



The Hamaspik Gazette

News of Hamaspik Agencies and General Health

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GAZETTE SURVEY

The GAZETTE asks YOU: **HOW MANY TIMES A WEEK DO YOU EXERCISE?**

Respond to: survey@hamaspik.org

HEALTH STAT

CAUSES OF CANCER

Genetically inherited 5%	Lifestyle/environment 29%	Random cell DNA copying errors 66%
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Source: Johns Hopkins University study, Science, Mar. 23

HEALTH QUOTE

“PFIZER SPENDS \$8 BILLION A YEAR ON RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. IF WE WERE LUCKY, WE’D PRODUCE THREE DRUGS A YEAR.”

—Pharma giant Pfizer CEO Ian Read on modern medicine, National Press Club luncheon speech, Mar. 23

HEALTH TIP

DRINK EVERY 15 MINUTES WHILE WORKING OUT

You should be drinking 64oz (about 9 7-ounce cups) of water a day—but when you’re exercising, add another 4-6oz every 15 minutes for good hydration.

INSIDE

HEALTH

- 02 NYC health tech goes boom!
- 06 French team cures sickle-cell patient
- 06 Lung cancer diagnosis improving

PUBLIC HEALTH AND POLICY

- 02 America 2016: Most insured ever
- 11 New NYC rules for drowsy cabbies

HAMASPIK NEWS

- 03 Regional OPWDD trains at Hamaspik Rockland
- 07 Purim in Hamaspik-ville

AUTISM NEWS

- 06 Troy, NY-based RPI develops autism blood test

SENIOR HEALTH

- 15 For post-joint-replacement recovery, home as good as rehab

PUBLIC POLICY NEWS

MASS MEDICAID MOVEMENT

WHILE JUST OVER 805,000 PATIENTS WERE TREATED BY COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS NATIONWIDE IN 2010, THE FEDERAL HEALTH RESOURCE AND SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (HRSA) NOW REPORTS OVER 24 MILLION PATIENTS TREATED AT COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS IN 2015. MILLIONS OF AMERICANS NOW GET THEIR HEALTHCARE AT COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS LIKE THIS EAST COAST CENTER ONE PICTURED BELOW. TYPICALLY LOCATED IN URBAN, MEDICALLY UNDERSERVED AREAS, THEY HAVE GROWN WITH THE MEDICAID EXPANSION UNDER THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA) THAT BECAME LAW IN 2010.



HAMASPIK NEWS

Breakthrough: HamaspikCare Approved for NYC Medicaid Home Care Population

WITH OFFICIAL NOD, AGENCY JOINS NEW YORK CITY’S “BIG TWO” CDPAP PROVIDERS

If you’re one of thousands of New York City residents on “straight” Medicaid (not Fidelis or other managed-care providers of Medicaid) and utilize CDPAP, you only had two choices of provider: Concepts of Independence, or the Chinese American Planning Council.

Until now, that is.

As of April 1, 2017, you’re able to get a personal assistant from a third non-profit

servicing the five boroughs of the Big Apple: HamaspikCare.

Thanks to a newly-approved contract with the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA), HamaspikCare can now provide Medicaid’s CDPAP program to even more people.

Residents of the five boroughs on “straight” Medicaid who qualify for the Con-

SEE PAGE 03 >>

PUBLIC POLICY NEWS

Gov. Cuomo Calls For 6.5% Wage Hike for New York’s Direct Support Professionals

SUPPORTS RAISE MUCH NEEDED, LONG AWAITED BY STATE’S FRONTLINE SUPPORT STAFF

On Tuesday, March 28, moving a long-awaited dream among many much closer to reality, New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced his clear intention to give a raise to New York’s Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), the men and women who work on the front lines in hundreds of disability agencies across the state.

The 6.5-percent wage hike will be rolled out in stages, according to Gov. Cuomo’s speech at a rally. At that wage-increase rally, entitled bFair-

2DirectCare, the state’s chief executive declared, “I will not sign the budget unless there is \$55M for Direct Care Professionals.”

The raise will first provide a 3.25-percent boost to take effect in January 2018, followed by another 3.25 percent increase come April of 2018.

Recipients of that coming raise are the DSPs employed statewide by the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD)—and frontline employees of such OPWDD non-profit partners like Hamaspik.

The pay hike will also affect DSPs employed by the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and affiliated agencies.★

Services Provided by NYSHA AGENCIES

OPWDD

COMMUNITY HABILITATION

Providing: A personal worker to work on daily living skill goals

HOME BASED RESPITE

Providing: Relief for parents of special needs individuals

AFTER SCHOOL RESPITE

Providing: A respite program for after school hours and school vacations

DAY HAB PROGRAM

Providing: A day program for adults with special needs

SUPPLEMENTAL DAY HAB PROGRAM

Providing: an extended day program for adults with special needs

CAMP NESHOMAH

Providing: A day program for children with special needs during summer and winter school breaks

INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTIAL ALTERNATIVE (IRA)

Providing: A supervised residence for individuals who need out-of-home placement

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Apartments and supports for individuals who can live independently

ENVIRONMENTAL MODIFICATION

Providing: Home modifications for special needs individuals

SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Providing: Support and job coaching for individuals with disabilities to be employed and to maintain employment

ENHANCED SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

Providing: Job developing and coaching for people with any type of disability

MEDICAID SERVICE COORDINATION

Providing: An advocate for the individual to access and coordinate available benefits

HOME FAMILY CARE

Providing: A family to care for an individual with special needs

INTERMEDIATE CARE FACILITY

Providing: A facility for individuals who are medically involved and developmentally delayed

IBS

Providing: Intensive Behavior Services

PLAN OF CARE SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Support for families of individuals with special needs

FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Reimbursement for out of ordinary expenses for items or services not covered by Medicaid

PARENTAL RETREATS

Providing: Getaways and retreats for parents of special needs individuals

SELF DIRECTION

Fiscal Intermediary (FI) — providing: accounting and billing for vendors that support individuals who self-direct their own supports

Broker — providing: one-on-one, independent brokering of all necessary services and supports to individuals who self-direct their own supports

DOH

CARE AT HOME

Providing: Nursing · Personal care aide · Therapy · Respite · Medical supplies · Adaptive technology · Service coordination

EARLY INTERVENTION

Providing: Multidisciplinary and supplemental Evaluations · Home and community based services · Center based services · Parent/ child groups · Ongoing service coordination · Physical therapy · Occupational therapy · Speech therapy · Special education · Nutrition · Social work · Family training · Vision services · Bilingual providers · Play therapy · Family counseling

NURSING HOME TRANSITION AND DIVERSION WAIVER PROGRAM (NHTD)

Providing: Service Coordination · Assistive

technology · Moving assistance · Community transitional services · Home community support services · E-Mods · Independent living skills · Positive behavioral interventions · Structured day program

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Providing: Service Coordination · Independent living skills training · Day programs · Rent subsidy · Medical equipment · E-Mods · Transportation · Community transmittal services · Home community support services

CHILD & ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

Providing: Breakfast · Lunch · Supper · Snack

HEALTH HOME SERVING CHILDREN (HHSC)

Providing: Intensive, comprehensive care management and family/community support services for children with chronic condition(s) and/or mental health issues at greater risk for relapse and/or lack of care

SENIOR DINING/SOCIAL DAY PROGRAM (SHNOIS CHAIM)

Providing: Daily onsite lunches and social/ educational activities for community seniors (Orange County only)

APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS (ABA)

Providing: behavior modification for children with autism covered by private insurance

LHCSA - HAMASPIK CARE

PERSONAL CARE & SUPPORT SERVICES

Providing: Home Health Aides · Homemakers · Personal Care Aides · Housekeepers · HCSS aides

COUNSELING SERVICES

Providing: Dietician/Nutrition counselors · Social Workers

REHABILITATION SERVICES

Providing: Physical therapy · Speech therapy · Occupational therapy · individuals

PACE-CDPAS

Providing: Personal care aides for people in need

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTS

Providing: Minor maintenance for qualified

SOCIAL MODEL

Providing: A social day program for senior patients

NURSING SERVICES

Providing: Skilled observation and assessment · Care planning · paraprofessional supervision · clinical monitoring and coordination · Medication management · physician-ordered nursing intervention and skill treatments

HAMASPIK CHOICE

A Managed Long Term Care Plan (MLTCP) approved by New York State

HCR

ACCESS TO HOME

Providing: Home modifications for people with physical disabilities

RESTORE

Providing: Emergency house repairs for senior citizens

HOME REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Providing: Remodeling dilapidated homes for low income home owners

NYSED

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

Providing: Employment planning · Job development · Job placement

JOB COACHING

Intensive and ongoing support for individuals with physical, mental and/ or developmental disabilities to become employed and to maintain employment

NYSHA

ARTICLE 16 CLINIC

Providing: Physical therapy · Occupational therapy · Speech therapy · Psychology · Social work · Psychiatry · Nursing · Nutrition

TRAINING

Providing: SCIP · CPR & first aid · Orientation · MSC CORE · AMAP · Annual Updates · Com-Hab/Respite · Family Care training · Supportive Employment

CENTRAL INTAKE

Providing: The first contact for a person or family in need of Hamaspiik services

HAMASPIK GAZETTE

Providing: A bilingual monthly newspaper informing the community of available Hamaspiik services

OMH

HEALTH AND RECOVERY PLAN (HARP)

Providing: long-term social, emotional, employment, peer-support and other mental-illness recovery supports

► PUBLIC POLICY NEWS

Mayo Clinic Warns Against Ice Fishing

Those Minnesota doctors should know! But a recent press release from the prestigious Mayo Clinic, the top U.S. hospital in many specialties (no hard feelings, Manhattan) warns the U.S. public against the winter pastime of ice fishing, or cutting a hole in a frozen lake and waiting for fish to bite your line. The Mayo Clinic is based in Rochester, Minnesota, a state known for freezing winters.

According to Mayo, both ice fishing and ice fishing-related injuries have increased in

recent years.

One would think that falling through the ice would be ice fishing's biggest risk. But only four such incidents were found on record—along with four ice fishing-related burns (ice fishing commonly entails using a heated hut, and resulting heat mishaps).

Among the 85 ice fishing-related ER visits identified in records from 2009 to 2014, nearly 50 percent consisted of broken bones, sprains and strains, with another 30 percent comprised of cuts, scrapes and punctures. ★

► PUBLIC POLICY NEWS

America 2016: Most insured ever

According to freshly-crunched numbers from the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), 2016 was the first year in U.S. history in which the number of Americans with no health insurance fell below nine percent of the total population.

But the report also shows that the bulk of Americans are still covered by employer-

provided private health insurance plans, and that less than five percent of the population has an Obamacare exchange plan, or private plan for individuals with no job-based coverage.

In 2010, the report said, about 48.6 million Americans, or 16 percent of total population, lacked insurance. By 2016, however, that number had dropped to 28.2 million, or 8.8 percent.

Here's where Americans got their health insurance in 2016:

- 69 percent of adults under 65 got health insurance through an employer
- 20.3 percent of adults under 65 got public coverage such as Medicaid or the VA
- 12.3 percent of adults under 65 had no health insurance
- 4.8 percent of adults, or 9.4 million, got insurance via Obamacare exchanges ★

► HEALTH NEWS

Industry Boom Makes NYC Nation's Number-two Health-tech Hotspot

ABOUT 100 HEALTH STARTUPS FUELING NATIONAL INNOVATION, CITY'S ECONOMY

Against the double backdrop of the national healthcare industry's boom in general, and New York City's ongoing hospital construction boom in particular, the Big Apple's health tech industry is likewise experiencing an ongoing boom.

Roughly 100 new health technology firms, with nearly \$1 billion in venture capital funding among them, currently make their headquarters in the five boroughs—mostly in Manhattan. At least eight employ 50 or more workers.

What's more, New York City health care jobs are projected to grow 22.5 percent in the ten-year period through 2022. However, many of those jobs will be low-paying home care jobs.

According to a recent report from the Center for an Urban Future, a research non-profit, New York City has emerged as a major hub for health care technology companies because they can take advantage of the area's renowned

SEE PAGE 03 ►►

► HAMASPIK NEWS

New York State OPWDD Taps HamaspiK of Rockland County to Host Regional Training

DOZENS OF HUDSON VALLEY PROFESSIONALS AT REQUIRED TWO-DAY COURSE

This time, it wasn't another flawless audit of a HamaspiK group home, or a finding-free survey of HamaspiK's Medicaid Service Coordinator (MSC) program, that came of another agency interaction with the New York State OPWDD.

Instead, it was a mandatory two-day training course on investigating incidents involving safety and support provided to individuals with intellectual and other disabilities.

The training sessions were held March 22-23 at the HamaspiK Terrace social hall at HamaspiK of Rockland County's headquarters on Monsey's central Route 59. They were attended by dozens of investigators and other professionals from several Hudson Valley disability non-profits.

Coordinated by Elaine Zoldan, Incident Compliance Officer with the New York State OPWDD's Hudson Valley Regional Office,

the two full-day sessions walked attendees through all official protocols.

Greeting OPWDD presenters Leslie Fuld and William Murray, the respective Director and Investigative Reviewer at the OPWDD's Albany-based Incident Management Unit, the morning of March 22 was HamaspiK of Rockland County Director of Development Zalman Stein.

Mr. Stein ushered the two officials to the multipurpose ballroom that was shortly turned into a conference room. Ms. Zoldan was also on hand throughout.

By 9:00 a.m., several dozen women and men from all major Hudson Valley disability services providers were seated in rapt attention to the informative presentations.

In walking newly-minted agency in-house investigators through the ins and out of investigating incidents, the presenters also reviewed the four categories of inci-

dents requiring investigation.

Those four categories, each discussed in detail with plenty of real-life examples, are abuse and neglect, significant incidents, serious notable occurrences, and minor notable occurrences. What to do about, and how (and to whom) to report, each type was laid out for attendees to internalize.

During the day-long trainings' breaks, and in mid-training interactions, participants got to know one another as members of the same professional community and informal family that they are.

When the training concluded the afternoon of Thursday, March 23, participants came away informed and empowered on providing objective and thorough protection to the most vulnerable members of society whom their community collectively supports.

In a follow-up e-mail the following Monday, Ms. Zoldan thanked HamaspiK. "I want to express our appreciation for letting us use your lovely facilities for our Investigation Training," she wrote. "Your agency really went above and beyond with helping us set up. It was also great meeting your staff people in person."

Safety of people with disabilities has long been a top HamaspiK priority shared by the New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), HamaspiK's state partner.

And given both the convenient location of HamaspiK of Rockland County's headquarters and its superlative track record of compliance with safety and all other regulations, the OPWDD's choice to have its regional training hosted by HamaspiK was almost natural. ★

HamaspiKCare Approved for NYC Medicaid Home Care Population With Official Nod, Agency Joins New York City's "Big Two" CDPAP Providers

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 01

sumer Directed Personal Assistant Program (CDPAP) will shortly be able to apply at HRA and ask for HamaspiKCare. Specifically, inquirers will be able to apply at the eight city-wide offices of CASA, the HRA subdivision that handles home care services.

The CDPAP program has long been provided by HamaspiKCare and other non-profits to a growing number of seniors in need who are privately insured, or covered by the numerous Medicaid managed-care plans available to many New Yorkers.

However, a sizable NYC population remains for various reasons on "straight" Medicaid, including a number of members of the communities served by HamaspiKCare across Brooklyn.

Those community members now have increased access and a greater, more neighborhood-based interface with the critical HRA service, thanks to the city's green light.

Regardless of venue, or through which Medicaid program it is obtained, the personal assistant program remains a very popular service—geared as it is for those who just need that extra hand at home or in

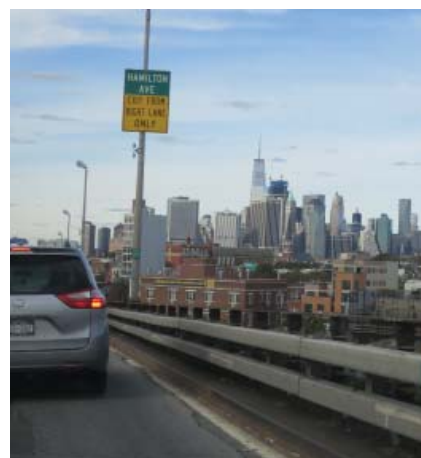
the neighborhood but have neither "disability" nor full independence.

In the family-heavy communities of Brooklyn and the upstate Hudson Valley that are serviced by HamaspiK, marked as they are by older men and women presiding over generations of living descendants, HamaspiKCare's CDPAP program enjoys a particularly robust community demand.

Thanks to CDPAP and its allowance for most family members to serve as aides to revered elders and other family members, hundreds of nieces and nephews, grandchildren and other relatives—or even children or parents, in some allowable situations—are now honoring beloved uncles, aunts, grandmothers, grandfathers or even parents (and, in some cases, children) by assisting them around the house, or out and

about on local errands.

With the breakthrough development, years in the making, now finally happening, HamaspiKCare is poised to service a vast new range of New Yorkers with disabilities. ★



Industry Boom Makes NYC Nation's Number-two Health-tech Hotspot

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 02

academic medical centers as potential investors and testing grounds.

In 2016 alone, according to research by company CB Insights quoted in the Center's report, New York City-based digital health companies collected \$908 million in venture funding—a nearly tenfold increase from the 15 companies that raised \$93 million in funding back in 2010.

New York City is now the country's #2 health-tech hotspot, second only to Northern California's Bay Area in terms of venture capital investment in digital health. The city is home to such digital health innovators like Flatiron, Oscar, Zocdoc and dozens of others.

Indeed, as reported in *Gazette* #141, three of *Modern Healthcare's* "100 Best Places to Work in Healthcare for 2016" were the NYC-based healthcare startups CipherHealth, Phreesia and Quartet. ★

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► HAMASPIK NEWS

Hamaspik of Kings County Brings Happy Faces to Upstate's Raleigh Hotel

AGENCY'S 61ST ST. MEN'S RESIDENCE ENJOYS MAR. 17-19 GETAWAY WEEKEND

No snow here!

While there was no shortage of the wintry white precipitation all over the grounds, residents of the 61st St. Briderheim all but escaped the frozen fury of the season over a thrilling and thoroughly rejuvenating three-day getaway centered on a Shabbos weekend at the upstate Raleigh Hotel.

That venue was the axis of the group home's March 17-19 vacation—which saw the

residents of the Borough Park-based Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) hit, road early Friday, hit a fast-paced go-cart track late Sunday, and get plenty of rest, relaxation and recreation in between.

Yossi Moskovits, longtime Manager at the Hamaspik of Kings County men's residence, oversaw a crew of four Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) supporting nine gentlemen from the vacation's start through its finish.



THE HEIGHT OF WINTER FUN MANAGER MOSKOVITS (FRONT LEFT) AND CREW ATOP CAMPGAW MOUNTAIN



RIGHT AT HOME THE 61ST CONTINGENT FIT RIGHT IN AT THE RALEIGH

Beginning well before Purim, Mr. Moskovits planned the entire itinerary, taking into thoughtful account each individual's personal preferences for a vacation that met their collective wishes. Providing him with critical help with all those arrangements was 61st Assistant Manager Mrs. Chany Wertzberger.

By the time the morning of March 17 rolled around, then, Raleigh reservations were long since made, foodstuffs and medications were packed, and gas-filled vans were ready to roll.

Pulling up to their vacation destination in leafy upstate South Fallsburg some three hours after departing brownstone Brooklyn, the 61st St. family exited their vehicles and—at least for Shabbos—left the world behind.

Hardworking Hamaspik DSPs Dovy Klein, David Teichman, Shea Teichman and Yidi Teichman never left the gentlemen's sides throughout.

First helping them settle into their hotel rooms and unpack their suitcases, the DSPs supported them throughout the Friday-night meal, serving them a range of culinary choices and enjoying their own renditions of Shabbos songs—which at least one young man delivered while standing on a chair in the private ballroom reserved for the Hamaspik guests.

The DSPs later helped the gentlemen off to

bed.

Shabbos day at the Raleigh was filled with Day-of-Rest rest and relaxation, as the young men enjoyed sleeping in, rising at their leisure to a lovely breakfast and sharing the company of the Raleigh's numerous other guests, the bulk of which share their same Chasidic Orthodox community of origin.

As such, on-site morning prayer services followed by the traditional Shabbos lunch made "the boys" feel right at home.

That was followed by a leisurely and lengthy Shabbos afternoon marked by relaxing naps and/or gentle strolls about the Raleigh's spacious and elegant indoor premises.

But as Shabbos ended, 61st's vacation only really began.

Following the post-Shabbos Havdalah ceremony, the young men opted for a private swim in the Raleigh's large heated indoor pool. Besides the recreational benefits, the buoyant non-impact water environment gave the swimmers a therapeutic workout.

In need of serious protein infusion (translation: dinner!) after that invigorating aquatic exercise, the gentlemen next enjoyed a late-night Melaveh Malka (lit. "Ushering the Queen"), the customary Saturday-night meal symbolically sending off Queen Shabbos.

Sunday morning kicked off with the Shacharis morning prayer services to which the gentlemen are accustomed, followed by a nutritious breakfast served by 61st's DSPs and Manager—themselves backed by none other than Hamaspik of Kings County Director of Residential Services Cheskel Fisher, who had accompanied the group since Friday for that extra measure of support.

By the time the clock struck 12:00 noon, the Hamaspik guests and support staff were all packed up and ready to roll again.

SEE PAGE 05 >>



ON THE RIGHT TRACK A GROUP-HOME RESIDENT AND DSP ENJOY GO-CARTING

► HAMASPIK NEWS

The Elements of Success and Caring

HAMASPIK OF ORANGE COUNTY HONORS STAFF WITH APPRECIATION EVENT

A fascinating, fun and interactive talk on the “Four Elements” of ancient medicine and what they mean in modern psychology today was just part of it.

But Hamaspiik of Orange County’s March 18 appreciation event for its employee body didn’t just educate its guests. It left the gathered Direct Support Professionals (DSPs), department and group-home managers, program directors and other staff feeling validated, encouraged and saluted for the hard and altruistic work they put in year-round.

The post-Shabbos dinner, held at the Hamaspiik Terrace ballroom on the premises of Hamaspiik’s main building in Kiryas Joel, featured an inspirational keynote address, fine cuisine and live music—and an atmosphere of camaraderie that the agency’s diverse employees, guests of honor all, particularly appreciated, too-often unable to socialize with each other as they are due to work demands.

For four hours on a late Saturday night, it was they who were given direct support.

The night of appreciation began at 9:30 p.m., as Hamaspiik of Orange County Executive Director Moses Wertheimer personally greeted the guests as each arrived.

Taking seats at elegantly set round tables, the guest socialized as live music by Meshorerim, a

local a cappella group, filled the air.

With the seating filling up, Director of Day Services Shmuel Moskowitz took the podium as Master of Ceremonies to formally welcome the crowd.

For Mr. Moskowitz, working with many of the participating DSPs on the front lines each day as he does, the event was of particular import, giving him the opportunity to convey a few powerful words of personal thanks as only a Day Services Director can.

Emcee Moskowitz then introduced the keynote address of the night: Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Weinberger, dean of Kiryas Joel’s primary yeshiva and a noted inspirational community speaker.

Rabbi Weinberger’s brief but poignant talk centered on the spiritual power of supporting individuals with disabilities—focusing on the pristine qualities of their souls counterbalancing whatever shortcoming may be present in their bodies.

As such, Rabbi Weinberger exhorted his rap crowd, to support people with special needs is to serve as an honor guard of sorts to such special souls—a career of service whose ultimate reward comes in spheres beyond our conscious existence.

The message of honor was not lost on the

crowd, putting their daily work as it did in a whole new light.

Following a musical intermission, Executive Director Wertheimer took the floor for a few minutes to speak about Hamaspiik in general—and the critical importance of the DSPs in particular.

Echoing the keynote message, Mr. Wertheimer shared inspirational spiritual experiences of his own in his long line of Hamaspiik work, connecting them to the ongoing work of the agency especially as spearheaded by its corps of Direct Support Professionals.

Mr. Moskowitz then introduced the night’s primary “entertainment”—a stimulating presentation by popular therapist Mordechai Weinberger, LMSW of Lakewood, New Jersey.

Mr. Weinberger’s interactive discussion revolved around earth, wind, fire and water, the ancient “Four Elements” said to categorize all personality types.

“Fire” is the life of the party who creates a scene in every task done. while “water” is the cerebral, calculated type who micro-analyzes everything to ensure the easiest route, Mr. Weinberger posited. “Earth” is the bottom-line, no-frills disciplinarian who just gets it done while “wind” is the creative artist, head in clouds, who can dream up genius but can’t plan anything.

A hilarious demonstration featuring an attendee representing each type followed, with the professional counselor using the foursome’s responses to the question, “What do you do when your wife asks you to take out the garbage?” to illustrate the personality of each.

The four categories are not only expressed in workplace performance but in personal lives, with Providence guiding men to marry women of opposite type, the lecturer went on, with “earth” marrying “wind” and “water” gravitating to “fire.”

Participants came away with a contemporary—and, most importantly, applicable—interpretation of the “Four Elements” of ancient philosophy to apply to their professional and personal lives.

While the event formally ended well past midnight with Mr. Wertheimer’s closing remarks, guests were clearly anything but tired—as an enthusiastic crowd gathered around Mr. Weinberger for an impromptu question-and-answer session that lasted several long minutes.

At the end of the day, after all, it wasn’t just affirmation of the four elements of personality that guests came away with—but with validation of who they are as members of the Hamaspiik family: elite support-givers providing superlative care to those members of their community, and society at large, who need it most.



ALL IN THE FAMILY ORANGE COUNTY STAFF ENJOY THEIR SHARED MISSION



INSPIRATION SPIRITUAL AND PRACTICABLE RABBI WEINBERGER (T) INSPIRES, SOCIAL WORKER WEINBERGER (B) INSTRUCTS



FROM THE TOP—AND FROM THE HEART MOSES WERTHEIMER ADDRESSES THE CROWD

Hamaspiik of Kings County Brings Happy Faces to Upstate’s Raleigh Hotel

AGENCY’S 61ST ST. MEN’S RESIDENCE ENJOYS MAR. 17-19 GETAWAY WEEKEND

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Their next destination, like their first (not to mention their point of departure), had plenty of snow, too—but this time, it attracted, not repelled. Destination? Campgaw Mountain Ski Area!

The snow on the snow tubing track at that venue was readily embraced by the gleeful young men, who had plenty of fun sliding down the hill snugly ensconced inside giant rubber bagels.

If that wasn’t fun enough, the gentlemen’s next destination of choice was southwest by Highway 287 to East Hanover, New Jersey, where an afternoon of indoor fun awaited at The Funplex.

If downhill (as in snow tubing) is fun, it would only logically follow that flat is not—unless, of course, you’re whizzing around the decidedly flat but hardly non-descript indoor go-cart track at The Funplex.

“There are no words to describe the happiness and joy that each and every individual had during this beautiful mini vacation getaway,” Mr. Moskowitz later told the *Gazette* by e-mail. “I saw a smile on every face.”

Needless to say, when 61st St. got back home to 61st St that night, after a long afternoon at The Funplex, everyone was still smiling.

“I have no regrets,” he said. “It was worth it to see their happy faces!” ★

The Funplex. .

► **AUTISM NEWS**

State of (Autism) Innovation

BLOOD TEST FOR AUTISM DEVELOPED BY TROY, N.Y.-BASED RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE (RPI)

In a preliminary study, a blood test to definitively diagnose autism appears to have an accuracy rate of 98 percent among children aged three to ten, it was reported mid-March.

The experimental blood test at the heart of the small study was developed by the department of biomedical engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in Troy, N.Y.

“The test was able to predict autism, regardless of where on the spectrum an individual was,” said study co-author Juergen Hahn,

who heads that department at RPI. “Additionally, the test indicates with very good accuracy the severity of certain autism-related conditions.”

The study was small, involving just 83 children with autism and 76 children without the disorder.

The current standard approach to diagnosing autism typically entails a consensus drawn from a group of medical professionals, including pediatricians, psychologists, occu-

pational therapists, and speech and language experts.

The new blood test takes a different approach, however, focusing instead on identifying the presence of key metabolism markers.

To test the idea, researchers collected blood samples from all 159 children. The analysis turned out to be nearly flawless in diagnosing autism cases, the researchers said. It was also more than 96 percent accurate in identifying those children who did not have autism, they added.

In the United States, it’s estimated that 1 in 68 children has autism spectrum disorder (ASD), the term for a range of conditions that may involve problems with social skills, speech and nonverbal communication, and repetitive behaviors.

Prof. Hahn said it remains unclear if the test’s preliminary success would extend to

children younger than age three.

“Ideally, one would like to test this on children 18 to 24 months of age,” he told health news outlet MedlinePlus. “But this has not yet been done, and as such we do not know where the limits are.”

The researcher added that it’s also unknown whether the test might forecast the onset of autism among children who have not yet developed any clinical signs of the disorder.

Other researchers have made related headway. A study published last month in *Nature* by researchers at the University of North Carolina reported that brain scans had shown early promise at predicting whether an infant under the age of one might develop autism in the second year of life.

The New York-based findings were published March 16 in *PLOS Computational Biology*. ★

► **HEALTH NEWS**

French Team Scores World’s First Sickle Cell Anemia Patient ‘Cured’ by Gene Therapy

If a new report in *The New England Journal of Medicine* is true, then doctors in Paris have made medical history by producing the world’s first-known complete cure of sickle cell anemia.

Sickle cell anemia, which primarily affects children of African ethnicity, is marked by misshapen red blood cells piling up in and clogging the body’s organs and small blood vessels.

The common disorder, caused by a genetic mutation that produces red blood cells not in their normal round shape, results in high pain, anemia, organ lesions and shortened life expectancy.

Approximately 100,000 U.S. residents, mostly of African heritage, currently have

the condition, and about one in every 365 black children in the U.S. is born with sickle cell disease.

According to the March 2 report, researchers at Necker Children’s Hospital in Paris cured a teenager of sickle cell anemia by reprogramming the faulty genes behind the disease so that they would produce normal-shaped red blood cells.

To do so, they first harvested his stem cells from his bone marrow. In a genetics lab, they then corrected the genetic defect that caused the stem cells to produce misshapen red blood cells.

Doctors then treated him with chemotherapy for four days to eradicate his diseased stem cells. The last step replaced

his missing stem cells by reintroducing the genetically modified stem cells, a step done by simple intravenous (IV) injection into the patient’s bloodstream.

According to the report, it’s been 15 months since the young patient concluded the experimental treatment—and his blood cells show no further sign of the disease. He’s also off medication.

“All the biological tests we perform lead us to think he is cured,” said Dr. Marina Cavazzana, senior study author of the study and head of the biotherapy department at Necker.

“Since therapy was applied, he hasn’t had any pain, any complications. He is free of any transfusions. He plays sports and goes to school,” said Dr. Philippe Leboulch, an author of the new research and a profes-

sor of medicine at the University of Paris.

“We want to be cautious, of course, and we don’t want to say that this is the cure for tomorrow or the next day for everybody,” he added. “At the same time, what we’ve observed is really convincing, and we just hope that we can move this along to make it available to patients.”

“Gene therapy holds promise because a patient serves as his own donor,” explained American Society of Hematology president-elect Dr. Alexis Thompson.

But is the patient truly cured?

The answer to that “can be provided only by the longer follow-up,” Dr. Cavazzana pointed out—adding hopes that the new treatment will be widely available within the next five years.

The only current long-term treatment for sickle-cell anemia is a bone marrow sickle cell transplant—a procedure only available to patients with a sibling (or, less commonly, a stranger donor) whose bone marrow is compatible enough for transplant. ★

Two New Medical Developments Might Streamline Lung-cancer Diagnoses, Save Lives

Because it is frequently caught too late, lung cancer remains by far the disease’s deadliest form. And making that diagnosis worse is the fact that just diagnosing it is fraught with uncomfortable, costly and even risky procedures.

Lung cancer is currently diagnosed in a few steps.

First, CT scans of the chest find suspicious and unidentified growths inside the lungs that are larger than about five millimeters. An invasive procedure called a lung biopsy is then usually done. A traditional lung biopsy involves inserting a specialized needle into the lung to remove a sample of the suspect nodule or tissue. The sample is then tested for cancer in a laboratory.

But lung biopsies can cause serious complications, including collapsed lungs, infections or worse.

That’s why medicine has long sought other ways of reliably—and non-invasively—confirming lung cancer.

In a study published Feb. 27 in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, analysis of DNA collected from simple nasal swabs may someday help doctors confirm cases of lung cancer and avoid costlier and more invasive existing procedures, according to Boston University researcher Dr. Avrum Spira and colleagues.

In the nasal swab samples, collected from current or former smokers at 28 medical centers in North America and Europe, Dr. Spira’s

study found a pattern of 30 genes that were active in a different way in people confirmed to have lung cancer than in those who were not.

In related news, biotechnology firm OncoCyte announced on March 6 that its tests have confirmed the effectiveness of its new “liquid biopsy” lung cancer blood test.

According to OncoCyte, a 300-patient validation study of its blood test for early detection of lung cancer has confirmed the accuracy reported from a prior trial.

The company’s previously-reported study of over 600 patients found the OncoCyte test had a sensitivity of 90 percent and specificity of 62 percent—meaning that it accurately detected cancer 90 percent of the time while demonstrating an ability to identify false positives 62 percent of the time.

The firm said it was preparing for a commercial launch of the test as early as the second

half of this year and expects it will be the first product of its kind for lung cancer to reach the market.

So-called liquid biopsies use blood or other body fluids to determine the presence of cancer and may help spare patients from invasive biopsies that are risky, expensive and often turn out to be unnecessary, as they commonly find samples to be benign.

OncoCyte said it would price its test at about 20 percent to 25 percent of the cost of a standard of care lung biopsy, which can run about \$15,000. That would put the OncoCyte test at around \$3,000 to \$3,750.

According to OncoCyte, about 1.4 million U.S. patients a year are found to have lung nodules 5mm or larger, making for a sizable market for alternative diagnostics. ★

● ► HAMASPIK NEWS

A Perfectly Person-centered Hamaspik Neighborhood Purim

Home Residents, Family Care Beneficiaries All Active Community Participants

Perhaps Mrs. Fischer puts it best: “People there are unbelievable—they’re so warm to the boys!”

But the residence manager’s post-Purim reference to the immediate neighbors, and neighborhood, of the Forshay Briderheim IRA also applies all across Hamaspik.

Reflecting not just today’s milieu of mainstreaming of people with disabilities but of the mutual integration of Hamaspik group homes and surrounding communities, the long-time manager conveys a picture of complete integration, where disability warrants nary a second thought.

At least not come Purim across the world of Hamaspik.

EXCHANGE OF PURIM SPIRIT

If the young men who call Wannamaker home hadn’t already effectively brought the exuberant Purim spirit to the streets, the streets sufficiently compensated by bringing it to Wannamaker.

At that Hamaspik of Rockland County group home, reports manager Joel (Feish) Horowitz, residents had more than ample servings of fun slathering their Hamaspik van with Purim-related slogans and images a day or so before the holiday.

And on the holiday itself, of course, with merry music pumping throughout the residence, a group of young students from a local yeshivah, hardly content to keep Purim to themselves, burst through Wannamaker’s front doors in a semi-serious state to dance and sing with their neighbors and friends—for no reason other than it being Purim, of course.

COMICAL CULTURE CLASH

So a 1940s New York businessman, a Middle Eastern sheik, a Chasidic rebbe, a circus ringleader and Mickey Mouse show up in a dining room.

Is it a joke? No. It’s Purim prep at Hamaspik of Rockland County’s Concord Briderheim!

That was the scene in Concord’s dining room in the run-up to the merry festival, as several residents representing persons and professions who’d otherwise hardly

meet met in a clashing, comedic collision of colors and cultures, none of which had anything to do with the other. (Unless, of course, the businessman was asked by Mickey Mouse to arrange a meeting with a rebbe and a sheik at which a circus professional happened to stumble in, or something like that.)

The nonsensical getups set the stage for the Purim holiday, whose tradition of costumes symbolize the hidden miracles of G-d behind the events of history.

What’s more, reports Manager Mrs. Goldberger, signage was prominently placed throughout the residence strictly forbidding all forms of frowning, dour faces, sour moods and the like on Purim.

Needless to say, Concord’s residents had a grand blast getting out and about in the local neighborhood on Purim day, bringing that indomitable Purim spirit to one and all.

OH, GOODIE!

At the Arcadian Briderheim IRA, a Hamaspik of Rockland County group home long under the leadership of Manager Shlomo Lebowitz and capable staff, residents furthered their person-centered supports by gathering around the residence’s dining room table to select from an array of chocolatey and otherwise tasty treats with which to fill shalach manos goodie bags for loved ones.

Those personally-packed packages were later delivered on Purim day to the boys’ parents and Arcadian neighbors alike, as Arcadian’s van, loaded with residents and musical Purim spirit, made its local rounds.

Dressed as clowns, soldiers, cowboys,

policemen, rabbis and other Purim staples, the Arcadian residents were supported with the fullest possible holiday community experience.

Besides hitting the road for goodie distribution, they also took in the nearest synagogue public reading of the Megillah, the central Book of Esther that is the axis of the holiday. Synagogue-goers, long accustomed to the Arcadian boys in their midst, welcomed them with open arms—and that extra Purim smile.

BRINGING IT HOME

Hamaspik Family Care Liaison Nachman Ciment was busy behind the wheel for a good part of Purim—delivering shalach manos gifts of appreciation from the agency to its sizable corps of providers of the New York State OPWDD program. (Hamaspik remains the state’s largest non-profit Family Care provider partner.)

While Hamaspik’s Family Care program delivered a message of support to those wonderful fathers and mothers who’ve opened their homes and hearts to beautiful children with disabilities over the years, likewise were those children themselves accompanied around town on Purim by their Family Care caregivers—ensuring that they were totally not left out on the jolly day.

That sentiment of inclusion culminated, by way of example, at the Purim feast of Grand Rabbi Leibish Rotenberg, also known as the Forshay Rebbe for the Monsey neighborhood he calls home—and a feast, like everything else at his large synagogue, that included the Rebbe’s neighbors from the Forshay Briderheim just across and down the road.

The Forshay Rebbe “includes them in everything he does with his kehilla [congregation],” Mrs. Fischer notes.

At Purim for the Forshay residents, coupled with their own pre-Purim shalach manos shopping with their Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) and their own money, that’s what putting inclusion on the table looks like.

That’s also what it looks like all across Hamaspik—with more than a little help from the neighbors. ★



THE CHOICE IS CLEAR ON PURIM DAY, WANNAMAKER’S VAN CARRIED THIS MESSAGE TO ALL

“Les Chocolatiers Amaspic”?!

Things weren’t just sweet but downright chocolatey Purim-time at Hamaspik of Kings County’s South 9th Shvesterheim IRA.

There, Manager Mrs. Cziment reports, residents didn’t just distribute the traditional shalach manos treats to friends, family and neighbors alike, but manufactured their own distributable goodies from raw edible material themselves.

Specifically, they transformed raw hunks of store-bought chocolate blocks into works of edible art. Using the magic of heat, molds and a good touch of creativity, residents were churning out all sorts of chocolate treats of all sizes and shapes.

“We’ll be opening a chocolate factory!” summarily declares Mrs. Cziment.

It remains to be learned who enjoyed the home-made chocolates more: South 9th’s recipients, or the residents and young budding chocolatiers themselves. In the meantime, Belgium has been put on notice...



PACKING IT IN FOR THESE ARCADIAN RESIDENTS, PURIM’S SPIRIT IS ON THE TABLE

► HAMASPIK NEWS

At Gala Annual Parties, Putting the People who Put People First, First

HAMASPIK OF KINGS, ROCKLAND HAIL DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL (DSP) TEAMS

Sunday through Friday, Yitzchok Yaakov Goldstein is up and out of the house by 6:30 a.m. and on the job by a quarter to seven. And about 40 miles south at the same time, when a lot of people are still getting out of bed, Shea Teichman is in the thick of work.

You'll hardly read about their unsung work anywhere else.

They are among the hardest workers you'll ever meet. They are among the gentlest people you'll ever meet. And they gently do some of the hardest work out there.

YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD HAMASPIK PILLAR

Being a Direct Support Professional (DSP) is one thing. Being a Hamaspiik Direct Support Professional (DSP) is quite another.

For a collective 12 years, Messrs. Goldstein and Teichman have been Hamaspiik DSPs.

The fresh-faced Mr. Goldstein still exudes boyish charm and spritely energy, working each day at Hamaspiik of Rockland County's Wannamaker Briderheim as if it's his first.

Arriving at 2 Wannamaker Ct. in upstate Chestnut Ridge early each day but Saturday, Goldstein joins fellow DSPs Yechezkel "Chezky" Dershowitz, Simcha Goldberg and Yoel Kupczyk in supporting the residence's residents as they get through

their morning routines. Come evening, Goldstein and his cohorts will repeat the morning's process in reverse. And the next morning, he'll be back at it.

For his part, Shea Teichman doesn't just do his job. He lives and breathes it. Working with DSP day-shift team members Moshe Grossman, Dov Klein and Yehuda Teichman each weekday morning, his support of residents around the house as they gear up for their days is more like brother helping brother—giving it the daily 110 percent that he does, and naturally and almost casually so.

He truly cares—as all Hamaspiik DSPs do. That's what makes them Hamaspiik DSPs.

These are but two of the many Hamaspiik people who put people first. And to honor and hail their elite level of hard work and true heart, Hamaspiik of Kings and Rockland Counties both recently separately hosted their annual DSP appreciation events.

BRINGING THE MESSAGE HOME

The lights were dim and the décor was elegant at the Hamaspiik Terrace social hall in Monsey.

It was 10:00 p.m. Saturday night, February 25, and the crowd of Hamaspiik of Rockland County DSPs and managers, all still in their Shabbos finery, was seated at round tables.

Serving as Master of Ceremonies was Joel Horowitz, doing double duty this evening.

Throughout the year, the energetic young man serves as Manager of the Wannamaker Briderheim (and Mr. Goldstein's proud and supportive boss). Tonight, however, he was not only present to emcee the event, but to also personally help fill out

the crowd paying appreciative homage to Hamaspiik's finest, the front-line foot soldiers that are its DSPs.

Other present Hamaspiik of Rockland County staff included Men's Day Rehabilitation Program Director Pinchos Knopfler, Day Services Director Shlomo Kornbluh, Quality Assurance officer Eliezer Appel, Grandview Briderheim IRA Manager Joel Schnitzer, and Director of Residential Services Moshe Sabel.

In his brief but warm opening remarks, Mr. Horowitz first talked about remaining inspired and resolute in light of current events and trends.

He then moved into a well-known account of two brothers and leaders in European Jewish history, both Chasidic Rebbes in their own right, who ended up together in a mass prison cell that was in offensively filthy condition.

Happy for the opportunity to connect with G-d by accepting a very unpleasant situation, the two men were soon literally dancing for joy—bringing all the dejected fellow inmates to their feet, too. But when a furious warden was shown the waste upon asking why everyone was dancing, the warden declared that he would show them—and proceeded to clean up the mess himself!

The moral of that true story, the manager reminded the audience, is that life is what one makes of it—and that while supporting individuals with disabilities is anything but glamorous at times, each adverse moment contains profound spiritual opportunity for personal growth.

For Hamaspiik founder and Hamaspiik of Rockland County Executive Director Meyer Wertheimer, who next took the floor, the event was a moment of reflection and identification.

Sharing personally with the crowd about his late first child, a boy with Down syndrome born nearly 40 years ago when supports were hardly what they are today, Mr. Wertheimer spoke from the heart, knowing full well from experience what special needs and direct support are all about.

Having been there in more ways than one, the Hamaspiik leader emphasized the critical bedrock underlying all Hamaspiik supports and services: heart.

"You can't buy heart," he said—going on to praise the Hamaspiik DSPs for the heart they give every night and day, heart that amounts to the greatest and most selfless acts of giving.

Rabbi Meir Mordechai Berkowitz, a well-known inspirational speaker in the Chasidic community, next delivered the event's keynote address.

Rabbi Berkowitz's delivery was as powerful as it was punctuated with improvisational humor, conveyed the message that supporting individuals with disabilities, be they intellectual, physical or (as is often the case) both, is as critical a piece of the social-justice puzzle as any other cause.

When the event was over, the DSPs left the same way they came—but walked out feeling taller.

SUPPORTING THE SUPPORTERS

The venue may have been different, but the atmosphere was the same the night of Monday, February 27. Gathered in the second-floor private party room of a classy Brooklyn restaurant were the DSPs of Hamaspiik of Kings County's IRA residences for men.

As such, DSP Teichman found himself surrounded by his fellow front-liners—61st St. DSPs Mechel Freund, Meilich Gelb, Moshe Grossman, Dov Klein, Moishe Maleh, Avrumi Reinman, David Teichman, Yechiel Teichman and Yehuda Teichman.

In keeping with a long-standing residential policy not just person-centered but also family-centered, Hamaspiik's IRA residents are supervised each weekend by a rotation of duly-trained husband-and-wife DSP team. Each lovingly stands in as father

SEE PAGE 9 >>



APPRECIATION ON THE TABLE HAMASPIK KINGS DSPS ENJOYING THE YEARLY EVENT



PERSONAL THANKS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FREUND SHARES HEARTFELT WORDS



HOUSE OF HAPPINESS MR. MELBER ESTABLISHES THE FOUNDATION OF DOMESTIC SUCCESS

At Gala Annual Parties, Putting the People who Put People First, First

HAMASPIK OF KINGS, ROCKLAND HAIL DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL (DSP) TEAMS

<< CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

and mother figures for the residents, particularly at the family-heavy Friday-night and Saturday-noon Shabbos meals.

As such, the father halves of each “Shabbos couple” were likewise present at the event. (Their better halves will be enjoying a Hamasplik DSP appreciation event of their own in the near future, the Gazette is told.)

Weekend staffers Mordechai “Mutt” Binet, Gershon Gale, Avrumie Horowitz, David Schmeltzer and Joel Wertzberger of the 38th St. Shvesterheim were thus on

hand, as were counterparts Eliyahu Botvinikov, Avigdor Follman, Shea Weisberg and Boruch Witriol of the South 9th Shvesterheim.

First mingling and getting to know fellow DSPs and Hamasplik staff, the honored guests caught up with old friends and made new ones while socializing over a sushi and salad bar.

With Emcee Yossi Moskovits, Manager of the 61st St. Briderheim formally calling the event to order, guests were seated around one long table—symbolizing and underscoring the unique camaraderie and esprit de corps that marks the Hamasplik employment experience.

The event’s keynote address was then

introduced.

Yidel Melber, a popular community time-management and personal life coach, held forth on the subject of happiness in marriage and home.

For close to an hour, Mr. Melber held the Hamasplik audience spellbound with his compelling, practical and positive message of getting out life what you put into it—a message sure to make the lives of agency DSPs, who already give so much in their professional lives, all the better in their personal lives.

Hamasplik of Kings County Executive Director Joel Freund then rounded out the event with a few heartfelt words of his own. In his comments, Mr. Freund expressed ap-

preciation, gratitude and thanks, both personally and behalf of the entire agency, for the exceptional work done day in, day out by Hamasplik’s DSPs.

And while those two deliveries were a message of appreciation and thanks enough, Hamasplik leadership also took the opportunity to invest in “training” its DSP corps for even better performance via inspiration—by giving each a copy of “As Long As I Live.”

That book is the autobiography of Aaron Margalit, a man who triumphed over numerous serious birth disabilities and crushing later setbacks to live a life of soaring inspiration.

But chances are, given the inspiring performances they regularly put in, that Mr. Margalit would be inspired by the superlative daily work of each and every Hamasplik DSP, too. ★

Happenings Around Hamasplik



A Sign(ing) of Expansion: Hamasplik of Kings County Taps Contractor for New Building

Hamasplik of Kings County’s state-of-the-art new headquarters expansion, featured in an artist’s rendition on the cover of the *Gazette*’s June 2016 edition, now has a builder!

In an official contract signing with Hamasplik of Kings County Director of Development Naftali “Tuli” Tessler on Monday, March 6, reps of the Brooklyn-based New York Major Construction Corp. wrapped up their winning bid.

The expansion project, which will add two floors of contemporary work-

spaces and more to Hamasplik’s main office on Borough Park’s 14th Ave., began immediately after the March 12 Purim holiday. Start-to-finish construction is estimated to take eight months.

The signing, like the entire project, is another indicator not just of Hamasplik’s constant dynamic growth—but of a growth driven by an ever-increasing community demand of an agency that continues to earn its trust. ★

Fire Safety Upgrade Confirmed at Dinev

As Hamasplik’s only Intermediate Care Facility (ICF), Hamasplik of Orange County’s Dinev Inzerheim group home requires higher fire safety standards than those of standard Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) group homes.

While Dinev has consistently met those standards over the years, state fire safety officials did suggest several improvements at a visit a few months ago to enhance the ICF’s otherwise-compliant mandatory standards.

Those upgrades were summarily made—and confirmed at the officials’ return visit to Dinev this past February.

In separate but related news, it was not long after that visit that Hamasplik and all New York

State disability non-profits were notified by an OPWDD memo that the state agency will be upgrading its ICF fire safety rules in the near future.

Those safety rules, known as the Life Safety Code, will now require ICFs (among other things) to keep maintenance and service logs on hand for every piece of on-site biomedical equipment needed by residents, such as nebulizers.

Because when it comes to people with disabilities and fire safety, you always want to be pushing for ever-higher levels of safety. ★



CRUNCH TIME SITE MANAGER YECHIEL LEVINE OF NEW YORK MAJOR CONSTRUCTION LOOKS ON AS HAMASPIK OF KINGS COUNTY DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT TULI TESSLER HANDLES THE WINNING BID



GETTING STARTED AS HAMASPIK OF KINGS COUNTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOEL FREUND LOOKS ON, NEW YORK MAJOR CONSTRUCTION CEO YIDI NUSENSWEIG AND MR. TESSLER ARE ALL SMILES—AND READY TO GO!



Happening In health Today

DOES VITAMIN D REDUCE RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS?

A review of 14 previous studies finds evidence that vitamin D lowers risk of respiratory infections. The review, published mid-February in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ), correlated taking regular vitamin D with 12 percent less cases of acute respiratory tract infections. Does it prove that vitamin D prevents respiratory infections? No. But it does add another indication to an already-sizable body of evidence that vitamin D is good for you.

EXERCISE HELPS COUNTER CANCER-LINKED FATIGUE

Cancer can be physically and emotionally exhausting, whether from the treatment or the disease itself. But in countering cancer-related fatigue, a study of 113 previous studies now finds that exercise and/or behavioral and educational therapy seem more effective than prescription drugs.

The upshot is that doctors should consider exercise and psychological interventions as “first-line therapy” instead of more medications when it comes to tackling cancer-related fatigue, lead researcher Prof. Karen Mustian of the University of Rochester Medical Center told health news outlet MedlinePlus.

The study was published March 2 in *JAMA Oncology*.

NEW ECZEMA DRUG PROMISING IN EARLY TRIAL

An experimental new drug called nemolizumab significantly reduces itching and skin appearance in people with moderate to severe eczema, a recent clinical trial has found. Eczema, a.k.a. dermatitis, is a genetic and chronic skin disorder that usually causes dry, itchy skin and rashes.

The 12-week clinical trial randomly assigned 264 patients to one of three injectable doses of nemolizumab or placebo—administering those every four weeks.

After 12 weeks, researchers found significant improvement in those regularly getting nemolizumab compared to patients getting placebo shots.

Specifically, patients getting the second-highest dose of nemolizumab had a 60 percent reduction in itching, compared to a 21 percent reduction among placebo patients. They also saw more reduction in size of eczema-affected areas.

However, 17 percent of patients had to withdraw due to side effects including wors-

ening eczema, infections, or swelling of the ankles or feet.

The study was published Mar. 2 in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

In related news, a Mar. 1 report in the *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* estimates that over 85 million Americans—or one of every four—are affected by any number of 24 common skin diseases, to an estimated \$75 billion in total U.S. costs for year 2013 alone.

FIRST-BORNS STILL DOING BETTER ON THINKING TESTS

Older research has found that first-borns do better on average than younger siblings or school peers on thinking-skills tests—possibly because first-borns get more attention from parents than younger siblings. A new study published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* now confirms that notion.

BONE-BREAK ULTRASOUND NO BENEFIT: EXPERT PANEL

In a detailed review published Feb. 21 in the *British Medical Journal* (BMJ), an international expert panel consisting of bone surgeons, physical therapists and doctors concluded that the low-intensity pulsed ultrasound (LIPUS) treatment does not speed the healing of broken bones.

The LIPUS device was approved by the FDA in 1994 as a fracture healing aid. The device, which can cost up to \$5,000, is now widely used by doctors across the country.

The initial theory behind low-intensity pulsed ultrasound was that it mechanically stimulates bone cells to produce more bone and calcium, thus helping fractures heal faster.

The panel noted that up to ten percent of people with broken bones face slow or complicated healing processes—but that there's little data or other evidence that LIPUS accelerates healing, eases patient pain, or reduces number of subsequent operations.

Based on the review, the panel now advises against using LIPUS to enhance recovery from broken bones or the surgical realignment of bones.

STUDY ON DIET STUDIES LAYS DOWN UNIVERSAL BASICS

If you're wondering what works and what doesn't when it comes to dieting, especially with new diets constantly trending, new research by Denver's National Jewish Hospital should help.

In their study, National Jewish researchers reviewed 40 years' worth of studies on diets and dieting—summarizing what experts have independently said over the years, especially regarding heart-healthy diets.

The research concluded that the most heart-healthy diet is one that is high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and legumes, and includes nuts in moderation. In contrast, people should avoid saturated fats, “trans” fats and solid fats, as well as sodium, added sugars, refined grains.

Conversely, “there is a great amount of misinformation about nutrition fads, including antioxidant pills, juicing and gluten-free diets,” said study co-author Dr. Andrew Freeman in a statement.

On those, here's what the study (of studies) found.

Juicing: Few studies have compared juicing fruits and vegetables versus eating them whole. Plus, consuming fruits and vegetables in liquefied form creates more calories, making it harder to know how many you've actually eaten, and easier to eat too many.

Antioxidant supplements: Studies have not found any heart health benefits from these supplements, with current evidence still finding fruits and vegetables their healthiest and most beneficial source.

Gluten-free diets: These are good for people with celiac disease, gluten sensitivity or wheat allergy, but there's no evidence that avoiding gluten will help people without these conditions.

Coconut and palm oils: Coconut oil and palm oil are high in the saturated fatty acids known to raise blood cholesterol levels, according to the American Heart Association. There's little evidence that these oils are beneficial for heart health, the researchers said, and some studies even suggest that palm oil may increase heart disease risk.

Nuts: Don't eat too many because they are high-fat and high-calorie, the researchers said. Still, nuts are a good source of protein and can be part of a heart-healthy diet.

So why is there so much confusion about which diets are best for preventing which diseases?

One reason, according to researchers, is that people who eat healthy also tend to live healthy—meaning, not only do they not eat junk, but also regularly exercise and don't smoke.

So are they healthy because of how they eat? Or because of how they live? The National Jewish researchers say it's hard to tell.

And if that leaves you confused, well... you just may have to start eating healthy and exercising!

BLOOD CANCER GENE THERAPY PASSES MAJOR APPROVAL HURDLE

On Feb. 28, California biotechnology firm Kite Pharma announced that a 101-patient clinical trial of its new CART-T cancer treatment produced complete remission in 36 percent of patients.

In all, 82 percent of patients had their

cancer shrink at least by half at some point in the study.

But the therapy is not without risk. Three of the 101 patients in the study died of causes unrelated to cancer, and two of those deaths were deemed due to the treatment.

The new treatment is currently geared specifically for non-Hodgkin lymphoma, a blood cancer.

It involves filtering the patient's blood to remove key immune system soldiers called T-cells. Those cells are then genetically altered in Kite's lab to contain a gene that targets cancer and then introduced back into the patient's bloodstream via injection.

The treatment apparently works by functioning as a “living drug”—permanently altering T-cells that multiply in the body into an army to fight the disease.

The CART-T technique was initially developed at the NIH's National Cancer Institute and then licensed to Kite. The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society helped sponsor the study.

While results are encouraging at February's six-month point into the study, some experts caution that more time is needed to wait and watch for any long-term side effects or negative outcomes.

Meanwhile, Kite Pharma is racing Novartis AG to get the first U.S. approval of the treatment. The company plans to seek FDA approval by the end of March.

Company officials would not say what the treatment might cost, but other immune system therapies have been very expensive.

If successful, CART-T could become the nation's first approved cancer gene therapy.

A DOCTOR NAMED DOCTOR, WORKING ON ARTIFICIAL BLOOD

Increasingly-organic artificial limbs and organs have been around for some time now—so why not fake blood?

That biotechnological hurdle is one that modern medicine has been trying—and failing—to overcome for over 50 years.

A key hurdle is hemoglobin, the iron proteins inside each red blood cell. Inside blood cells, hemoglobin carries oxygen from the lungs to the rest of the body. But outside blood cells, iron is toxic to body tissue and can cause blood vessels to constrict.

So far, no artificial blood contains safe formulations of hemoglobin.

But Dr. Allan Doctor, a critical-care pediatrician and Washington University researcher, is now working on a new artificial blood called ErythroMer.

In ErythroMer, hemoglobin is encased in a synthetic polymer (natural or artificial substance made of one or two ingredients, like plastic or Styrofoam). Researchers hope to safety-test ErythroMer on small animals and eventually humans.

The need for the product is clear. But if it's ultimately successful (it's currently years away from approval), ErythroMer could be freeze-dried into a powder and stored safely for years so that when needed, it can be mixed with sterile water and administered. ★



Public Health And Policy News

NEW YORK BIG INSURANCE SPENDING LESS ON DRUGS

While several prominent U.S. politicians have recently denounced high drug prices, a recent *Crain's Health Pulse* report says that drug spending by several New York health plans in 2016 actually dropped compared to 2015.

For example, drug costs for the 971,000 members of EmblemHealth's GHI plan dropped 21 percent, while Empire BlueCross BlueShield saw drug spending fall 10.4 percent, said Crain's.

While insurers are still experiencing an increase in drug prices, according to *Crain's*, they are getting better at managing their own spending by moving toward generic drugs, using pharmacy benefit managers like Express Scripts to save on high-cost specialty drugs.

In related news on the Big Apple's health insurance market, Crain's also reported mid-March that "the fortunes of New York City insurers were mixed last year with plans backed by the largest U.S. insurers," like Oxford and Empire HealthChoice Assurance, "reaping big profits while Affordable Care Act-focused startups continue to lose money."

BIRD FLU: NEW WAVE IN CHINA, VIRUS IN TENNESSEE

The H7N9 "bird flu" strain of the Influenza A virus, which infects poultry but generally not humans, has hit 460 people in China since October, according to an early March CDC report.

Most people infected by the flu strain, including those in the current outbreak, are poultry workers.

At the same time, a recent World Health Organization (WHO) meeting on H7N9 concluded that the current H7N9 virus does not seem to have mutated to become more infectious to people. Instead, its most recent mutation has apparently made it more contagious among birds—which could be a good thing. A stronger bird flu virus leads to visibly sicker birds—allowing poultry farmers to notice outbreaks faster and take countermeasures that are ultimately less costly.

Also, the North American strain of H7N9—according to the USDA, a different virus than the H7N9 hitting China—was found in early March on a Tennessee commercial chicken farm, leading to a culling of thousands of birds to prevent the virus' spread.

The U.S. was forced to cull nearly 50 million birds, mostly egg-laying hens, during the last major bird flu outbreak in 2014/2015. Those losses pushed U.S. egg prices to record highs.

Bird flu on U.S. soil was last found in a commercial turkey flock in Indiana in January 2016, and in a wild duck in Montana that appeared to match one of the strains of the 2014/2015 outbreak.

In the meantime, the CDC and the WHO are watching the spread of other bird flu viruses besides H7N9, like H7N2 and H5N1, which are also capable of infecting people. France and South Korea were also respective-

ly hit in recent months with the H5N8 and H5N6 bird flu strains.

DENSER CITIES, BIGGER LIFE PLANS?

Earlier population psychological studies indicated that the more crowded the living environment, the more negative effects on public mental health. But a recent paper posits that population density may actually have positive long-term psychological effects.

The study cross-referenced public health data for a number of countries and all 50 U.S. states, looking at population densities and rates of long-term personal planning, long-term marriages, and investment in personal and children's education.

The study found that people in U.S. and foreign regions with denser populations were more likely to: plan for the long-term future, get and stay married, and invest in both their own and their children's schooling.

The study's authors suggest that big-city living may prompt more long-term planning because life where there are more people generates more competitiveness—thus demanding more effort and planning towards reaching and maintaining quality of life.

MEDICAL JOURNALISM: "CANCER MOONSHOT 2020"=HYPE

While former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden was launching his still-ongoing Cancer Moonshot project last year, billionaire surgeon and cancer researcher Dr. Patrick Soon-Shiong was launching his own, dubbed Cancer Moonshot 2020 (with the bold goal of eradicating cancer by that year).

But now, an investigation by medical news outlet *STAT News* finds that Dr. Soon-Shiong's research project has made very little scientific progress since inception.

"At its core, the initiative appears to be an

elaborate marketing tool—a way to promote his pricey new cancer diagnostic tool at a time when he badly needs a business success, as his publicly-traded companies are losing tens of millions per quarter," *STAT News* reported.

The outlet also asked "several independent scientists" to review Soon-Shiong's claims. "Their conclusion: The data don't back up the hype,"

GOVERNORS SEEKING MEDICAID WORK REQUIREMENT

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson is among a few Republican governors hoping to impose a work requirement on Medicaid recipients, *The New York Times* reported on Feb. 25.

According to the Times, Mr. Hutchinson believes that "extending Medicaid to millions of low-income adults without disabilities under the [Affordable Care Act] health law gave them an incentive not to work."

Work requirements have long been central to the Republican goal of instilling a sense of "personal responsibility" in people who benefit from government programs. But, the Times also noted, it was the embrace of work requirements for welfare recipients by Democratic Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton that underpinned the 1996 federal welfare law enacted during his presidency.

NEW NYC RULES FOR DROWSY CABBIES

In mid-February, New York City's Taxi and Limousine Commission (TLC) published the final version of its new rules to reduce drowsy driving in the for-hire vehicle industry, *Crain's* reported. The new rules, which take effect in March, prohibit TLC-regulated drivers from transporting passengers for over ten hours in any 24-hour period. The clock resets after eight hours of idling, and the weekly limit is now 60 hours. ★

END OF AN ERA: DR. THOMAS E. STARZL, TRANSPLANT PIONEER, 1926-2017

Dr. Thomas E. Starzl, the U.S. surgeon who rose from humble Iowa roots to perform the world's first liver transplant in 1963 and eventually become the world's leading authority on organ transplantation, died Saturday, March 4. He was a day shy of his 91st birthday.

Dr. Starzl's career-long authority in transplantation gave rise to numerous transplant advances and anti-rejection medicines which in turn saved thousands of lives and gave life to generations.

While launching his surgical career at Denver's University of Colorado, he worked at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) from 1980 to his 1991 retirement, turning it into the world's busiest and highest-profile transplant center.

Dr. Starzl performed about 175 liver

transplants at the University of Colorado. By 2001, the 20th anniversary of Pittsburgh's first liver transplant, the center's team had transplanted more than 5,700 livers, 3,500 kidneys, 1,000 lungs and 500 hearts.

Doctors from around the world came to Pittsburgh to train with Dr. Starzl, and left to become head of their own transplant teams. Today, according to colleague Dr. Ngoc Thai, about 90 percent of all U.S. and global transplant centers are headed by Starzl-trained surgeons or surgeons who trained under Starzl trainees.

"When he did the first liver transplant [in 1963], people called him a 'monster' because the surgery was so novel and the first four patients did not survive long," said Dr. Thai.

In 1989, Dr. Starzl jointly developed FK506 (better known as tacrolimus), still the world's most widely used immunosuppressant.

A written joint statement from his family and colleagues read, in part, "His work... brought life and hope to countless patients.... Nobody who spent time with Thomas Starzl

could remain unaffected."

"The world has lost today the greatest figure in the history of transplant," said Abhinav Humar, clinical director of the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute. "The Starzl Transplant Institute will continue to work tirelessly to carry on his rich legacy."

Dr. Starzl is survived by his wife, son and grandchild.

Arthur S. Levine, M.D., University of Pittsburgh senior vice chancellor for the Health Sciences, said, "There is not a transplant surgeon worldwide who has not, in some way, been influenced by his work."

Dr. Starzl was also the recipient of over 200 awards (including the Presidential National Medal of Science, the nation's highest scientific honor) and 26 honorary doctorates from universities worldwide. He was a member of over 60 professional organizations and was one of only five Americans inducted into the prestigious National French Academy of Medicine. ★



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U.S. AGENTS COMPLICATE STATUS OF CANADIAN NURSES IN DETROIT HOSPITALS

In mid-March, some 30 advanced practice nurses and nurse anesthetists from Canada employed by the Henry Ford Health System in Detroit were told by U.S. border agents that their visa status—and hence, the legality of their presence—was uncertain under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Under the much-debated NAFTA pact, highly trained foreign professionals from outside the U.S. have qualified for so-called TN visas, or documentation allowing them long-term U.S. jobs as non-immigrants.

But Henry Ford reported that at least one of their Canadian nurses was recently denied entry to the U.S., with others being told by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents that their status is in question.

In a statement, the CBP said there have not been “any policy changes that would affect TN status” and blaming any issues on “improper paperwork presented by the traveler.”

Under NAFTA, 63 occupations, including registered nurse, qualify for TN visas allowing citizens of Canada, Mexico, or the U.S. to cross borders for a job. According to Henry Ford immigration attorney Marc Topolesky, nurses to fill the advanced positions are hard to find—with foreign professionals helping fill that shortage.

MEMORIAL SLOAN KETTERING OUTPATIENT VISITS, INCOME GROWS

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK), one of New York City’s several national medical-care leaders, saw its income grow in 2016, according to its newly-released financial disclosure.

That growth in operating income was driven primarily by growth of MSK’s regional outpatient

centers. Its newest outpatient center, in Monmouth, New Jersey, opened in December and its Commack, New York center was nearly doubled in size this past October.

The growth stands in stark contrast to another noted cancer center, MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, whose president Dr. Ronald DePinho announced recently that he was stepping down in the wake of a \$266 million loss in fiscal 2016.

BIG-HOSPITAL DOCTORS PAID MORE THAN INDEPENDENTS

The recently-released 2016 Fee Schedule Survey by Physicians Practice, an industry group, confirms that the classic neighborhood doctor’s office of old continues its fade-away.

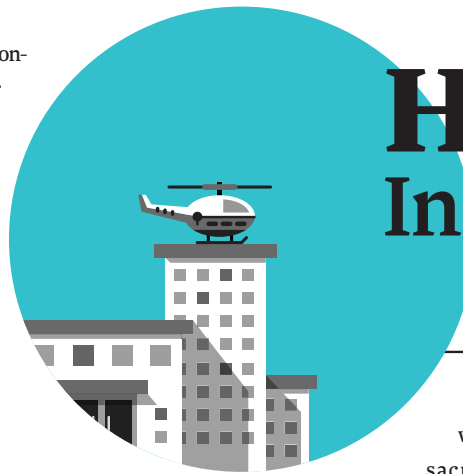
Based on Physicians Practice’s newest data, the reason is fairly obvious: Doctors working for hospitals or health systems get paid more.

The Survey found that affiliated doctors got paid an average of \$74 for new-patient office visits, while independent doctors reported an average of \$58.40.

For office visits by existing patients, Physicians Practice found that hospital- or health-system-based doctors got a per-visit average of \$58.70, compared to about \$43.10 for independent doctors.

At the same time, the 2016 Fee Schedule Survey finds that about 38 percent of all currently practicing U.S. doctors are employed by hospitals or health systems—and that 25 percent of physicians’ practices are owned by hospitals or health systems.

However, for independent doctors, all hope is not lost—industry experts note that in many regions, independent doctors can join an independent physician association (IPA) to increase bargaining



Status Report: Happening In Hospitals Today

power without sacrificing independence.

TOO MANY STROKE PATIENTS NOT GETTING TPA “CLOT-BUSTER”

Because artery blockages caused by internal blood clots are the cause of most strokes, the “clot-buster” drug TPA is the first ER treatment for most strokes—or at least should be.

A recent study found that patients treated for strokes at large urban hospitals, teaching hospitals or designated stroke-center hospitals were likelier to get TPA. However, the study found that minorities, women, Medicare members, rural residents and southeastern U.S. “Stroke Belt” residents were less likely to get TPA upon suffering strokes.

But the good news is that study also found that across-the-board rates of stroke patients getting TPA rose each year by 11 percent.

A second related study further found that stroke patients who get TPA even before they get to hospital ERs—in mobile stroke units, or ambulances carrying special equipment to diagnose and treat strokes on the road, including TPA—had an even lower risk of stroke-related long-disability (like partial loss of speech or movement) than those only first treated in ERs.

That study concluded that for every 1,000 stroke patients given TPA on their way to the hos-

pital, 182 will be less disabled by their stroke and 58 will have no disability at all.

To be effective, TPA must be administered within 4.5 hours of the start of a stroke—and the closer to the start, the better. (Theoretically, a person having a stroke in a hospital ER and getting on TPA within five minutes could emerge with no long-term damage whatsoever.)

RUDE PARENTS, DOCTORS, HURT MEDICAL TEAM CARE

A new study in *Pediatrics* suggests that if a parent of a baby says something rude to medical staff at a hospital’s neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), the quality of care might suffer.

“All the collaborative mechanisms and things that make a team a team, rather than four individuals working separately, were damaged by the exposure to rudeness,” said researcher Dr. Arieh Riskin.

Rudeness has long been part of medical culture, whether between senior doctors and trainees, or between surgeons and nurses in the operating room, according to Dr. Riskin. And an earlier related study by Dr. Riskin found that rude comments made among hospital professionals also hurt medical-team performance.

In both of the NICU studies, the effects on performance were significant; rudeness explained more error than the levels of error that have been shown to result from sleep deprivation.

“We are human beings,” Dr. Riskin told *The New York Times*. “We are affected by rudeness.” ★

HamaspikCare Patient Snowed In By Winter Storm Stella? “Snow” Problem!

BLUSTERY BLIZZARD NO MATCH FOR AGENCY ON-CALL COORDINATOR MRS. MONIFA BROWN

HamaspikCare On-call Coordinator Monifa Brown isn’t the type to let trifling obstacles like a few feet of snow get in the way of getting the job done.

That’s why, when the late-night call came in on Monday, March 13, as Winter Storm Stella bore down on the Tri-State region, Mrs. Brown did the opposite of what most members of the workforce were doing: she got right to work.

In need of immediate attention was an 88-year-old man being discharged from a Rockland County hospital late that very night.

The gentleman and HamaspikCare beneficiary had endured a fall and resulting arm fracture that had landed him in the ER for ten hours that day—and his HamaspikCare home help had already called in to say she’d be unavoidably unable to get in on Tuesday in the storm’s midst.

It was well past nightfall, and into Stella’s first snowfall, when Mrs. Brown, on duty with HamaspikCare’s round-the-clock emergency hotline, picked up the phone.

On the line was the venerable senior’s niece, who

hastily explained the adverse situation.

Needless to say, by the time the gentleman had been safely transported back to the local senior residential complex he calls home, a capable HamaspikCare aide was already waiting for him.

Having furiously worked the phones in a blitz of productivity, Coordinator Brown had seen to it that an available, willing and always-professional HamaspikCare home health aide (HHA) was secured and duly dispatched to the senior residence, and in record time.

HamaspikCare was thus the proud recipient of a gracious letter of thanks the following week from the man’s niece—who turned out to be none other than Mrs. Sarah Birnhack, the legendary writer.

With Mrs. Birnhack’s kind permission, we’re proudly including the entirety of that letter—because we couldn’t have said it better ourselves! ★

----- Original message -----

From: Sarah Birnhack
Date: 3/17/17 11:06 AM
To: Mordechai Wolhendler
Subject: A note of recognition...

Monday night, when all of Monsey was getting ready for a monster storm and most caretakers were calling your office that they would not be doing their usual shifts on Tuesday, the woman who answered the Hamaspik emergency line, Monifa, took my call for help for my elderly (88 year old) uncle who is authorized for 6 hours a day of help (whose caretaker had already called to say she would NOT be showing up for her 6 hour Tuesday shift!) who was being discharged from Good Sam hospital with a fractured bone above his left elbow and couldn’t even get into bed with only one hand. She went out of her way and arranged for a caregiver to be in his room at the Fountainview from when he returned there after being in the emergency room 10 hours (most of them with no food or drink as they thought he might need surgery on the arm)! The caretaker was there when we needed her, all thanks to Monifa’s true caring. I told her I would let her supervisor know that she personified Hamaspik by going that extra mile in a true emergency. Your organization is a symbol of caring that others should emulate, since you instill this mission in your employees, even those whose job it is to “just answer the phone.” Kol hakavod.

Sarah Birnhack



The Senior Care Gazette

News from
the World of
HamaspikCare
and Senior
Health

HamaspikCare Tapped to Host Community Parkinson's Awareness Event

SPARKS OF LIFE JEWISH CENTER FOR PARKINSON'S TO VISIT MONSEY ON MAY 9TH

A growing Jewish community support organization for people affected by Parkinson's will be making an informative, interactive presentation to the Monsey community after Pesach.

The "Evening of Support," to be held at the Hamaspik Terrace social hall on Tuesday, May 9th, is being hosted by HamaspikCare, the popular community agency for seniors and others in need of a wide range of home care services.

Beginning at 7:30 p.m., Hamaspik of Rockland County's central doors at 58 Rt. 59 in the heart of Monsey will open to welcome the entire community.

Addressing the community will be internationally renowned inspirational speaker and author Rabbi Paysach Krohn.

Also to be presenting is Rebecca M. Gilbert, MD, PhD. Dr. Gilbert, a leading Parkinson's authority, is Director of NYU Langone Medical Center's Fresco Institute for Parkinson's and Movement Disorders, and Clinical Associate Professor of its Neurology Department.

A question-and-answer session will follow both presenta-

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TUESDAY MAY 9, 2017
7:30PM
AT HAMASPIK OF MONSEY
58 Route 59, Suite 1 | Monsey, NY

GUEST SPEAKER:
DR. REBECCA GILBERT
CLINICAL ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DEPT. OF NEUROLOGY
NYU LANGONE MEDICAL CENTER

Dr. Rebecca Gilbert is an associate professor in the dept. of neurology and associate director of movement disorder in NYU Medical Center. She is board certified in neurology and has published books and articles on various aspects of Parkinson's disorder.

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For more info, call **732.806.1133**
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Sparks of Life Jewish Center for Parkinson's
P.O. Box 983 Lakewood, NJ 08701 // jewish.parkinsons@gmail.com

tions. Refreshments will be served. The event is also free of charge; no reservations are required.

Since its inception several years ago, the Lakewood, New Jersey-based non-profit has been helping the unfortunately growing number of community members, and their affected loved ones, who have to contend with the serious long-term illness.

Sparks of Life was founded in March of 2016 by Lakewood resident-turned-Parkinson's activist Rabbi Moshe Gruskin, who turned his own diagnosis into a drive to help others with the disease.

Besides informing and empowering inquirers with the latest treatment options and personalized suggestions for each individual case, the non-profit has been hosting public awareness events.

With HamaspikCare uniquely positioned to bring cutting-edge medical awareness to a sizable constituent base, Sparks of Life chose the agency when planning to bring the sizable Monsey community up to speed on Parkinson's information and options.

"Don't stand alone," reads Sparks of Life's slogan. And with HamaspikCare's help, people in Monsey affected by Parkinson's won't have to. ★

For Parkinson's inquiries, leave message at 732-806-1133. All calls strictly confidential. For more information about HamaspikCare, call 1-855-HAMASPIK.

LOW EDUCATION+EXCESS SLEEP=MORE DEMENTIA?

Previous Alzheimer's research suggests that sleep functions as a brain-cleansing mechanism. In healthy seniors, studies have found that levels of beta amyloid build up in the brain by the end of each day, only to be flushed down to lower levels during sleep through the night.

That research suggests that Alzheimer's may result from the brain not getting enough sleep to lower its daily beta amyloid buildup—suggesting that more sleep would lower Alzheimer's risk.

But now, a newly-published study suggests that seniors suddenly developing a habit of sleeping over nine hours each night

is just as bad for in terms of Alzheimer's risk—at least for seniors with less education.

Researchers at Boston University School of Medicine (BUSM) observed a large group of adults for a full decade to see who developed dementia, including dementia due to Alzheimer's disease. The researchers found that participants without high school degrees who recently developed nine-hour-plus sleep habits were six times likelier to develop dementia. The researchers now believe that screening for sleeping problems may aid in the early detection of cognitive impairment and dementia. ★

Exercise better than weight loss for senior hearts?

A new study suggests that seniors who want to give their hearts a healthy boost may want to focus on exercise first. The Dutch study by the Erasmus University Medical Centre in Rotterdam, the Neth-

erlands tracked 15-year outcomes of over 5,300 people aged 55 to 97—finding that that physical activity was tied to a lower risk of heart disease. The findings were published in the *European Journal of Pre-*

Staying socially active nourishes aging brains

A new report finds that socializing with lots of relatives and friends may help people stay mentally sharp as they age. According to the joint report by the AARP and the Global

Council on Brain Health (GCBH), close relationships and age-friendly communities benefit both physical and mental health in older adults. ★

More Parkinson's/strokes and strokes/Parkinson's

Researchers at Manhattan's Weill Cornell Medical College reviewed data on 1.6 million Medicare recipients between 2008 and 2004—finding a link between Parkinson's disease and stroke prevalence, and stroke prevalence and Parkinson's disease, but no direct cause and effect.

The data review found that seniors with

Parkinson's had about twice as many strokes as those without Parkinson's—and that seniors who had had strokes had twice the diagnoses of Parkinson's than those with no history of strokes.

The scientists now wonder if Parkinson's somehow raises stroke risk, or if a stroke-weakened brain somehow has more Parkinson's risk, or even if an unknown third factor is involved. ★

ventive Cardiology.

Expert guidelines currently recommend 150 minutes a week of moderate

intensity physical activity to decrease the risk of heart disease in seniors. ★



The Senior Care Gazette

Now Hear This: U.S. Hearing-loss Rise Projected

STUDIES WARN, SENATORS PEN VOICE OF CONCERN

A new study by Johns Hopkins University's Center on Aging and Health projects that hearing loss among U.S. adults 20 and older will reach 44 million in 2020 and 73.5 million by 2060.

The most common cause of hearing loss is prolonged exposure to loud noise, including loud music and a noisy workplace. Prevention

includes limiting the volume of sound from headphones and speakers, and protecting oneself from industrial noise at work.

It's never too early, or too late, to start protecting your hearing—so start today!

The study was published Mar. 2 in *JAMA Otolaryngology—Head & Neck Surgery*.

The projection comes after FDA's Dec. 2016 announcement (see *Gazette* #145) that it would no longer be enforcing the requirement that people 18 and up get medical evaluations or sign waivers before buying most hearing aids.

The FDA also announced then that it would be looking at “creating a category of over-the-counter (OTC) hearing aids that could deliver new, innovative and lower-cost products to millions of consumers.”

The FDA is concerned that hearing aids typically cost around \$4,600 a pair and are only sold in the U.S. by six companies—and is hoping that eventually allowing OTC hearing aids without doctor visits and prescriptions will make cheap hearing aids readily available to the millions who will need them, just like reading glasses can be bought in any store today without prescriptions.

At the same time, in a Mar. 3 editorial in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, U.S. Senators Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) and Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.) gave bipartisanship a fair hearing—by jointly echoing the FDA's moves towards greater OTC hearing-aid availability.

In “Over-the-Counter Hearing Aids: The Path Forward,” the Senators noted that “approximately 48 million Americans, including

half of those in their 70s, have hearing loss in at least one ear,” that “the risk of hearing loss in older adults is about ten to 20 times higher than the risk of heart disease and 100 times higher than the risk of cancer,” and that “only a small share—roughly 14 percent, according to one analysis—actually use a hearing aid.”

In that vein, Sens. Warren and Grassley had introduced the Over the Counter Hearing Aid Act of 2016 in the 114th Congress, and plan to introduce the bill again in the 115th Congress.

“There is no one-size-fits-all solution to addressing these issues,” the Senators wrote, “but increasing access to innovative, low-cost hearing technologies must be part of the policy response to the untreated hearing loss now experienced by millions of Americans.” ★

Possible Alzheimer's/blood sugar link

A March study in *Scientific Reports* indicates that increased blood sugar levels may lead to Alzheimer's disease by damaging a protein essential to fighting the disease's early stages.

Excessive levels of glucose (a sugar type) in the blood, and its breakdown products, can damage proteins through a reaction called glycation. Glycation has been associated with Alzheimer's.

Researchers have now found that glycation damages a protein called MIF in early Alzheimer's stages. The protein plays an important role in control of glucose levels.

After glycation, MIF can no longer stimulate glial cells, which help prevent accumulation of faulty proteins in the brain. As Alzheimer's progresses, glycation of MIF increases, further contributing to neuronal damage, the research shows. ★

Home as good as (or better than) rehab: Study

New research by the Thomas Jefferson University Medical School shows that patients who go straight home from the hospital following hip or knee replacement surgery recover as well as, or better than, those who first go to a rehabilitation center—including those living alone without family or

friends.

“We can say with confidence that recovering independently at home does not put patients at increased risk for complications or hardship,” said study co-author Dr. William Hozack. ★

Spanish brain-scan software catches Alzheimer's, other diagnoses

Spanish researchers created a computer program with the ultimate goal of diagnosing Alzheimer's far earlier than people are currently diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

Modern medicine currently knows that the brain changes that eventually cause Alzheimer's can begin years or even decades before the memory loss of Alzheimer's becomes apparent.

The new computer program, essentially artificial-intelligence software, was first fed huge amounts of data from MRI brain scans of healthy people.

It was then programmed to perform vast calculations that would allow it to detect changes in the brain's gray matter (brain cells) and white matter (nerve fibers connecting areas of gray matter).

The program was then tested on brain scans from an Alzheimer's patient database.



The program was able to accurately distinguish between Alzheimer's and cognitively healthy people with 90 percent accuracy.

The diagnostic software could also identify people with mild cognitive impairment, a precursor to Alzheimer's, at a high level of

accuracy—and distinguish between both mild cognitive impairment and Alzheimer's and between mild cognitive impairment and healthy patients.

The study on the program was published in the *International Journal of Neural Systems*. ★

In the Know

ALL ABOUT... HIVES

“Hives? Aren’t those what bees live in?” But this irritating skin reaction is anything but funny to those who get it.

Hives that fade away after a relatively short time are usually not a serious concern. But hives that last over six weeks, or which recur over months or years, have a medical category of their own: urticaria (ur-tih-KAR-e-uh), or chronic hives. Here’s what you need to know.

DEFINITION

Hives are white, pink or red welts (bumps or raised marks) on the skin.

Hives can appear within minutes of exposure to their cause (read on), or in a delayed reaction of an hour or two (or even more) later.

Hives can appear anywhere on the body, including the face, lips, tongue, throat, or ears, or on the hands, feet, arms, legs, torso, back or elsewhere.

Hives range in size from as small as a pen tip to as large as a dinner plate. They may connect to form even larger welts.

A hive often goes away in 24 hours or less, but since new hives may appear as old ones fade, hives can sometimes last for a few days or longer.

There are a few kinds of hives:

- Acute, the most common kind, runs from a few hours to less than six weeks.
- Chronic hives, or urticaria, are hives that last over six weeks.
- Physical, or hives caused by direct physical stimulation of the skin, like cold, heat, sun exposure, vibration, pressure, sweating, and exercise. These hives usually hit right where the skin was stimulated, rarely appearing elsewhere. Most such hives pop up within one hour after exposure.
- Dermatographism, a sub-type of physical hives, in which hives form after firmly stroking or scratching the skin. These hives can also occur with other kinds of hives.
- A related diagnosis is angioedema, in which swelling occurs beneath the skin, not on the surface. Angioedema usually strikes around the eyes and lips, and sometimes the hands, feet and elsewhere.

SYMPTOMS

The most common signs and symptoms of hives are:

- Slightly raised, white, pink or red bumps or welts on the skin
- Itchiness, which may be severe
- Welts that occur alone or in batches, or connect over a large area—usually the face, torso, arms or legs
- Welts that fade or go away within 24 hours at one spot but may appear at another spot
- Welts that change size and shape over the course of the reaction
- Occasional stinging or pain

Complications

People with chronic hives often have a trigger, or the substance that causes the hives. Every time they are exposed to that trigger, they get hives.

But in cases of chronic hives, complications can also occur, like muscle soreness, vomiting, stomach upset, or difficulty breathing. Difficulty breathing is typically caused by swelling of the tongue or throat—and if that occurs, call an ambulance immediately.

Hives can also be a symptom of anaphylaxis, a severe and life-threatening allergic reaction in which the airway narrows and blood pressure drops. Anaphylaxis is a medical emergency that needs immediate treatment.

CAUSES

Hives are usually a reaction by the skin to something to which the body is allergic. But they can have other causes.

Allergies

Allergies that trigger hives are wide-ranging. They range from insect stings and bites to consuming anything dairy-based, and from common food items like peanuts or wheat to even specific medications. (Allergies, of course, are a full subject in their own right.)

Other foods known to trigger allergies are fruits (especially citrus fruits), eggs and shellfish.

Other items known to trigger allergies are alcohol, berries, chocolate, food additives, latex,

pollen, tomatoes, or even an allergy shot.

In more detail, allergic hives are caused when certain blood-vessel cells react to the trigger by releasing histamine and other chemicals into the bloodstream. The histamine and other chemicals cause plasma to leak out of small blood vessels in the skin. The leaks of plasma into the skin then cause the hives.

Other medical conditions

In some cases, hives may be caused by other medical conditions like hepatitis, lupus, a type of vasculitis, or certain colds or other infections caused by specific bacteria or fungi. Hives can also be caused by thyroid disease or even cancer.

Other causes

- Exposure to sun (solar urticaria), heat, cold, or water
- Exercise
- Stress
- Pressure on the skin, such as from sitting too long or a tight waistband
- Contact with chemicals
- Scratching the skin

Factors that increase risk of developing chronic hives include being female, as women are affected twice as often as men, and being a young adult.

DIAGNOSIS

Since there are no specific tests for hives, testing will depend on the patient’s medical history and a thorough exam by a primary care doctor, allergist or dermatologist.

To find out what is causing hives, the doctor, dermatologist or allergist will review the patient’s health history, ask a series of questions (often in questionnaire form), and do a physical exam. The patient may also need any of the following tests:

- Allergy tests (on the skin or blood)
- Blood tests (to rule out other illnesses or infections)
- Skin biopsy, in which a tiny layer of affected skin is painlessly removed for examination under microscope

The doctor or specialist may also ask the patient to keep a diary to keep track of daily activities, foods and drinks consumed, all medications or supplements taken, where/when hives appear, and how long it takes them to fade.

Unfortunately, because there are so many things to which a person can be allergic, doctors often can’t find their cause. As a matter of fact, it’s often impossible to find the exact cause—especially in the case of chronic hives.

TREATMENT

See a doctor if you have severe hives, hives that don’t respond to treatment, or hives that continue to appear for several days.

Seek emergency care if you feel dizzy, have severe chest tightness or trouble breathing, or feel your tongue or throat swelling.

In the minority of cases where hives are not allergy-related, treatment of the underlying medical cause should eliminate or at least reduce the symptom of hives.

Antihistamines

For mild to moderate cases of hives, the most common treatments are over-the-counter (OTC) or prescription drugs called antihistamines.

These help relieve the itching and inflammation of hives. Antihistamines are also prescribed to treat chronic hives. Daily dosages help prevent hives from forming.

There are many antihistamines on the market. Some make people drowsy, while some are specifically “non-drowsy” formulations.

Some common new (and mostly non-drowsy) antihistamines include Alavert, Allegra, Clarinex, Claritin, Xyzal and Zyrtec. Other older (and mostly drowsiness-causing) antihistamines include Benadryl, Chlor-Trimeton and Vistaril.

Epinephrine

For some emergency cases of hives or angioedema, patients may need an injection of epinephrine. This is usually administered by an EMT or ER staff member, or an ordinary responder using the popular Epi-Pen devices usually on hand in every school or public place.

Medications

If antihistamines alone don’t relieve symptoms, other drugs that doctors may prescribe include:

- Corticosteroids (in oral or cream form; usually short-term, as long-term has side effects).
- Dapsone, an antibiotic that can also relieve redness and swelling.
- Xolair is an injected drug that can help patients with long-term chronic hives.
- Histamine (H-2) blockers, also called H-2 receptor antagonists, may be injected or taken orally. Examples include Axid, Pepcid, Tagamet and Zantac. They do have side effects, though.
- Asthma drugs that also contain antihistamines, like Accolate and Singulair. Side effects may include behavior and mood changes.
- Cyclosporine (brand names Gengraf, Neoral and others) affects the immune system and provides relief from chronic hives. Possible side effects include headache, nausea and increased risk of infection and reduced kidney function.
- Tacrolimus, medicine’s leading immunosuppressant, reduces the immune system response that causes hives. It may cause a range of side effects, from minor to serious.

Whatever you’re prescribed, ask about possible side effects.

Temporary relief remedies

While you’re waiting for hives and swelling to disappear, here are some tips:

- Avoid irritating affected areas
- Apply cool compresses or wet cloths to affected areas
- Cool showers, fans, or soothing lotions may also help
- Try to work and sleep in a cool room
- Wear loose-fitting lightweight clothes

PROGNOSIS

For most people, hives are not serious, despite being very uncomfortable and interfering with sleep and daily activities. Children may outgrow the allergies that cause their hives.

But with most cases of hives, chronic or otherwise, being symptoms of allergic reactions, treatment consists of counteracting the allergen itself if an outbreak is underway.

And once that’s over, the informed patient is best served by engaging in patient personal research of his or her own—to isolate the allergen(s) triggering the hives and then eliminating them from his or her life. ★