

HAMASPIK GAZETTE



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News of Hamaspiik Agencies and General Health

The Powers of Flowers

Holiday theme breaks out all across Hamaspiik at Shavuos

Shavuos, or Pentecost, may not be the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks “Jewish holiday.”

But, like Passover, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur or Chanukah, Shavuos (pronounced shah-VOO-ohs) is no less significant—especially since it marks the giving of the Torah, the divinely bestowed morality manual and ethical foundation not just of Jewish society but of all Western civilization.

It’s also flowery. Literally.

To symbolize and commemorate the miraculous sprouting of lush vegetation at the foot of an otherwise barren Mt. Sinai before the Torah’s giving on that peak, the ancient Jewish custom has been to decorate—and in some communities, festoon—homes and synagogues with flowers.

Walk into any Jewish home or house of worship just before Shavuos and you’re liable to smell them before you see them. They’re the pungently sweet aromas of fresh roses, carnations and crouses, or the leafy intoxication of young hibiscus,

and they’re liable to be everywhere.

And across Hamaspiik before

and during Shavuos, this botanical tradition was in full bloom.

Ample flowers and greenery were in flourishing display at the



SOARING SPIRIT: Hamaspiik of Rockland County’s Camp Neshoma summer respite program, like these balloons, is flying high

Concord Briderheim residence, where the young men also displayed growth of their own by attending services at local synagogues, where they were greeted as the regular community members that they are.

Residents at that Hamaspiik of Orange County group home not only enjoyed the bouquets of flowers sent to them by loving members of their own families, but also made Shavuos holiday packages to present to those beloved fathers, mothers and siblings too. The packages consisted of clear plastic holders filled with painstakingly homemade cupcakes topped by leafy white sprigs.

“We had some Shavuos,” says Acres Briderheim Home Manager Mrs. Laufer. “It was absolutely beautiful.”

But that beauty wasn’t just the physical flowers, but the spiritual hours spent in the presence of Grand Rabbi Meshulam Lowy, the Tosher Rebbe, that the entire residence body enjoyed over the holiday. That’s because the young men of Acres

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The Affordable Care Act: Now Coming to a State Near You

The Gazette reviews healthcare-reform developments in recent months

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius released a new report on Friday, January 28 that showed how much families and businesses might save on health

insurance premiums and out-of-pocket costs under the Affordable Care Act beginning in 2014.

Each year, according to the report, a low-income family of four

could save up to \$14,900 and businesses will benefit from the savings and tax credits in the new law.

The original source of the new HHS report is a 2009 analysis from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) that looked at some provisions and predicted that “Average [health care] premiums would be seven to 10 percent lower...” (The CBO also found that the ACA will also slightly reduce the national deficit slightly.)

But the same analysis also predicted that other provisions of the law would have the opposite effect, saying “Average [health care] premiums would be 27 percent to 30 percent higher...”

Bottom line? Premiums will still rise despite the ACA—just not as much as they would have without it. The bill doesn’t lower premiums—it just makes them rise slower.

Waivers

Under the ACA, health insurers must now spend at least 80 percent of income from members’ premiums on actual medical costs, not administrative or overhead costs.

However, as mentioned in *Gazette #77* (September 2010) when the issue first became big news, a number of American firms offering

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Golden Opportunity

At Fosse Shvesterheim, realized potential

The first thing you notice is the gold décor: off-white pastels, creamy beiges and soft hues of light yellow that accent the entire living room. It's bronze but not baroque, gold-colored but not gilded. It's light, sunny, disarming and accessible. It's a living room in which anyone can find themselves at home.

And for the individuals residing at the Fosse Shvesterheim IRA, this is home—a place where opportunity is as golden as its interior-design color scheme.

The Fosse Shvesterheim opened in January 2004, becoming Hamaspik of Rockland County's first group home for women.

From Day One, it's been under the adept administration of Mrs. E. Landau, a tireless woman whose life expanded to embrace the lives of its residents. Few other jobs give one such an opportunity.

But it's mainly been the residents who've been lavishly blessed with opportunity at Fosse.

Some came from different IRAs when it was decided that a residence for higher-functioning individuals

would benefit them best. Others hailed from a string of stints at adoptive homes; their hearts ached for the opportunity for growth made possible by the stability they eventually found at Fosse.

One resident found completion and closure—the opportunity for a space she could call her own, and the peace of mind that comes from being happy and well taken care of. Another found a safe haven where she could be herself.

And yet another, whose handicapped body stands in contradistinction to her healthy mind, found in Fosse residency the care and support that allowed her to master occupational skills, pursue personal hobbies and to even dream of life's greatest aspirations.

A home by any other name...

Home sweet home, be it a childhood home or the home in which one raises one's children, is the home of opportunity.

It's where wise parents nurture



Opportunity has an address: 1 Fosse Court looks like the perfectly ordinary home that it is

their young with advice, support and unconditional love. It's where a boy or girl is encouraged to complete a hands-on project, conquer a jigsaw puzzle, master test material or dream big things. It's where a child is given his or her own room, his or her own space and the opportunity to mark it all with a personal touch.

At Fosse Shvesterheim, the opportunities may be different, but the foundation of love is the same.

And that, of course, is simply because Fosse is a home.

When calls come in from people seeking employment, Mrs. Landau explains that Fosse's typical day is like a regular home—opportunities for healthy and loving family interactions and all.

Those average, ordinary goings-on include the residents' daily return from Day Hab, school or other programs in the mid-afternoon. Like mainstream kids, they'll enjoy a snack or two and then discuss their day with Mrs. Landau and staff. They'll then relax.

Later in the afternoon, two or three of them will head out with their individual Direct Support staff for the various expeditions of typical life like shopping or just strolling.

Upon return, they'll take in their daily exercise session (Fosse has aerobics instruction twice a week) in the home's exercise room, followed by a round of indoor games and a scrumptious supper.

And like the functional family that they are, the residents will complete their household chores after dinner—such home-maintenance staples like taking out the garbage or clearing the table.

Additional free time, replete with indoor recreation like reading books or just chatting with staff, takes up the next hour or two following dinner—until bedtime arrives.

The routine repeats itself the next day.

Sundays are likewise filled with opportunities for happiness, including visits to local waterfronts, park picnics, and shopping. The individuals also receive allowances on a per-need/per request basis, with staff taking them to local bargain stores to purchase small necessities.

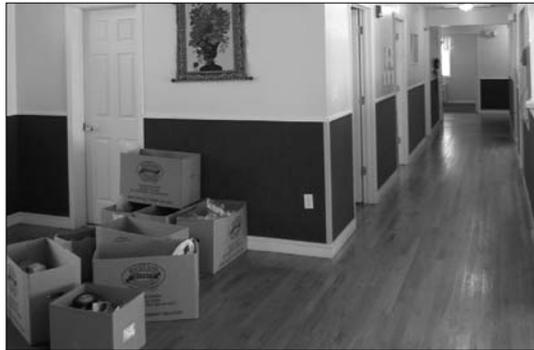
One individual resident is even fully travel-trained, allowing her the

opportunity to freely ride regional buses and rails to attend weddings and other festive occasions within her extended family, which she frequently does. Staff merely needs to bring her to and from Fosse's nearest bus stop.

And all that springs from the fact that Fosse, like any home, is where opportunity lives. ■



Happiness hall: The interior



Delivering the goods: Staff keep Fosse well-stocked

Federal benefits payments to be electronic-only

The U.S. Treasury Dept. has gone high-tech: By 2013, no more paper benefits checks.

All individuals receiving Social Security Administration (SSA), Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Veterans Administration (VA) payments, must soon use the government's new Go Direct deposit system.

People currently getting federal benefits checks must switch to electronic payments by March 1, 2013. Additionally, people now applying for federal benefit payments for the first time must choose an electronic payment option at the time they apply for the benefit.

People who do not choose an electronic payment option by March 1, 2013, or at the time they apply for federal benefits, will receive their payments via a Direct Express card sent to them so they will not experience any interruption in payment.

The switch is being made because it's a safer, easier more cost-effective way for recipients to get their federal benefits.

People who don't have bank accounts can use the new Direct Express card, which functions as a prepaid, fee-free debit card usable at most stores and the 50,000-plus Direct Express network-participating ATMs nationwide. A toll-free customer service number, 800-333-1795, is available to provide assistance.

Go Direct was launched in 2005 as part of efforts by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Federal Reserve Banks to increase the use of electronic payments for federal benefits and to reduce the use of paper checks for federal benefits payments.

To get your Direct Express card and/or to electronically link your bank account to Go Direct, contact your Hamaspik service provider or your federal benefits agency office. ■

Punishing parental preference? State bills would erode rights of disabled private-school students

Two bills being considered by the New York State Senate have sparked serious concerns among parents of special-needs children who opt for private schooling.

The bills, S5816 and S5758A, would make it harder for parents to obtain hearings on publicly-funded school benefits currently being received by their children.

They would likewise render it more difficult for said parents to obtain additional academic support.

Of specific concern to parents of special-needs children who qualify for publicly-funded programs are the bills' proposal to reduce the statute of limitations to 180 days for parents who unilaterally place their children in private schools and desire hearings. ■

The proposals would also allow school districts to cut academic intervention services for students with IEPs, or the Individualized Educational Plans that outline their publicly-funded special educational services.

Most troublesome to many parents is the bills' proposed deadline of April 1st of each year as the day by which parents must declare their children's schooling plans for the following year or else forfeit any publicly-funded services for the next year. With many parents of special-needs kids not planning their children's education until late spring or mid-summer, the early deadline would force parents into a Hobson's choice of schools that may not serve their children best. ■

Where the Mild Things Are

Concord Briderheim IRA residents visit African-themed zoo

Would you go as far as the untamed African wilds to tend to an individual's specific needs?

Concord Briderheim staff did the next best thing to that—bringing themselves not to Africa but to a place that brought Africa to them: Adirondack Animal Land.

At that cozy little secret of a zoo in Gloversville, New York, visitors can get up close and personal not just with goats and sheep but with camels and giraffes too.

As for those whom coming face to face with a bear is too close for comfort, the zoo maintains a comfortable double fence between its guests and that fearsome furry denizen of its enclosures.

And, of course, what would an exotic zoological garden be without

mischievous, ever-frolicking primates? Several species of those wild animals were on hand for observation and even feeding—all of which, and more, were taken in with glee by a small group of Concord Briderheim residents, who made their rounds of Adirondack Animal Land on Sunday, June 5, 2011.

The visit had been planned by Briderheim Manager Mrs. Shaindel Goldberger for well over two months. Mrs. Goldberger, who had been to Adirondack Animal Land on a personal visit around Passover time, found it to be a perfect gem of a therapeutic destination for some of her group-home's residents.

Said individuals had always wanted, and had always received, exclusive trips and outings, further-

ing Hamaspik's mission of accommodation against the backdrop of the ever-increasing integration emphasized by the special-needs community.

The young men thus found themselves snugly strapped into a sturdy Hamaspik transport van that fine weekend morning at the hour of 8:00 a.m. rolling north towards Albany.

Under the care and supervision of Direct Support Professional Yoel Loeffler, the group found itself at Adirondack Animal Land by 11:00 in the morning. They spent the next three-plus hours roaming the grounds at will—feeding the domestic animals at the facility's petting farm, seeing live red pandas and several species of African deer, and imbibing the larger-than-life experience of having two live giraffes bend down their soaring necks to feed right out of your hand.

They also observed zoo staff feeding raw iceberg lettuce to giant tortoises and enjoyed feeding fish in an outdoor pond. They likewise thrilled to the monkeys, who extended their arms through their fences to snatch bits of food from the delighted visitors.

The group took a lunch break at 2:00 p.m. But the fun was hardly over yet.

After the afternoon meal, the Hamaspik visitors embarked on a "safari"—a ride on an open-sided multi-passenger cart through the park's vast outdoor enclosure dotted



Tall order: A Hamaspik resident feeds a gentle giant...

with live, and decidedly friendly, camels and ostriches.

A pack of the two-humped desert trotters ambled blithely behind the slowly moving cart as the guests rode along, with at least one casually thrusting its head into guests' faces. (Small wonder it's said that camels actually have a sense of humor.)

A little later, the riders experienced the thrill of seeing live ostriches, with the unique long-necked flightless birds strutting about on all sides of their vehicle.

With the "safari" concluded, the individuals and their Hamaspik guide departed Adirondack Animal Land about 4:00 p.m. En route back to Rockland County, the group stopped at the always-busy New

Baltimore rest stop along New York's 87 Thruway to eat a refreshing supper.

They were back home by 7:00 p.m., tired but happy.

The trip came just two short days before the important holiday of Shavuot, which commemorates the Jewish Nation receiving the Torah at Mt. Sinai in the middle of a desert. Making a tongue-in-cheek connection between the ancient holiday and the current trip, Mr. Loeffler quips, "The Jews went into the midbar [desert—ed.] to see the animals."

But if that's where you have to go to give individuals the sense of respect they deserve, then that's what you do—at least at Hamaspik.



...and new friends of a decidedly sheepish variety

Building Up

The administrative offices of Hamaspik of Rockland County and Hamaspik Care under expansion



Filling a void: An elevator will offer disabled access to the second floor (top left); space for new offices (bottom left); the exterior as of June 29, 2011

Who Grants Us Life

A milestone, a message, and a new Torah scroll

From its perch at the family hearth, the heirloom presides over a dynasty. A veritable family member, it witnesses tragedy and triumph, agony and joy, a silent, stalwart part of all.

Like the mantel clock, the Torah is passed from father to son for generations and sometimes centuries. And as that timeless timepiece is so much more than wood and metal, the Torah scroll, axis of the Jewish ages, is not just parchment, ink and wooden spoils.

The Torah informs community, inspires conformity. It is the symbol and soul of eternity. It is there throughout. It sees, knows, and feels it all.

When the Torah is carried through the synagogue, all hands reach to touch it, to revere it, young and old alike. For the Torah touches them. It is held fast by the men honored to carry it; it carries those who hold fast to it. It is at once an anchor, a lighthouse, a safe harbor. It is Life.

The Jew of history, ever expelled in an endless march of exiles, carried his meager possessions in one arm and his eternal Torah in the other. Without the latter, he had nothing. For the Torah, he sacrificed anything. For the Torah is everything.

Through torture and tears, hate and Holocaust, the Jew stumbled from the millennial fog of the Continent to secure a beachhead on these Columbian shores, his Torah always at hand.

It was there as congregants of the Touro Synagogue, one of America's oldest Jewish houses of worship, read "to bigotry no sanction" in a letter from one George Washington.

It was there as thousands of refugees trudged through Castle Garden to build new synagogues and lives in New York.

It was there as the Chasidic courts of Europe, the great Lithuanian schools and the Sephardic enclaves of the Middle

East sank new roots in American soil in this past century.

And it is there as Shloimy Reisman, a strapping young individual with Down syndrome who attends Hamaspik of Orange County's Day Hab program, forges his own link in the chain of infinity in the Kiryas Joel of Sunday, June 5, 2011.

Surrounded by father, brothers, family, Hamaspik staff and fellow participants, Shloimy celebrates the penning of his own Torah scroll today.

A new Torah scroll is an honor typically reserved for the dead. But Shloimy is all life. Every day. And especially today.

Dozens of men stream into the Reisman abode at 249 Mountainview Drive to watch as the scroll is completed. Shloimy stands by, beaming. Those closest to him are honored with the inking of a last letter. Their participation honors him.

Shloimy gets the greatest honor yet as Grand Rabbi Aharon Teitelbaum, the Satmar Rebbe, arrives to complete the final phrase "before the eyes of all Israel" before the assembled Sons of Israel.

The writing ends. But the celebration now only begins.

Shloimy watches in awe as the scroll is boosted into the air by its lower handles. Spools spread far apart, the sacred letters are displayed to all as the crowd calls out, "This is the Torah which Moses placed before the Sons of Israel."

These very words. This very calligraphy. Unerringly transcribed over the eons. An unbroken chain of replication traceable to Moses himself.

There's a faraway look in Shloimy's eyes.



All in the family: Exec. Dir. Wertheimer pens a Torah letter

What does he see? Is it the pain of the past? Is it the promise of the future? Is it the transcendent wonder of the present, a moment so rich with the Jewish endurance and indomitability that so uncannily parallel his own life?

One can only imagine. Yet there Shloimy stands, the newest Jew of history.

The scroll is lowered, rolled closed and draped in its custom-made *mantl*, a velvet "coat." On that burgundy textile, in gold Hebrew letters, is embroidered a message for all time: "This Torah scroll was inscribed by Alter Shlomo Reisman."

The Torah marches on today, under circumstances blessedly prosperous but no less victorious. And marching with it midst pomp and pageantry is Shloimy, whose place in Jewish continuity is now set for posterity.

Torah scroll in hand, Shloimy and his entourage now march forth. Among them are his friends from Hamaspik and beyond. All are dressed in their Shabbos best; all have been longing for this day for months. Singing and clapping break out from all sides. They exit the house.

Just outside the front door is waiting the Yeshivah Shaarei Arazim Marching Band, a group of talented teens from that Monsey school.

Basses boom, snares crackle, and a procession fit for a Torah scroll begins wending its way to Congregation Avnei Tzedek, a community synagogue a stone's throw away.

With hundreds looking on from the sidewalks, dozens of children waving flags and adults bearing torches and candles, Shloimy and his Torah are ushered all the way to Avnei Tzedek under a colorful canopy. There is dancing and singing in the street, fired by live music blasting from the most multi-hued of floats behind the Torah canopy.

The exhilaration only rises when the parade reaches Avnei Tzedek. Shloimy and his special friends exult with abandon, dancing and singing inside as they did outside for well over an hour. The crowd and Hamaspik staff on hand look on, with nary a dry eye in the room.

For special-needs kids anywhere, and their parents, the scene is as mighty a validation as imaginable. In Shloimy's community, one can hardly find a greater singular event or accomplishment in the life of a special-needs person than having their own Torah scroll.

No less than the Satmar Rebbe himself affirms that community's embrace of Shloimy and his scroll when he unexpectedly reappears at Avnei Tzedek to personally wrap



The celebration of a lifetime: Shloimy with family (top), community (c) and friends (r)

one arm around the young man and the other around the Torah. Both have arrived.

Shloimy and his father, the indefatigable Mr. Chaim Reisman, are honored with snugly ensconcing the new Torah scroll in its new home, the ornate ark that dominates the sanctuary. The dancing has concluded. But like a presidential inauguration, with the Torah having been officially inducted, it's now time to have a ball.

Celebrants thus make their way to the nearby Paradise Hall, where a

veritable wedding dinner awaits the dozens of family members, friends, teachers and HamaspiK staff who have been part of Shloimy's life for so long. This is their celebration too.

Live music floats through the air as guests flow in and slowly fill tables. Excitement builds once again and the capacity crowd, at peak anticipation, bursts into song and dance as Shloimy, king for a day, makes his grand entrance. He is joyously buoyed into the air on a chair and carried into the center of

the room. Rollicking music ensues, and the men step lively.

After the first dance, Master of Ceremonies Rabbi Yonason Schwartz takes the podium to enthrall the crowd with *grammen*, the sing-song Yiddish poetry that is a highly nuanced traditional art form.

Shloimy then works the crowd, shuttling from table to table to give and take "I'chaim!" toasts.

Two of Grand Rabbi Teitelbaum's sons-in-law, standing in for their honored patriarch, next address the crowd.

Shloimy Reisman himself now steps to the lectern. All eyes are upon him. The room falls silent.

At milestones of watershed momentousness, the Jew of history would recite this ode to G-d: "Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the Universe, Who has granted us life, and Who has sustained us, and Who has brought us unto this time." The blessing is known as "Shehechiyanu," its Hebrew words for "Who has granted us life."

Eyes closed in soulfulness, Shloimy invokes the Creator as he recites Shehechiyanu.

He then thanks his former teachers at the Kiryas Joel Union Free School District and Yeshivas Shaarei



Blessed: Shloimy with HamaspiK of Orange County board member (and uncle) Eli Reisman, concluding the meal

Chemla, and his current caregivers at the HamaspiK of Orange County Day Hab. He singles out HamaspiK Executive Director Meyer Wertheimer. He also mentions Day Hab Manager Eliezer Appel, Day Services Director Joel Friedman, Direct Support staffer Joel Landau and Family Care Liaison Mendel Rosenfeld by name. For if Shloimy's path in life is a road, his teachers, caregivers and those who

empower them are lampposts along that road, illuminating his path and deserving of their own limelight.

But the highlight of the repast comes when Mr. Reisman, ever effervescent, recounts for the crowd the true tale he told his Rebbe earlier in the day.

Years ago, Reisman encountered the late Grand Rabbi Moshe Teitelbaum (1914-2006), the previous Satmar Rebbe, as both were wintering in Florida. At that time, the Chasid remembers, Rabbi Teitelbaum told him of his struggle to ensure that his community's special-needs children had every opportunity possible, and at every level possible: schooling, social services, therapy and communal integration—including writing a Torah scroll.

"Go out and tell the street in my name," the Rebbe beseeched Reisman, as the now-proud father recollects.

Considering the crowd on hand earlier for the Torah's outdoor parade, it seems that the street has heard well for some time now.

Shloimy Reisman, sitting regally at the head table with ceremonial cup of wine in hand, now leads the Birkas HaMazon, the Grace after Meals prayer. Live music strikes up again following the brief prayers, and Shloimy ventures out onto the floor to dance with his family, of which the HamaspiK contingent is an inseparable part. Those staffers form their exclusive circle with the young man, bonds of spiritual brotherhood in evidence.

The event ends about 1:00 a.m. The next day, HamaspiK of Orange County MSC Joel Landau, whose caseload includes one Shloimy Reisman, gets an effusive phone call from an exhausted but eternally grateful father.

The next day is also a mainstream back-to-work Monday. The typical cross-section of locals fills Avnei Tzedek for early-morning services. An average minyan (a ten-man group needed for some prayers) forms. Routine prayers are recited. A new Torah scroll is retrieved and read. A Shloimy Reisman, just another guy, is called up to preside over the second reading.

Shehechiyanu indeed. ■



The dance of life: Shloimy holds fast to his Torah scroll

Cancer from your cell phone?!

What the World Health Organization statement means

Thirty-one cancer experts from 14 countries under the auspices of the World Health Organization (WHO) met in Lyon, France in late May to review hundreds of studies, releasing a statement that cell phones are "possibly" carcinogenic

and calling for more research.

The WHO had previously maintained that cell phones carried no cancer risks.

Over five billion cell phones are used globally, according to the expert body. And with 427.8 million

cell phones sold in the U.S. in the first quarter of 2011—a 19% increase from the 359.6 million sold a year earlier—that's quite a public health risk.

But should you be worried? No. Here's why.

The statement by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a division of the UN's World Health Organization (WHO), used the phrase "possible."

There are five designations for cancer-causing agents: "known," "probable," "possible," "probably not," and "not classifiable."

In plain English, the new "possible" designation means just that: It *could possibly* cause cancer—but so could many other things, and there's no proof for any that they do.

Among those other things mentioned in the report as "possible" cancer causers were: coffee, Styrofoam cups, auto fumes, night-shift work, Valium and even talcum powder. So don't give up on driving to work while chugging a disposable mug of morning Joe just yet!

About the most alarming thing the statement made was that there is a "possible" connection, although with "limited" evidence, between cell phones and *gliomas* and *acoustic neuromas*, two types of brain tumors.

Evidence of cell phone links to other cancers is insufficient, the report added.

In response, the American Cancer Society noted that more peo-

ple are probably killed by car accidents caused by cell phones than from brain tumors caused by cell phones.

Additionally, the Society pointed out, the radio waves given off by cell phones are *non-ionizing* and *low-frequency* waves, which are too weak to damage one's DNA.

Also, the studies examined by the IARC were old. They looked at phones from the late 1990s and early 2000s—but the newer and newest models emit less radiation than those.

The panel neither quantified the possible risk nor estimated how much cell-phone use might be safe or risky. It also made no recommendations on whether the devices should be regulated more strictly or what steps consumers should take.

However, one panel member said users might consider common-sense precautions such as texting more instead of talking and using a headset to keep the phone farther from the head to minimize exposure. Bluetooth devices, while also emitting radiation, emit even less than cell phones themselves.

And according to CTIA-The Wireless Association, the cell-phone industry trade group, there's no evidence the measured ratings have any correlation with risks.

Spokesman John Walls said CTIA wouldn't fight a manufacturer that wanted to market a "low-radiation phone." But claiming a phone to be safer than any other would cross the line, he said.

"They're all deemed safe by science," Walls said.

Bottom line? Too much of anything isn't good—so don't be on your cell phone all day. ■

RADIATION-RATING YOUR PHONE

Worried about the radio frequency radiation pouring out of your cell? See if your phone's on the safe list.

The U.S. government measures the radiation zapping your body from your phone using the Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) of how many watts per kilogram it puts out.

By law, a phone sold in the U.S. must have a SAR of 1.6 or less to be legal. Here are the top—and bottom—ten performers:

Highest SAR

- #1: Motorola Bravo: 1.59
- #2: Motorola Droid 2 Global: 1.58
- #3: Sony Ericsson Satio: 1.56
- #4: Sony Ericsson X10 Mini Pro: 1.55
- #5: Nokia Astound/C7: 1.53
- #6: Motorola Defy : 1.52
- #7: HTC Desire: 1.48
- #9 (tied): Motorola Droid 2, Motorola Droid: 1.47
- #10: Motorola Atrix: 1.47

Lowest SAR

- #1: Samsung Infuse 4G: 0.2
- #2: Samsung Acclaim: 0.29
- #3: Samsung Replenish: 0.3
- #5 (tied): Huawei Ideos X5 and Samsung Sidekick 4G: 0.34
- #6: LG Quantum: 0.35
- #7: Samsung Captivate: 0.42
- #8: HTC Surround: 0.439
- #9: Motorola Devour: 0.45
- #10: HTC Imagio: 0.498

Powers of Flowers

Continued from Page 1

traveled all the way to Quebec, Canada to spend a few days, Shavuos included, in the court of the Rebbe and his thousands of disciples.

Besides the flowers dominating the home's common quarters, each young woman residing at the Fosse Shvesterheim in Monsey also enjoyed the bouquets in their own bedrooms. And to further accentuate the decor and usher in a festive, formal atmosphere, staff arranged for new silver and crystal table service at the home's holiday meals.

Arcadian Briderheim residence staff, led by the ever fresh-faced and always-smiling Home Manager Shlomo Lebowitz, work 'round the clock and up to the last minute before holidays all year 'round—and Shavuos was no different, according to staffer Joel Goldberger. It's no wonder then that the young residents looked eminently happy at holiday's end, Goldberger notes, what with the

joyful experience they had throughout the holiday... and the hand-picked bouquets decorating Arcadian's interior that the boys had personally assembled before Shavuos began.

The botanically-inclined festival of Shavuos at this Hamaspik of Rockland County mainstay was "regular," says stalwart Home Manager Mrs. Sarah Fisher—that is, with generously overflowing pots bursting with flowers of every color and shade taking up positions of prominence in several nooks and crannies throughout the home and the vegetation theme driven further home with an impressive centerpiece of dried corn dominating the dining-room table...

The precious young residents of the agency's very first residence, the Hamaspik of Orange County-based Dinev Inzerheim Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), celebrated Shavuos in the usual way—with lovely flower arrangements delivered to each of them from their families before the

holiday.

Compounding the powers of flowers, the residents also planted their own flowers in tiny pots before Shavuos, with the wait for the seeds to sprout and flourish a most apt metaphor.

Though some of the residents went home to their parents for the holiday, Shavuos was in no way diminished at the 38th St. Shvesterheim, the youngest of Hamaspik's group homes. In the run-up to the florid festival, fanciful and flower-themed spice boxes were created by hand by the residents. Dreamt up by Direct Support staff, the naturalistic arts and crafts projects gave the individuals fresh holiday memories of the most aromatic sort.

Residents of Hamaspik of Rockland County's still-newest Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) at 4 Wannamaker Court welcomed Shavuos about a week in advance by concocting flowers of the most irresistible vari-



Caption here: Caption here

ety: the edible kind. Working with the home's Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), the residents fashioned flowers of chocolate and apricot.

"Flowers have given a lot of inspiration to people from all walks of life, whether you are a florist, a gardener, a painter, a photographer or a writer," noted Women's Division Day Hab Manager Mrs. Chumy Niederman in a pre-Shavuos newsletter. That's why her program brought in one Mrs. Freund, a professional florist, to guide the young women through the art of flower selection and arrangement.

The Day Hab also launched a flower-stand program called Special Blossoms, baked flower-themed goods at its Tastes of Specialty baking workshop, and affixed a variety of plastic buttons to their house plants to give them a distinct floral look... all in the spirit of Shavuos.

The young men attending Hamaspik of Rockland County's flourishing Day Habilitation program, under the care of devoted Manger Pinchos Knopfler, prepared for the holiday of Shavuos in several ways, not least of which was the manufacture of flowering potted plants—of the man-made variety. Using an eclectic selection of arts and crafts materials, the individuals were able to produce delightful "flowers" in accompanying pots—items which, while they will never grow, are indicators of solid and unmistakable personal growth.

Individuals in that program's Women's Division, for their part, enjoyed a visit to The Gardens at the Matterhorn Nursery in upstate Spring Valley, New York a week before Shavuos, with the flowery theme not lost on them. They also made chocolate miniatures as gifts for their homes or hosts over the upcoming holiday meals. And, like their Orange County counterparts, they took in a flower-arrangement class whose instructor used a color wheel to demonstrate proper hue combinations, and even included a "walking workshop" on flower selection right in the store.

The young attendees at Hamaspik of Rockland County's After-School Respite program filled their time in the days before

Shavuos with a variety of hands-on activities, these associated with the holiday, naturally.

Younger participants used colored chalk to give ordinary salt some vibrant colors, then filled tall clear plastic cups with the colored salts to create a vibrant rainbow-like effect. Large Popsicle sticks topped by hand-decorated paper flowers centered with personal photos were then stuck into the sand to create adorable handmade flower pots complete with "flowers."

Older Respite participants created edible flower pots (minus the pots) filled with ground-cookie "soil" topped with whipped cream and "flowers" consisting of lollipop sticks topped by crumpled, flower-like sheets of fruit leather. They also soaked stems of white carnations in water dyed with food coloring overnight, lending those flowers splashes and tinges of yellow, red, pink and other colors, and hand-painted their own wooden (and flower-accented) napkin holders.

All said arts and crafts projects, which also included dairy cupcakes and "mini-blinis" (some sort of cheese pastry), were neatly packaged and sent home with the individuals as loving holiday gifts to parents and caregivers.

Down in Kings County, all Day Hab attendees joined for a joint grand trip on June 1 to Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, where they exulted in the natural richness of Longwood Gardens and its 1,077 acres of G-d-given glory—sculpted bushes, spiral-staircased chime tower, automated water fountain show and all. Being an all-day trip, the young men and women ate brunch at a rest stop on the way to Pennsylvania and dinner at a wooded picnic area in the late afternoon on the way back home.

Additionally, individuals attending the Day Hab's Women's Division created yet another edible flower pot—this one consisting of carrot "stems" planted in alfalfa-seed "soil" and topped with "flowers" made of real leaves. The organic and deliciously cute vases made excellent Shavuos gifts back home.

Things all across Hamaspik are always growing—and at Shavuos, that growth was literal, too. ■

Striving to Eat Right at Day Hab

Hamaspik nurse instructs individuals on proper nutrition

It was 11:45 a.m. on Tuesday, May 31 at the Hamaspik of Rockland County Day Hab Women's Division center, and individuals were in the thick of interactive learning under the inspired tutelage of Hamaspik of Rockland County IRA Nurse Evie Steinhart, RN.

A few weeks earlier, high-functioning special-needs individual Esther F. had asked for some guidance on healthy eating at her Individualized Service Plan (ISP) meeting, the annual conference between individuals and their Hamaspik staff and service-coordination team.

The request stoked a discussion between Day Hab Manager Mrs. E.R. Kresch and Mrs. Steinhart on the possibility of a nutrition information session at the Day Hab one day, instructing not just Esther but all the individuals in the high-function STRIVE program on healthy eating.

And so now, joining the individuals at their table in an activity room, Mrs. Steinhart asked them to first offer their own knowledge of nutrition and proper eating.

The question triggered a flurry of excited responses, with the young women eager to flaunt what they knew—and eager to learn even more.

Perpetual motion

The STRIVE program is a "sub-program" within the Hamaspik of Rockland County Day Hab Women's Division program.

Geared for the highest-function-

ing consumers, STRIVE is an acronym for Support To Reach Independence and Vocational Enhancement. It provides individuals with daily instruction in living and employment skills, as well as regular sessions in physical exercise, menu planning, and art and cooking instruction as taught by experienced visiting professionals.

Since its beginning, STRIVE has increased individuals' proficiency at personal computing, reading, cooking, and even managing weight. "That's a big goal that they have," says Mrs. F. Neuman, STRIVE's assigned Direct Support staffer.

Individuals in the program also enjoy weekly visits to a local nursing home, where they play Bingo and socialize with the venerable seniors, and weekly trips and outings.

"My main objective is to get them as independent as they could possibly be," says Mrs. Neuman. She lists shopping, following instructions, and being able to cook on their own as typical program goals.

Inspired learning

The instructional session, though lasting a mere hour, was packed with information and interaction.

Mrs. Steinhart opened the discussion by having the participants read *Hashem's Candy*, a poem on healthy eating by youth author Bracha Goetz.

Using the nutritional pyramid guide promoted until very recently by the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA), Mrs. Steinhart then walked

students through the five primary food groups.

Mrs. Steinhart, who also provides competent nutrition instruction at orientation training sessions for new Hamaspik staffers, then used a fun series of questions and answers to teach the young women how to use the five groups to construct daily meal plans.

The back-and-forth covered *portion control*, or ensuring that each food group is not over- or under-represented, and eating the right foods.

Several handouts were passed around, including five sheets on the pyramid guide and a meal-plan sheet for individuals to create their own nutritious breakfasts, lunches, dinners and snacks.

The handouts were kept together in tidy portfolios that individuals could keep and take home.

With Mrs. Steinhart's interactive and individualized input, a classroom-like atmosphere settled on the gathering as the individuals put pencils to paper to concoct their own meal plans.

After completing their plans, the group engaged in another thought-provoking, habit-changing discussion on the food choices they had just made.

Says Mrs. Steinhart: "It was really fun and we learned a lot!"

The goal of STRIVE for its individuals, as Mrs. Neuman simply puts it, is "to maximize whatever capabilities they have."

Thanks to the new nutritional counseling, healthier eating is now also on their menu. ■

Affordable Care Act update

Continued from Page 1

low-cost, low-coverage “mini-med” insurance plans to employees—most prominently, iconic American company McDonald’s—began receiving waivers that exempted them from the 80/20 compliance rule.

In late December 2010, the number of waivers granted by the Obama administration to employers who cannot meet the new law’s requirements spiked from a little more than 200 to more than 700.

“Even the Obama administration is admitting by granting these waivers that they better make some exceptions or they’re going to have the unintended consequence of having more uninsured, not less,” according to Jim Capretta of the Ethics and Public Policy Center, a former official in the White House Office of Management and Budget from 2001 to 2004.

Besides requiring insurers to spend at least 80 percent of income on actual healthcare costs, the law now forces all plans to offer at least \$750,000 in annual benefits.

Hundreds of entities from banks to church groups to school districts are saying they can’t live up to the law—including dozens of unions’ chapters, from electrical workers to Teamsters to the Service Employees Union, most of whom supported passage of the bill. Even a union representing New York firefighters asked for a waiver, as well as several states whose own health care requirements were lower than the new federal law.

The waivers last for a year but can be renewed until 2014, at which point everyone has to get insurance from their employer or through state-run exchanges where those making less than \$80,000 a year will get federal subsidies.

The Obama administration announced on June 17 that applications for waivers would not be accepted after September 22, 2011.

House, Senate launch hearings

After passing H.R. 2, which called for the repeal of the Affordable Care Act, the Republican-controlled House kicked off long-promised public hearings on the bill on January 26, 2011.

But Senate Democrats launched their own set of hearings the following Thursday, featuring their own witnesses who said they’ve reaped benefits from the law.

State ACA bans

Texas State Representative Leo Berman (R-Tex.) filed a bill that would make his colleague’s efforts—really, those of anyone trying to implement out the Affordable Care Act in Texas—illegal. The bill did not pass.

At the same time, the Wyoming House of Representatives passed a bill banning the Affordable Care Act in the state—a symbolic law since states do not have the power to override federal law.

Open to change

The January tapping of former Wall Street bigwig William Daley as Obama’s new Chief of Staff was seen by many as symbolizing the President’s willingness to hear constructive changes to the Affordable Care Act; Daley had previously been very critical of the bill.

Insuring kids

The Affordable Care Act’s provision preventing insurance companies from denying coverage to children with conditions existing at the time of application went into effect in January.

Watershed ruling

In a watershed ruling, Judge Roger Vinson of the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Florida ruled on Monday, January 31st, 2011 that the entire Affordable Care Act is void.

Vinson, a Reagan appointee,

built his ruling around his understanding of the Act’s so-called “Individual Mandate”—the requirement for everyone to eventually hold a health insurance policy or face a fine. The judge ruled that the government’s basis for the Mandate—Congress’s power to regulate interstate commerce—did not hold water.

In his 78-page opinion, Vinson agreed with the states’ argument that a person’s refusal to buy health insurance does not amount to economic activity and is therefore beyond Congress’s power to regulate under the Constitution’s Commerce Clause.

Interestingly, the government had also argued before Vinson for the law using one of opponents’ most compelling arguments *against* the law.

Government attorneys had actually argued that if individuals could wait until they were on their way to a hospital before buying insurance, and insurers were forced to accept them, the companies would go bankrupt or be forced to raise premiums to unsustainable levels. But this was the very argument made by the insurance companies themselves, among others, in opposition to Affordable Care Act, saying that imposing costly new regulations on insurers will only raise premiums,

not lower them.

The government had used the Constitution’s “necessary and proper” clause in making this argument; the clause allows Congress to create laws needed by other laws.

However, “Rather than being used to implement or facilitate enforcement of the Act’s insurance industry reforms, the individual mandate is actually being used as the means to avoid the adverse consequences of the Act itself,” Vinson wrote. “Under such a rationale, the more harm the statute does, the more power Congress could assume for itself under the Necessary and Proper Clause.”

As it is, the individual mandate does not become law until 2014.

Vinson’s ruling became the fourth court verdict on the Act to date. Three previous lawsuits were brought against the Act, with two finding it constitutional and one not.

The verdict stopped short of issuing an injunction against the law, however, allowing the government to proceed with implementation and leaving existing changes intact.

The Dept. of Justice immediately announced plans to appeal the decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 11th Circuit.

The case against the Act had been brought before Vinson by 26 state Attorneys General. Observers expect it to be ultimately decided by the Supreme Court.

States react

The day after Vinson’s ruling, Wisconsin Attorney General J.B. Van Hollen, one of the participating AGs, said: “This means that, for Wisconsin, the federal health care law is dead” and that his state “was relieved of any obligations or duties” to carry out the statute.

Democratic Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper pointed to the 700 people in his state with serious medical problems who already found insurance under the law. “Who goes to these people and tells them, ‘Sorry, a judge in Florida has decided we now need to put you out in the cold?’”

In November, the Supreme Court refused to review another challenge to the health care act that had been dismissed by a California judge on grounds that the plaintiffs did not have standing to sue.

Officials in Idaho and Florida, the state that initiated the lawsuit last March, said the ruling gives them the freedom to stop the work they have begun to put the law into effect. “We are not going to spend a lot of time and money with regard to trying to get ready to implement it,” Florida Gov. Rick Scott (R) told reporters in Tallahassee.

Other states like Georgia are continuing with laying groundwork for eventual ACA compliance to avoid any catch-up should the law be ultimately validated.

States’ reactions to the ruling come against the background of their ongoing implementation, or lack thereof, of the Affordable Care Act. While states are being granted federal monies for rolling out statewide “exchanges,” or marketplaces where consumers will be able to comparison-shop for insurance starting in 2014, many resent the strings attached to said funds.

Berwick testifies

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) Director Dr. Donald Berwick testified on February 11 on Capitol Hill about the ACA, undergoing rigorous grilling by Republicans. Members of the GOP-led house peppered Berwick with concerns on the \$575 billion the law requires in Medicare reductions.

Appeal hearing underway

On June 8, a three-judge panel at the 11th Circuit Court in Atlanta, Georgia heard opening arguments in the government’s appeal of Judge Roger Vinson’s earlier mixing of the entire Affordable Care Act. A key issue for the 11th Circuit was whether Americans can be required to obtain health insurance.

But on Wednesday, June 29, just as the *Gazette* was going to print, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit, based in Cincinnati, upheld a previous Federal District Court ruling that the Individual Mandate was constitutional. ■

Summer Health and Safety Tips

Experts weigh in on the season

A number of safety messages from experts in several areas have caught the *Gazette*’s attention in recent weeks. Here’s some:

Spring/summer cleaning accidents

In 2010, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), over 35,000 people injured themselves while using a stepladder, 41,000 while gardening or using gardening equipment, and over 127,000 while using a lawnmower.

The American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS) offers the following advice for fair-weather housecleaning:

1. Separate feet and bend at the knees when lifting. Lift with leg muscles, not the back
2. Avoid prolonged repetitive motions by varying activities and resting in between
3. Wear protective gloves and clothing when gardening and cleaning
4. Use a sturdy stepstool instead of chairs or couches when cleaning hard-to-reach areas
5. Have a “spotter” watching you when you’re on a ladder and don’t lean over too far in either direction: your navel should never

go past the ladder’s sides

6. Don’t let kids under 12 use a lawnmower and young adults under 16 use a ride-on mower
7. Take breaks, drink water and keep a cell phone with you so you can call for help if you’re injured

Heat safety

The risk of heat-related illnesses rises in summer—including long-term damage or death. Infants and the elderly are particularly susceptible to prolonged and/or high heat. According to the National Athletic Trainers Association, the most common heat-related illnesses include:

1. Heat stroke, or body temperature topping 104 degrees Fahrenheit
2. Heat exhaustion, or loss of fluid or sodium
3. Heat cramps, or intense pain and persistent muscle contractions during and after exercise

To prevent and treat these illnesses before they become serious:

1. Allow time for heat acclimatization
2. Take breaks and include adequate rest between outdoor exercise regimens
3. Drink plenty of water or sports drinks before, during and after outdoor activities
4. Exercise during the early

morning or late evening when temperatures are cooler

5. Know when to quit. If something doesn’t feel right, stop immediately

However, more fluids is not good for infants—straight water for infants six months and younger is actually quite dangerous, as it can cause water intoxication, or the dilution of body sodium.

Pool safety

According to a new national survey by the American Red Cross, two in ten people planning to swim, boat or fish this summer cannot swim well. So prevent drowning accidents:

1. Always have a lifeguard at the pool—and an adult in the water within arms’ reach of kids who can’t swim
2. Ensure that pools have fences and gate alarms
3. Swim parallel to shore if caught in a rip current

And be especially careful with portable/inflatable pools: A new first-ever study of its kind has found that a child dies in a portable pool every five days during warm-weather months. ■



In the Know

All about... Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD)

From time immemorial, age has been associated with declining health—and declining vision.

But thanks to increasing advances in medicine over the past century, especially in recent years, not only is older age no longer synonymous with failing health, neither is it with failing eyesight.

However, failing vision can still strike men and women in any of several ways as they age—and commonly with age-related macular degeneration, or AMD, a leading cause of vision loss among people over 50. The risk increases with age.

In this installment of In the Know, we'll take a look (no pun intended) at age-related macular degeneration—its symptoms, causes, risk factors, and treatments... and the latest breakthroughs.

Definition

Age-related macular degeneration is, quite simply, the degeneration of the macula as one ages.

The macula is the small center part of the retina. The retina is the layer of tissue on the inside back wall of the eyeball. The retina is what allows us to see. The retina sends light from the eye to the brain.

The macula gives the retina clear vision and ability to see fine detail, particularly in the central, direct and "straight ahead" line of sight. (The rest of the retina, the peripheral retina, allows us to see to the sides.)

There are different kinds of macular problems, but the most common

is age-related macular degeneration. When macula cells begin to die, the person begins losing clear vision in the center of the field of vision. This loss of vision can occur very slowly or very quickly. It causes no pain.

Macular degeneration usually does not affect peripheral vision. For example, one might be able see the outline of a clock but not the hands to tell what time it is.

There are two types of AMD: Dry and wet.

Dry macular degeneration is defined by deterioration of the macula.

Wet macular degeneration is defined by swelling of the macula caused by leaky tiny new blood vessels that sprout in the back of the eye.

Dry macular generation is much more common, comprising about 90 percent of AMD cases.

Symptoms

Dry macular degeneration

Dry macular degeneration symptoms usually develop gradually. Speak to your doctor if you notice any of the following:

- A need for increasingly bright light when reading or doing close-up work
- Increasing difficulty adapting to low light levels, like entering a dimly lit restaurant
- Increasing blurriness of printed materials
- Blurry distance and/or reading vision
- Decreasing intensity or brightness of colors

- Difficulty recognizing faces
- Increasing haziness of overall vision
- A blurred or blind spot in the center of the field of vision
- In advances cases, hallucinations of geometric shapes, animals or people

Dry macular degeneration doesn't cause total blindness, but worsens quality of life by causing a blurry or blind spot in one's central vision, hindering reading, driving and recognizing faces.

Dry macular degeneration may affect one eye or both eyes. If only one eye is affected, one may not notice any or much change in vision because the good eye compensates for the weak one. Typically, dry macular degeneration striking one eye allows one to still drive, read and go about life without noticing changes in overall vision. But the dry form can advance and cause vision loss too.

Wet macular degeneration

Wet macular degeneration always begins as dry macular degeneration, so wet macular degeneration symptoms will almost always be the same as dry macular degeneration at first.

Dry macular degeneration can progress to wet macular degeneration at any time, even during early-stage AMD. There is currently no way to tell if or when dry AMD will become wet AMD.

Wet macular degeneration can strike quickly and cause vision loss rapidly. Here are its primary symptoms:

- Straight lines appearing wavy or crooked (a common primary symptom)
- Visual distortions like doorways or street sign looking lopsided, or objects appearing smaller or farther away than they really are, and/or of different size to each eye
- Decreased central vision
- Decreased intensity or brightness of colors
- Well-defined blurry spot, dark gray spot or blind/blank spot in the field of vision
- Abrupt onset; rapid worsening
- In advances cases, hallucinations of geometric shapes, animals or people

Causes

Genetic changes now appear to be responsible for approximately half of AMD cases. But there are other risk factors for developing the disease, too.

For starters, many older people simply develop AMD as part of the body's natural aging process. One large study found that the risk of getting AMD jumps from about two percent for people in their 50s to nearly 30 percent in people over age 75.

Part of this ageing process is oxidative stress. The human body constantly reacts with the oxygen in the environment, and over a lifetime, produces tiny molecules called free radicals. These free radicals affect the body's cells and sometimes damage them. This is called oxidative stress and is thought to play a major role in the cell breakdown that causes

AMD. About one in three Caucasians have genetic changes that make them more prone to damage from oxidative stress, which can lead to macular degeneration.

Some studies have shown that inflammation of the body's tissues may play a role in developing AMD. Inflammation is the way the body's immune system fights off infection or other things it considers "invaders"—but an overactive immune system with its associated inflammation may be a risk factor for macular degeneration.

It's not clear what causes wet AMD to develop—and there's no accurate way to predict who will eventually develop wet macular degeneration and who won't.

As mentioned, wet AMD is caused by abnormal blood vessel growth and leaking in the back of the eye. The longer these abnormal vessels leak or grow, the more risk one has of losing more of one's detailed vision. Also, if abnormal blood vessel growth occurs in one eye, there is a risk that it will occur in the other eye too. The earlier that wet AMD is diagnosed and treated, the better chance one has of preserving some or much of his or her central vision.

In some situations, though, wet AMD is caused by buildup of other fluids in the eye.

Risk factors

General factors that may increase risk of macular degeneration include:

- Increasing age

- Eating too few fruits and vegetables
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol

Some known risk factors for wet AMD include:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol levels
- Obesity
- Race: Whites are much more likely to lose vision from AMD than blacks, especially after 75
- Family history: People with a family history of AMD are at higher risk of getting AMD
- Gender: Women appear to be at greater risk than men

Diagnosis

If you or someone you love experiences any of the symptoms mentioned above, it's very important to see an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) immediately.

Dry macular degeneration

There are three stages of dry AMD, based on how much damage has already occurred at the time of diagnosis: Early stage, intermediate stage and advanced stage.

Early stage is defined by the presence of several small or medium-sized drusen (see below) on the macula in one or both eyes. There's generally no vision loss in this stage.

Intermediate stage is defined by the presence of many medium-sized drusen or one or more large drusen on the macula in one or both eyes. Central vision may start to blur and extra light for reading or doing detail work may be needed at this stage.

Advanced stage is defined by the presence of several large drusen on the macula, along with the extensive breakdown of light-sensitive cells in the macula—causing a well-defined spot of blurring in the central vision. The blurred area may become larger and more opaque over time.

An ophthalmologist will perform any of the following tests to diagnose a patient with dry AMD:

- Amsler grid test: The Amsler grid is a grid centered by a black dot; a person with dry AMD will see some of the grid's straight lines as wavy, faded, missing, broken or distorted. An eye doctor can also provide patients with Amsler grids for daily self-evaluation
- Visual acuity test: An eye chart test that measures how well one sees at various distances
- Examining the back of the eye (dilated eye exam): The eye doctor may examine the back of the eye to look with an ophthalmoscope for a mottled appearance that's caused by drusen—yellow (or white) deposits of fatty proteins that form under the retina in people with AMD. (Scientists know that an increase in the size or number of drusen raises a person's risk of developing either advanced dry AMD or wet AMD, but are unclear about the connection between drusen and AMD.) To examine the back of the eye, the doctor will dilate the eyes using eye drops and then use a special magni-

fying lens. Vision may remain blurred for several hours after this exam

- Tonometry: This test uses an instrument to measure the pressure inside the eye. Numbing drops may be applied to the eye for this test
- Optical coherence tomography: This noninvasive imaging test helps identify and display areas of retinal thickening or thinning. Such changes are associated with macular degeneration. It's often used to help monitor the response of the retina to macular degeneration treatments

Wet macular degeneration

Wet AMD is categorized as advanced-stage AMD (as opposed to early or intermediate) and, as mentioned, always comes after development of dry AMD first. To diagnose a patient with wet AMD, an ophthalmologist will perform either or both of the following tests:

- Comprehensive dilated eye exam: The first and widest-used test to diagnose wet AMD
- Angiogram: A procedure that allows eye doctors to create an image of the eye using a colored dye injected into a vein in the arm. The dye travels to the eye's blood vessels and highlights them so that a special picture of the eye can be taken and later examined carefully. If any leaking blood vessels in the eye are found, the person may have wet macular degeneration

Treatments

While there is little that can be done to improve the eyesight of someone who has AMD, with early detection, the rate of vision loss can be slowed. The keys to slowing vision loss are to understand AMD, constantly monitor symptoms and visit an ophthalmologist regularly to test vision. Even with AMD, one can still maintain an enjoyable lifestyle.

Dry macular degeneration

There's no treatment available to reverse dry macular degeneration. But this doesn't mean one will eventually go totally blind. Dry macular degeneration usually progresses slowly, and many people with the condition are able to live relatively normal, productive lives, especially if only one eye is affected. A doctor may recommend annual eye exams to see if the condition is progressing.

Once dry AMD reaches the advanced stage, no form of treatment can prevent vision loss. However, with intermediate AMD, treatment can delay and possibly prevent it from progressing to the advanced stage.

AREDS vitamin formulation

One known treatment to slow or even stop dry AMD (but not cure it or restore lost vision) is increased vitamin intake. Specifically, taking the following high-dose formulation of antioxidant vitamins and zinc created by the National Eye Institute's Age-Related Eye Disease Study, or AREDS, has been shown to lower

the risk of AMD progressing to advanced stages in one or both eyes by about 25 percent:

- 500 milligrams (mg) of vitamin C
- 400 international units (IU) of vitamin E
- 15 mg of beta carotene (often as vitamin A—up to 25,000 IU)
- 80 mg of zinc (as zinc oxide)
- 2 mg of copper (as cupric oxide)

The formulation also reduced the risk of vision loss for those at risk by about 19 percent.

Ask your doctor whether this formulation may help you reduce your risk of vision loss. However, for people with early-stage dry AMD or no AMD at all, there's no evidence that the AREDS formulation helps.

Wet macular degeneration

Treatment of wet AMD focuses on stopping progression of the disease.

Wet AMD can be treated with laser surgery, photodynamic therapy, and eye injections—but none of these treatments is a cure; the disease and vision loss may continue after treatment.

Laser surgery uses a laser to destroy fragile, leaky blood vessels—but only a small percentage of people with wet AMD can be treated with laser surgery. Additionally, there is a high risk of new blood vessels developing after laser treatment, and repeated treatments may be necessary.

In photodynamic therapy, a drug called Visudyne is injected into the bloodstream. This drug tends to stick to the surface of new blood vessels, including those in the affected eye(s). The doctor then shines a light into the eye for about 90 seconds. The light activates the drug. The activated drug then destroys the new blood vessels and leads to a slower rate of vision decline. But because the drug is activated by light, one must avoid exposing skin or eyes to direct sunlight or bright indoor light for five days after treatment. Photodynamic therapy does not stop vision loss or restore vision in eyes already damaged by advanced AMD, and results often are temporary and may require second treatments.

Eye injections, also called anti-VEGF therapy, block a certain genetic growth factor that otherwise stimulates the abnormal growth of new blood vessels in the eye. Multiple injections over the course of several months are usually given. Eye injection treatments can help slow down vision loss from wet AMD and in some cases even improve sight.

Popular eye-injection drugs include Bevacizumab (Avastin), Ranibizumab (Lucentis) and Pegaptanib (Macugen). Avastin and Lucentis, however, are essentially the same thing, the only difference being price. Talk to your doctor about using Avastin, especially if the cost of Lucentis bars your health-insurance company from covering it.

Surgical implants

For people with advanced AMD in both eyes, the surgical implant of a telescopic lens in one eye may be an option. The telescopic lens, which looks like a tiny plastic tube, is equipped with lenses that magnify one's field of vision and may improve both distance and close-up vision.

Retinal Image Translocation (RIT)

Retinal image translocation (RIT), a cutting-edge new strategy in low-vision rehabilitation, may give hope to the 11 million Americans who are legally blind as the result of aged-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, retinitis pigmentosa and other retinal diseases. The non-surgical, non-invasive technique provides patients whose retinas are damaged with a new type of custom eyeglasses, four weeks of therapy, up to three months of weekly follow-ups, and dramatic results.

The technique uses ultra-high-resolution digital retinal photography to locate healthy areas of the retina. Once these "windows" of peripheral vision are located, custom prismatic lenses move the retinal image to a healthy spot on the retina and away from scar tissue.

Patients fitted with the new glasses have reported improvements of up to 200% in both distance and near vision, and ongoing vision improvement for most even months after receiving RIT glasses.

Current research

National Eye Institute scientists are currently studying the possibility of transplanting healthy cells into a diseased retina, evaluating families with a history of AMD to understand genetic and hereditary factors that may cause the disease, and looking at new anti-inflammatory treatments for wet AMD.

Another large study in women showed a benefit from taking folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12. And a large study evaluating the possible benefits of lutein and fish oil (omega-3) is ongoing. Other studies have shown that eating dark leafy greens, and yellow, orange and other colorful fruits and vegetables, rich in lutein and zeaxanthin, may reduce your risk for developing macular degeneration.

Prevention

The following measures may help one avoid AMD—or prevent it from getting worse if one is diagnosed with it:

- Get an Amsler grid from an eye care professional, because dry AMD can turn into wet AMD at any time. You could then use the grid every day to evaluate vision for signs of wet AMD
- Get routine eye exams. Ask your eye doctor how often you should undergo routine eye exams. A comprehensive dilated eye exam once a year or so can identify macular degeneration.

• Manage other diseases. For example, if one has cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure, taking medication and following doctors' instructions for controlling the conditions are key

• Stop smoking. Smokers are more likely to develop macular degeneration than are nonsmokers

• Maintain a healthy weight. Reduce the number of calories eaten and increase daily exercise. If weight is already healthy, maintain it by exercising most days of the week

• Eat lots of fruits and vegetables—the greater variety, the better. These foods contain antioxidant vitamins that reduce risk of developing dry AMD

• Eat fish and nuts. The omega-3 fatty acids in fish like salmon, sardines and tuna, and in some nuts like walnuts, may reduce the risk of dry AMD

• Choose healthy fats. Healthy unsaturated fats like those found in olive oil may help protect your vision. Avoid saturated fats like butter and trans fats like the partially hydrogenated oils in packaged foods

• Whole grains, like whole wheat bread, may also be better than refined grains like white bread

Living with AMD

For starters, it's important to remember that about 90 percent of all AMD cases are dry AMD and thus can be treated at least somewhat, or possibly prevented from getting worse. Of the remaining ten percent of AMD cases that are wet AMD, 25 percent can be treated.

In plain English, this means that of every 1,000 AMD cases, 925 will be treatable.

Secondly, remember that people with untreatable wet or dry AMD will not become blind, as they will still have peripheral, or side, vision.

Otherwise, here are several things someone who has AMD can do:

- Learn to "see again" with whatever vision remains using special low-vision rehabilitation, devices and services—and regain confidence and independent-living skills. People with low vision may find a team approach is often best in vision rehabilitation. This team may involve some or all of the following professionals: Ophthalmologist, low-vision specialist, occupational therapist, rehabilitation teacher, orientation and mobility specialist, social worker and counselor.
- The rehabilitation process can be a challenging and frustrating period of adjustment—one that demands patience, practice, motivation and the support of caregivers, family and friends. The rewards can be great, however.
- Use low-vision aids and devices specifically designed to help people with low vision function better. Different devices are available for different tasks. A trained professional can help you understand which device is best for accomplishing

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Public Health And Policy

U.S. defends smallpox-virus stockpile

At the May 17 opening in Geneva of the annual World Health Assembly, the yearly members' gathering of the UN's World Health Organization (WHO), U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius said that the U.S. would be retaining its stockpile of smallpox virus.

Keeping or destroying live viruses of the deadly disease, which was eradicated in the 1970s and whose last known case occurred in 1978, is a matter of debate in the world health community, with most countries and experts for the viruses' destruction.

The U.S. and Russia, however, keep the world's only live smallpox viruses in liquid nitrogen containers at extremely secure labs in Atlanta and Novosibirsk, respectively, arguing that their retention is necessary for future research.

"We're concerned that the smallpox virus may still exist outside the official repositories and could be released unintentionally or used as a bioweapon," said Sebelius the day after the U.S. introduced a resolution calling for retaining the American and Russian stocks. "By retaining stocks ... we'll be able conduct that research."

But Sebelius added: "Let me be clear: we are committed to the eventual destruction of the virus stocks. But we also believe this Assembly should authorize continued research to develop the countermeasures needed to ensure that we're prepared for a potential smallpox outbreak."

However, a large number of member countries again called for the virus' destruction in a WHA resolution, the fifth time the event has heard that call in recent years.

Martha Somerman named NIDCR Director

Dr. Martha J. Somerman, DDS, PhD, has been tapped by National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Dr. Francis S. Collins as the new director of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR), one of 27 NIH divisions. Somerman is currently dean of the University of Washington School of Dentistry and an internationally known authority.

Bacterial meningitis cases dropping

Cases of bacterial meningitis, a dangerous infection that inflames the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, dropped by 31 percent from 1998 to 2007—on the heels of a 55-percent drop in the late 80s and early 90s. At least 4,000 cases, including 500 deaths, occur each year.

U.S. Army: Concussions serious

New annual classes on mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) awareness for all U.S. Army soldiers are now mandatory, as is advanced mTBI training for medics.

To help soldiers remember mTBI indicators, the Army created "HEADS": Headaches (or vomiting), Ear ringing, Amnesia (or Altered/lost consciousness), Double vision/Dizziness and Something doesn't feel right.

Since 2000, U.S. Army members have suffered over 91,000 concussions, the highest number of any branch of the armed services. The injury can have long and debilitating effects if gone untreated. ■

HHS spying on doctors?

To assess the public's access to care, the Dept. of Health and Human Services will be conducting a secret phone survey of 4,185 medical practices across nine states, with callers posing as private or public insurance bearers trying to schedule appointments. Doctors roundly decry the survey.

New gov't food guide: Plate

The U.S. Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) has replaced its confusing pyramid food guide with a simple round plate. The new diagram calls for half of each day's total servings to consist of fruits and vegetables, and conveys seven key messages, including: enjoy food but eat less, drink water, not sugary drinks, and switch to fat-free or low-fat milk.

Medicaid to not pay for hospital errors

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced recently that, as of July 2012, Medicaid will not reimburse hospitals for certain preventable medical errors, including surgery on the wrong patient, wrong surgery on a patient and 11 different surgical-site infections.

E. coli in Alabama

Six Alabama kids who visited the Opelika SportsPlex and Aquatic Center between June 12 and 18 have been hospitalized for illnesses caused by the E. coli bacterium.

Meditation helps PTSD soldiers

A first-ever study of its kind by Georgetown University has found that transcendental meditation benefited several U.S. military vets suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Soldier David George, whom the meditative technique helped in coping with his PTSD incurred during his 2003 Iraq tour, is now committed to getting 30,000 veterans to practice meditation within the next three years.

Over 20 percent of soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from PTSD, according to the U.S. Dept. of Defense. And over 350 studies have shown transcendental meditation's positive effects, including its ability to lower blood pressure and help treat depression.

Military medicine for U.S. flood victims

In mid-June, the U.S. military's Task Force Razorback sent 300 military dentists, optometrists and other specialists to provide free glasses, dental care and other services through several mobile clinics to thousands of Arkansas' poorest residents affected by recent flooding.

Holmes County: No place to live

A review of national life-expectancy data by the University of Washington found that at an average of 73.5 years, U.S. women live the shortest lives in Holmes County, Mississippi. The Magnolia State already holds the dubious title of most obese state.

Heat heralds cholera

A study of African warm/rainy seasons and cholera outbreaks found that cholera cases rose following raised heat and rain levels due to the bacteria's proliferation. Researchers believe that the rises can predict outbreaks—and thus allow for better public preparation.

Obama nanotechnology policy

A June 9 government memo posits Obama's umbrella policy on nanotechnology research and enforcement as based on science-based public safety concerns. Nanotechnology is the promising field of using microscopic man-made machines in a range of applications, including medicine.

Social Security Trust Fund gone in 2036

The combined assets of Social Security's

Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance (OASDI) Trust Funds will be exhausted in 2036, one year sooner than projected last year, Social Security's Board of Trustees recently announced.

Social distancing limits H1N1 spread

Eighteen-day school closings in Mexico at the height of that country's 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic were effective in reducing disease transmission by more than one-third, a study by the Fogarty International Center, the international component of the NIH, has found.

Docs against kids' energy/sports drinks

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) now calls for young children and teens to avoid energy drinks entirely and limit if not stop drinking sports drinks. The AAP says that energy drinks like Red Bull tend to be dangerously heavily-caffeinated and stimulant-laden, while ostensibly safer sports drinks like Gatorade now come in a variety of flavors and types—along with too many calories, putting kids at greater risk of obesity, weight gain and dental erosion.

Infected hospital worker exposes hundreds to TB

An infected employee exposed about 780 patients and employees to tuberculosis at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta, the hospital confirmed in late May. All were contacted and provided with proactive screening instructions.

Gov't now pursuing health-fraud execs

In contrast to decades past in which pharmaceutical, biomedical or healthcare corporations were heavily fined for white-collar crime, government enforcement agencies like the FDA and others are now pushing for prison for top executives for crimes committed on their watch.

So, What's Happening in Your Health Today...?

Risky surgeries getting safer

According to University of Michigan researchers, deaths after high-risk surgeries have fallen substantially in recent years—largely due to hospitals doing a lot of them.

Sedentary jobs building obesity

Staring at screens for hours daily rather than physical work means Americans are burning 120 to 140 fewer calories a day than they did 50 years ago, fueling the obesity epidemic, new research suggests. Two-thirds of U.S. adults are now overweight or obese.

Aspirin may protect against melanoma

After scrutinizing medical records of 1,000 people, researchers have determined that the risk of melanoma was nearly halved when people took aspirin daily for at least five years.

Weight loss helps reverse Type 2 diabetes

Dutch researchers looked at 424 people with Type 2 diabetes who received gastric-bypass surgery for weight loss and 211 people who received gastric banding surgery. Researchers found that 83% of gastric bypass patients and 62% of the banding patients were able to stop taking medication for their diabetes within a few days of surgery. However, for many, the diabetes reversal was short-lived. By the 10-year follow up, only 36% of all patients were able to maintain normal blood glucose levels without medicine.

Tinted glasses may reduce migraines

Migraine headache sufferers reported 70 percent less discomfort when looking at striped patterns that normally trigger attacks while wearing precision-tinted glasses.

Home stroke therapy just as good

A Duke University study of 400 stroke patients of various severities found that home-based exercise guided by physical therapists was just as effective at restoring walking ability as formal rehabilitation programs using specialized "locomotor" treadmills.

Orphan drugs under-tested

A Harvard Medical School review of pre-market trials on 15 "orphan drugs"—medicines that treat "orphan diseases," or disease

affecting under 200,000 Americans—finds that the trials used far fewer patients and otherwise cut corners to bring the drugs to market, where many, like rare leukemia drug Mylotarg, didn't work and even caused deaths.

Shed an allergy? Bake it up!

Feeding 88 milk-allergic children muffins and other baked goods containing milk enabled about half of them to outgrow the allergy faster than by merely avoiding milk products, says a Mount Sinai Medical Center study. Less than a quarter of a control group was able to safely consume skim milk or yogurt by the end of the study. It is believed that milk proteins change shape when heated, lowering immune-system reactions. But researchers caution parents to only try "muffin therapy" under a doctor's care.

Cancer bankrupts patients

Researchers have now found that bankruptcy rates almost doubled one year after diagnosis, and quadrupled within five years of diagnosis on average. Bankruptcy risk was highest among patients with lung, thyroid and leukemia/lymphoma cancers.

Genetically customized cancer treatment

A University of Texas study found that matching drugs to genetic tumor markers led to higher rates of tumor shrinkage and survival, finding that 27 percent of patients with a single gene aberration who were treated with a matched drug had tumor shrinkage.

Experimental drug shrinks rare tumor

Experimental cancer drug cediranib shrunk tumors of a rare cancer called alveolar soft part sarcoma (ASPS) by 50 percent in a National Cancer Institute (NCI) clinical trial.

Needle in ear, once again hear

People stricken with sudden deafness can be treated just as well with a steroid injection directly through the eardrum as with the oral steroids usually given, according to a comparison study of over 250 patients by Harvard Medical School.

Pesticides and Parkinson's

A study of 703 residents of California's field-filled Central Valley—half of whom had Parkinson's disease—found that the disease's risk rose threefold for those closest to fields treated with chemicals maneb, ziram and

paraquat over 25 years.

Exercise in, strokes out

A Columbia University study of the exercise habits of 1,238 stroke-free older people who found that about 43 percent claimed no regular exercise, 36 percent did light physical activity and 21 percent regularly did moderate to intense exercise like jogging, swimming or biking.

Six years later, at the average age of 70, scans showed that 16 percent of them had experienced silent strokes—but that those who reported moderate to intense activity were 40 percent less likely to have had silent strokes than those who got no regular exercise.

Type 2 diabetes drugs helps Type 1

In a small clinical study, Type 2 diabetes injection drug Victoza improved the sugar control, insulin use and weight loss of Type 1 patients.

Aspirin still king

A 28-month French comparison study of aspirin vs. promising new drug terutroban in preventing second episodes in 19,000 stroke patients found that terutroban had no benefit.

In related news, two recent studies on the long-term benefits of taking aspirin regularly arrived at opposite conclusions. Bottom line? Ask your doctor what's best for you.

Healthy gums, healthy lungs?

A study of 200 people ages 20 to 60, half of whom were hospitalized with respiratory diseases, found that the ill group had worse teeth and gums than the healthy ones, suggesting that periodontal disease may increase risk for respiratory infections caused by bacteria from the upper throat being inhaled into the lower respiratory tract.

Lose excess weight, gain Vitamin D

In a study, older obese or overweight women who lost 15 percent or more of their body's weight through diet and/or exercise enjoyed major increases in blood Vitamin D levels.

In related news, the Endocrine Society now recommends routine Vitamin D screening for people considered at high risk. "Vitamin D deficiency" can lead to osteoporosis.

Kids need vision screenings

An Australian study of over 1,000 kids ages 2.5 to 6 found that between 6 and 7 percent had vision problems, primarily astigmatism, in

at least one eye—and that kids with low birth weights had increased vision-problem risk. The researchers call for screenings.

Young high blood pressure

A recent analysis of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health has found that roughly 19 percent of Americans ages 24 to 32 may have high blood pressure.

Anti-fat fanaticism a fad?

In two studies on fats' effect on dieting and blood-vessel health, Johns Hopkins scientists found that low-carb dieters lost weight faster than low-fat dieters—and that a single 900-calorie, 50-grams-of-fat McDonald's meal not only didn't hurt arteries but actually improved arterial stiffness by 16 percent, turning "anti-fat" thinking on its head.

Fear may worsen heart attack effect

A British study of 208 cardiac-event patients found that those most afraid of dying had raised levels of TNF alpha, a marker linked to inflammatory processes in the body, which increase the risk of additional heart attacks.

Business travel unhealthy

A recent study found that workers who traveled over 20 nights a month were 2.61 times more likely to report they were in poor or fair health than those on the road one to six days a month and were 1.92 times likelier to be obese.

Niacin fails in cholesterol study

An NIH study on whether high niacin (Vitamin B3) doses help reduce heart attacks and strokes in patients on cholesterol-busting drugs has been stopped due to no effect noted. However, people taking niacin should not stop now before talking to their doctor.

Unseen brain abnormalities found

An advanced MRI scan called diffusion tensor imaging (DTI) has allowed joint military/academic researchers to find brain abnormalities previously unseen in the brains of U.S. soldiers diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury after exposure to blasts. The find may help scientists better understand mild traumatic brain injury symptoms.

More sleep, less weight?

A New Zealand study of 244 kids aged three to seven found that those getting less than the average of 11 hours of nightly sleep had a

greater risk of higher body mass index (BMI) by the time they turned seven.

Malaria function found

NIH scientists have discovered how the malaria parasite, which hides inside human red blood cells, genetically creates tiny feeding pores to survive. The finding may lead to new treatments. Malaria kills over 700,000 annually worldwide, mostly kids.

MSG and obesity

Over five years' observation of 10,000 Chinese adults found that those who consumed more monosodium glutamate (MSG) were 33 percent likelier to be overweight or obese.

Eat fish, fight clots

In a Polish study, omega-3 fish oil given to heart-disease patients with stents implanted in their coronary arteries apparently triggered less blood-clot formation in those stents.

The more calcium, the (not) better

Older women taking high daily calcium doses don't get stronger bones, says a Swedish study. Low calcium raises risk of bone fractures and osteoporosis, or brittle bones, but U.S. experts say 1,200 mg a day for women over 50 is enough.

Loved toddlers make better spouses

S. Olaf's College researchers found that toddlers treated well by mothers and better at resolving conflicts as teenagers tended to be more committed in relationships as adults.

Ears that see

Not only can some blind people echolocate like bats, but researchers have also found they use their brains' vision, not hearing, centers to process the clicks and echoes.

Really, now...

A University of Michigan study found that bullies are more likely to exhibit daytime sleepiness due to disorganized homes or too much stimulation from technology.

A University of Massachusetts study found that 80 percent of students figured out a game's secret if they slept on it compared to 40 percent who stayed up all night.

A University of Pittsburgh study has found that when wives are unable to fall asleep at night, both spouses' interactions are impacted the following day. ■

Happenings around Hamaspik

Preparations for Camp Neshoma shifted into high gear in early June, with the hiring on the second of that month of Mr. Yaakov Adler as a Direct Support Professional for that Hamaspik of Rockland County's After-School Respite Program's summer session. Mr. Adler will be assisting in the daily management and execution of that program, and will be staying on after the summer as a Respite Program employee.

Newly minted Hamaspik Quality Assurance Director Joel Heilbrun isn't wasting a minute getting into the swing of things.

An intense meeting was held on Monday, June 6, 2011 on Hamaspik of Rockland County's premises. Attending the hours-long session was Heilbrun, Hamaspik of Rockland and Orange County MSC Supervisors Mrs. Nechama Nissenbaum, Mr. Arthur Sabel, Mr. Moshe Sabel and Mrs. Perry Zelik, and Mrs. Zissy Reich, Hamaspik's Compliance Officer for the aforementioned counties.

The meeting helped get all said staff leaders on the same page vis-a-vis Heilbrun's heightened new standards of professionalism and compliance.

Kiryas Joel resident Joel Nojovits was welcomed on his first official day on the job on Monday, June 13. Mr. Nojovits, a capable young multitasker with a background in community volunteering for the less fortunate, replaces Joel Heilbrun as a Hamaspik of Orange County Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC).

HamaspikCare is still growing by leaps and bounds, with its first-ever Personal Care Aide (PCA) training course kicking off on Tuesday, June 14 in response to community demand for those in-house specialists. Under expert instruction by HamaspikCare Field Nurse Lauren Wieder, RN, the students spent several days learning all about the communications skills, hands-on techniques and attentiveness to verbal and non-verbal cues needed to provide personal care to HamaspikCare's expanding home care patients. The course ended on June 20.

The training complements HamaspikCare's existing cadre of Home Health Aides (HHAs), a different category of direct support professionals for whom the agency has already organized several training sessions.

Concord Briderheim IRA resident Joel Biener had long wanted to donate a synagogue notice board to his local synagogue in memory of his beloved grandmother.

On Tuesday, June 7, he finally got his chance.

Accompanied earlier to a Kiryas

Joel engraving company by Home Manager Mrs. Shaindel Goldberger, young Mr. Biener selected a popular design for the elegant sign. The notice boards, typically made of treated wood and accented with gold flourishes, display regular prayer times, weekly Torah portions, changing seasonal prayers and other importance information to synagogue-goers.



In loving memory:
Mr. Beiner's gift

A few days after making his selection and purchase, Joel proudly presented it to his fellow congregants. With synagogue rabbi and members looking on, the plaque was mounted—and Joel was presented by the synagogue with a thank-you citation of his own to place on his own wall.



Waiting no more: The
Clinic's waiting room

Summer is well under way for the young women residing at Hamaspik of Orange County's Seven Springs Shvesterheim. On a recent Sunday afternoon, the "girls" found themselves riding the Beast, a high-powered motorboat based out of Manhattan's Chelsea Piers, and Sunday, June 19th found them at the popular Rye Playland amusement park.

Arcadian Briderheim residents are kings of their castle—and this past Memorial Day, they spent the day at the Castle Fun Center in Chester, New York, where they were treated like kings. The Castle Fun Center was later visited by the Hamaspik of Rockland County Day Hab Women's Division.

Several streamlining-oriented staffing updates are the order of the day Hamaspik of Kings County: A new team of Direct Support staff has been taken on at the 38th St. Shvesterheim; IRA Nurse Judy Schwartz is now exclusively overseeing nursing care at the agency's residences; and MSC Supervisor (and Registered Nurse) Shalva Sashitsky is now tending to the agency's NHTD- and Day Hab-related nursing demands.

In 38th St. Shvesterheim news, the "girls" had no less than four happy family occasions to attend the week of June 19-24, what with two staffers' weddings and subsequent sheva brachos, the small but festive post-wedding dinners. "They looked like princesses" for one whole week, says senior staffer Mrs. R. Horowitz.

The individuals also recently enjoyed trips to Brooklyn's Luna Park, the Brooklyn Botanical Garden, a bowling outing, and even the Nachas Health Fair, a community educational event. They also were treated to an irresistible backyard barbecue served up by their residence's cook, and are planning to

engage in some serious backyard do-it-yourself gardening too.

Hamaspik Staff Trainer Joel Grosz was in action yet again this past Monday, June 20th on the premises of Hamaspik of Rockland County. It was on that day that Mr. Grosz personally led his first-ever Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention (SCIP) training session for new and existing Hamaspik employees. The all-day course served as orientation training for newly-minted Direct Support Professionals, and a required refresher for existing employees.

A mere two days later, on Wednesday, June 22nd, the Hamaspik Terrace ballroom was occupied yet again for another training session, this one involving Medical Immobilization and Protective Stabilization, or MIPS. The OPWDD-required training teaches Direct Support Professionals and other staff in contact with special-needs individuals how to painlessly and effectively restrain them should they physically resist treatment when brought to doctor or dentist for care. To pass MIPS training, staff must demonstrate mastery of various holds; MIPS-certified agencies like Hamaspik must also keep a plan written by a staff psychologist on file and updated yearly. Individuals' doctors and dentists

must also have individuals' MIPS plans on file at their offices.

The new NYSHA Article 16 Clinic in Brooklyn, New York is slowly but surely sinking community roots and building momentum.

Under the supervision of Hamaspik psychologist Alan Blau, Ph.D., psychologist Dr. Alison Finkel has been tending to female special-needs clients' mental-health needs per community sensitivity since the clinic's opening day.

Mrs. S. Stern, a Hamaspik of Kings County employee of various positions for over six years now, brings her wealth of experience with special-needs individuals to the Clinic as its first-ever administrative assistant—joining Medical Director Dr. Abraham Berger, Drs. Blau and Finkel, physical therapist Yitzi Kolodny and counselor Yisroel Williger as the Clinic's core corps.

"I don't hire anyone who doesn't have a smile on their face," says Clinic Director Shloime Reichman.

He explains that building up a "name," or positive community reputation, takes time—especially with such sensitive issues as healthcare for special-needs individuals. "If people hear that it's good, then word of mouth spreads. We want people to enjoy and want to come back."

Nevertheless, "It's picking up nicely," he says. "We're going at a very healthy pace." ■

In the Know... AMD

Continued from Page 9

ing your particular needs. Training and practice are also important in order to become skilled at using any device.

Some of these items include prescription magnifying glasses and/or eyeglasses for reading or other close-up tasks; hand magnifiers of varying strengths (some with built-in lights); desktop-mounted

magnifiers; telescopes for seeing far-away objects or signs that can be handheld like binoculars; and video magnifiers that enlarge printed material, pictures, or small objects and which are growing in use and range of application.

Other low-vision devices and techniques include electronic books; e-book readers; audio books; large-print books, newspapers, magazines and banking checks; high-contrast and large number telephones, thermostats, watches, and remote controls; talking watches, timers, books, and medical devices; bold-tipped markers for easy-to-read shopping and phone number lists; and computers that can magnify (on screen or on paper) any printed material or picture, or that read aloud what is viewed on screen.

Bottom line? For someone diagnosed with AMD, whether dry or wet, it is critical to get the emotional, mental, social and therapeutic support one needs to live as healthy and functional a life as possible.

Hamaspik thanks Dr. Ronald Siwoff, O.D., F.A.A.O., a leading low-vision specialist and researcher noted for his compassionate touch for special-needs individuals, for critically reviewing this article. ■



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