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Assemblymember Jim Brennan REPORTS TO THE PEOPLE

Fall 2013

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GREEN-OVATION

A forum on conservation
and solar energy

**Tuesday
October 22
5:30 – 8:30 p.m.**

Camp Friendship

339 8th Street
at the corner of 6th Avenue
Park Slope, Brooklyn

More details on page 2

**TAKING NON-PROFITS
TO A NEW LEVEL
Tuesday, November 12
6-8 p.m.**

Temple Beth Emeth
83 Marlborough Road
(corner of Church Avenue)
Prospect Park South, Brooklyn

A panel discussion about strategies to strengthen
and develop community-based organizations,
fundraising capacity building, and complying with
State laws that regulate charities.

More details on page 2

Funding Restored for the Disabled

The initial state budget cut funding for programs for the developmentally disabled, but a campaign was mounted for full restoration of the \$90 million that had been cut. With the support of

my office and many other advocates and legislators, the Legislature voted and the Governor agreed to restore the money at the end of the 2013 session.



This summer I visited the Lawrence Avenue day facility run by United Cerebral Palsy of New York City. We discussed the recent campaign and new technologies to help persons with disabilities.

Traffic Safety Wins in Kensington and Flatbush

State DOT Addresses Prospect Expressway/Church Avenue Intersection

After a pedestrian fatality on June 24, 2013, NYS DOT approved a variety of safety improvements at this dangerous intersection. NYC DOT will be responsible for implementing the measures which include a “refuge area,” new pedestrian signals, protective barriers and new pavement stripping to reduce lane widths and provide space for the refuge area. Also included in the plan are high visibility crosswalk markings, new flashing signals with yellow arrows for right-turning vehicles which will warn motorists to proceed with caution and yield to pedestrians, and other improved signage.

Traffic Agents Now Posted at Hazardous McDonald Avenue Intersections

NYPD has posted traffic agents along McDonald Avenue, one at the corner of Caton Avenue and the other at the corner of Ft. Hamilton Parkway. The agents are on duty from 7:30 - 9:30 a.m. and again from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Due to traffic complexity at the intersections, which includes 3,000

school children in the immediate vicinity, NYPD and NYC DOT agreed that traffic agents were best suited to address safety concerns at the intersection. The traffic agent postings are the result of an August 28th meeting I organized on behalf of the community members and school administrators who had become increasingly concerned with safety conditions in the area.

Pedestrian and Bike Safety Improvements Along Ocean Parkway Corridor

During budget negotiations my office worked to designate new pedestrian safety funding. I am pleased to report that the state government will provide \$6M for the project. The scope of work will include walkway countdown signals; improving vehicular signals for greater walking and bicycling safety; traffic calming to encourage responsible vehicular speed; upgrading signage to clearly communicate potential conflict areas; and enhancing bikeway and walkway street crossings. My office will be assisting local residents to ensure that there will be public input into this project.

GREEN-OVATION!

Tuesday, October 22
5:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Camp Friendship
339 8th Street
(at the corner of 6th Avenue)
Park Slope, Brooklyn

Find actionable and affordable ways to conserve, increase efficiency, and lower costs. Learn about solar conversions.

Meet innovators and influencers creating the products, practices, and programs. Benefit now!

Presenters include:

ACRE

(a group of cool clean-tech businesses funded by NYSERDA)

Con Edison

Council of New York Coops and Condos (CNYC)

CUNY Energy Institute

New York City Office of Management and Sustainability

Solar Home and Building Owners

Solarize Brooklyn

Solar One

Urban Green

NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority)

Target Audience: Homeowners, building owners, cooperators, coop board members, small businesses, management agents, anyone for a greener, more efficient Brooklyn!

Format: A series of brief scheduled presentations and tables that feature demonstrations, product samples, literature and more between 5:30 and 8:00 pm.

Benefits: Come away inspired and enlightened about how you can adapt, retrofit and alter your home, building or business to be greener and more efficient today!

TAKING NON-PROFITS TO A NEW LEVEL

Getting Stronger, Working Smarter

Tuesday, November 12
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Temple Beth Emeth
83 Marlborough Road
(corner of Church Avenue)
Prospect Park South, Brooklyn

Panelists:

Michael Clark

Executive Director
Non-profit Coordinating Committee of New York

Karin Kunstler-Goldman

NYS Attorney General's Office
Section Chief in the Charities Bureau

Hedwig O'Hara

Senior Staff Attorney
Lawyers Alliance New York

Danny Rosenthal

Consultant to NYC Nonprofits
Focuses on Strategic Planning, Advocacy and Fundraising

Karen Yau

Executive Director
Coalition for Asian American Children and Families
And a special presentation by **Think Brooklyn!**
(formerly Center for the Study of Brooklyn)

Target Audience: Non-profit founders, staff, board members, contributors, members of the community the non-profits serve and volunteers.

Format: Panelists will present perspectives and then accept questions from the audience.

Benefits: Hear about strategies and roadmaps to maximize effectiveness and long-term vitality, build capacity for fundraising and growth, and gain a better understanding of the new compliance regulations.

Instructions on STAR Registration Fact Sheet

New York State Department of Taxation and Finance STAR Registration Fact Sheet

New legislation requires all homeowners receiving a Basic STAR exemption to register with the New York State Tax Department in order to receive the exemption in 2014 and subsequent years.

This is part of a new initiative to protect New Yorkers against inappropriate or fraudulent STAR exemptions.

Who must register?

Resident homeowners who currently receive the Basic STAR exemption must register with the New York State Tax Department in order to receive the exemption in 2014 and subsequent years.

- Homeowners do not need to re-register every year.
- Based on the information provided in the registration process, the Tax Department will confirm homeowners' eligibility in future years.

Senior citizens

Senior citizens receiving the Enhanced STAR exemption are not affected by the new registration requirement. However, in order to receive Enhanced STAR, seniors must continue to:

- apply annually, or
- participate in the Income Verification Program.

Resident homeowners applying for STAR for the first time are not affected by this year's registration procedure. To apply for STAR a new applicant must:

- use Form RP-425, *Application for School Tax Relief (STAR) Exemption*, available on the Tax Department's Web site, and
- file the application with their local assessor.

When does registration begin?

Registration will begin **August 19, 2013** and continue through **December 31, 2013**.

- The Tax Department will mail instructions to all homeowners who currently receive the Basic STAR exemption. The letters will include a STAR code that homeowners will need to register.
- Because seniors who receive Enhanced STAR are not affected by the new requirements, they will not receive new instructions from the Tax Department.

continued on back

www.tax.ny.gov

RP-425-FS (8/13)

How does a homeowner register?

Online registration

The fastest and easiest way for homeowners to register is through the Tax Department's Web site, www.tax.ny.gov.

Homeowners will need their STAR code to register. In addition to being included in the instructions that were mailed to them, homeowners will be able to find their STAR code through an online lookup or by calling the Tax Department at [518] 457-2036.

Online registration is a simple process that will require homeowners to provide some basic information about their eligibility for the STAR exemption. Homeowners will need to:

- provide the STAR code and confirm the property address
- provide the names and social security numbers for all owners of the property and spouses
- confirm that the property is the primary residence of one of its owners (married couples with multiple residences may only claim one STAR exemption)
- confirm that the combined income of the owners and their spouses who reside at the property does not exceed \$500,000
- confirm that no resident owner receives a residency-based tax exemption from another state

Telephone registration – (518) 457-2036

Homeowners who are unable to register online will be able to register over the phone. The Tax Department will also provide telephone support to any homeowners who have questions about online registration.

What happens when homeowners do not register?

The Tax Department will send homeowners additional letter reminders in December 2013 and January 2014.

In February 2014 the Tax Department will give assessors the names of any homeowners who did not register, or who were determined not to be eligible for STAR. The assessment roll entries for these homeowners will not include the STAR exemption.

- Homeowners who the Tax Department found to be ineligible for STAR will have the right to administrative review within the Tax Department, and review before the State Board of Real Property Tax Services.

RP-425-FS (8/13) (back)

www.tax.ny.gov

LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

Stronger Utility Oversight

Following Superstorm Sandy it became crystal clear that better planning and preparation are required by utilities for the extreme storms that the Northeast has been experiencing. Governor Cuomo appointed a Moreland Act Commission to make recommendations for improvements in the law, and I sat on the “2100 Commission” panel as the Assembly’s representative. [see my winter newsletter]

Several reforms were enacted in the State budget. As chair of the Assembly’s Committee on Corporations, Authorities and Commissions, my office led negotiations that provided for the following:

- ✓ **Increased penalties for violators:** We changed the standard for seeking penalties under the law from a “knowing” standard to a “reasonableness” standard and allowed the Public Service Commission (PSC) to impose administrative penalties directly rather than requiring a Court to order the penalties, which was a lengthy process.
- ✓ **Improved oversight by the PSC:** Provided that the PSC may audit the operations and management of utilities and may order more stringent conditions based on the findings of the audit.
- ✓ **Utilities are now required** to file detailed emergency preparedness plans on an annual basis.
- ✓ **Whistleblower protections:** this provision protects utility workers from retaliation by their employer for reporting company violations.



My office sponsored a forum to discuss housing problems. Here I am pictured with (l to r) John Goss, assistant executive director and Larry Jayson, executive director of Brooklyn Housing and Family Services, as well as Tom Bauer, administrative director of Ocean Parkway Community Development Corp. Affordable Housing booklets and Important Housing Contacts sheets are available upon request at my Park Slope and Flatbush District Offices.



I joined Inspector Eric Rodriguez, Commander of the 70 Precinct at a Community Council meeting to discuss neighborhood concerns.

Homeowners receiving
STAR Tax Break must reapply
to maintain exemption

The STAR program continues to provide vital tax relief to homeowners across the state and new provisions have been made to make the program even more effective. However, Basic STAR recipients must remember to take action so they don’t miss out on future savings. **See page 3 for instructions.**