting in our office—it's usually in their office, or they just mailed it to us the night before and they're making it sound like we've been sitting on it for months."

New York's youngest-ever elected member of a local school board, has served as Comptroller since his appointment over three years ago. He will be facing off against Republican challenger Harry Wilson at the November 2nd polls.

DiNapoli, who at 18 became



**Integration on display:** the Comptroller with the Day Hab's excited consumers

## Households HOME

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development."

The program's primary feature is the flexibility it gives participating jurisdictions in determining how best to spend the funds. For some jurisdictions, repairing dilapidated housing may be a foremost priority; building new units may be others'. New for this year, at least in New York State, is a HOME-funded rural program to exchange squalid mobile homes for livable new replacements. Over 500,000 New Yorkers currently live in manufactured homes, primarily in upstate regions.

For Hamaspik, however, the HOME program will allow the very neediest among its constituent community to receive desperately-needed residential repairs, explains Hamaspik of Rockland County

Director of Operations Yoel Bernath. The ability to help, notes Bernath, is especially significant in light of New York's still-flailing economy.

Governor David Paterson broke the positive news of DHCR's awarding in a September 16 press release.

"These awards will help leverage additional investments of more than \$36 million from public and private sources that will create jobs and increase our stock of affordable housing," Paterson said. "More importantly, these awards will dramatically improve the quality of life for thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers."

The program was secured thanks to hard work by Bernath, Hamaspik Project Coordinator Mrs. Brenda Katina, and Hamaspik of Kings County Executive Director Joel Freund.

## ObamaCare: Pros and Cons

Democratic U.S. Rep. Jim McDermott of Washington State and Galen Institute non-profit president/founder Grace-Marie Turner went head-to-head in presenting opposing views on President Obama's signature health reform bill.

Arguing for it, McDermott said that the bill increases options for entrepreneurs and allows them to better afford coverage. The Congressman also linked the recession and rising health care costs, something the President has repeatedly asserted.

"What seems to have gotten lost in the headlines is how the recently passed health reform legislation will help our economy down the road," McDermott said, asserting that making health insurance affordable for small businesses will jumpstart entrepreneurship.

Arguing against it, Ms. Turner said that businesses will drop plans and hire fewer workers because of their costs. "Costs will rise, taxes will go up, millions will lose the health insurance they have now... and businesses will find it harder to create new jobs," said Turner.

"President Obama said that by the end of his first term in office, families' health costs would be \$2,500 lower. But the CBO [Congressional Budget Office] says families who buy their own health insurance will pay \$15,200 a year for a policy by 2016 under ObamaCare but only \$13,100 if the law hadn't been enacted," Turner continued.

Ms. Turner also noted that "the new law did nothing to deter lawsuit abuse, so doctors will continue to practice defensive medicine, driving health costs ever higher."