



State Senator Daniel Squadron (above, center) receives the Legislator of the Year Award from Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (left) and Executive Director Joel Kaplan, Esq., (right) at the United Jewish Council's Annual Dinner.

Howard Fried (below, center), director of the UJC's Home Attendant Program, was named Employee of the Year. He is pictured with UJC President Rabbi Zvi Romm (left) and UJC Executive Director Joel Kaplan, Esq.



## Funding Crisis Forces Cuts at United Jewish Council

By Michael Steinhart

The state legislature in Albany finally passed a budget early in August—just 125 days past the deadline. The budget calls for reinstated taxes and funding cuts to schools, parks, libraries, and other services. Most alarming, however, is the elimination of member items—projects for specific local needs like social services, employment readiness, community organizing, and services for children and the elderly funded by individual legislators.

Funding for the United Jew-

ish Council of the East Side's 235 East Broadway community services office comes primarily from these member items, and the absence of these items in the state budget reduced the office's 2010-2011 operating budget by \$650,000, according to Joel Kaplan, Esq., executive director of the Council.

The UJC Adult Luncheon Program, which serves hot meals to local seniors at the Lillian Wald Senior Center in the Orenstein Building, has not been affected (see related story on page 4). In fact, the closing of the Jacob Riis Senior Center has

## Conservancy to Open Lower East Side Visitor's Center

By VOICE Staff

Early this fall, the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy will open an information center for tourists and visitors to the historic neighborhood.

Located centrally at 400 Grand Street, the Lower East Side Conservancy Visitor's Center occupies the space formerly known as Ruby's Fruit Store. Renovations are expected to be completed by September, and an opening ceremony will be held soon, according to Joel Kaplan, Esq., executive director of the United Jewish Council of the East Side.

"It's right across the street from Noah's Ark and Citibank at the heart of Grand Street," Kaplan explained, "and it's close to all the historic synagogues and destinations people visit on the Conservancy tours."

The center will feature maps, video presentations, and accessible washroom facilities, Kaplan added.

Laurie Tobias Cohen, executive director of the Conservancy, said that all walking tours conducted by the Conservancy will convene at the visitor's center once it opens.

The visitor's center owes its existence to a series of serendipi-

tous occurrences, Kaplan added. The store had been vacant for a number of years, and the UJC was able to secure an attractive rental rate and then began seeking funds for renovating the property. Solicitations went to everyone on the Conservancy's considerable mailing list, which is how Brooklyn genealogist Michael Pertain learned of the project.

Pertain is a teacher retired from the NYC Board of Education, and when he learned of the project, he felt it was a fitting tribute to his extended family, the Kling/Niman family. Pertain's interest in genealogy and immigration led him to donate \$50,000 toward the center, which will be named the Kling/Niman Visitor's Center in his honor.

"We don't know how he ended up on the mailing list," Kaplan admitted. "He'd never been on a Conservancy tour before, but it's very fortunate that he got our letter."

Another generous donation came from the prominent Trachtenberg family of Oklahoma City, Cohen stated. Earlier this year, Jeff and Debbie Trachtenberg were looking for a special place to hold their son, Jack's Bar Mitzvah. The Conservancy con-

nected the Trachtenbergs with Rabbi Azriel Siff at Congregation Chasam Sopher, and provided research on catering and hotel options. The event was a huge success, and Larry Trachtenberg—Jack's grandfather—booked a private Conservancy-led walking tour for the family, as well.

In recognition of the help provided by the Conservancy, Jeff and Debbie Trachtenberg donated \$5,000 to name the welcome desk at the center in honor of their parents.

"The donation is their way of showing their appreciation for our good work, and they're coming back with a UJA mission group, which we will assist with, in the spring," Cohen added.

At press time, interior demolition at the site was completed and electricians and contractors were working to ready the center for its September opening. The center will be manned by Conservancy docents and tour guides during its operating hours, and the Conservancy is still considering ways to maximize usage of the space, according to Laurie Tobias Cohen.

For more information about the center and the Conservancy's schedule of walking tours, visit [nycjewishtours.com](http://nycjewishtours.com).

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Senator Daniel Squadron, Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer, and other dignitaries turned out for the official opening of the Hester Street Fair, which brought games, vendors, and eateries together each weekend this summer. Located in the Seward Park Co-op, the fair created a space that reflects the dynamic energy of the Lower East Side.

The Hester Street Fair featured dozens of vendors and community partners, including the Grand Street Settlement, Lower East Side Business Improvement District, and the Museum at Eldridge Street.



increased attendance at Lillian Wald, Kaplan explained.

"Our Home Attendant Program has not been affected," he added. "In fact, we're seeing more clients than ever. But our Licensed Home Care Program has been shut down."

Five staff members were laid off as a result of these cuts, and several open positions will not be filled. "In all, about twenty-five employees were affected," Kaplan reported. "We've retained our core services, and we still offer them in multiple

languages, and we're looking for other sources of revenue to make up the shortfall. We owe our clients and the people who rely on us nothing less."

The Lower East Side VOICE will continue to provide ongoing updates as this story develops.