



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Liz Krueger

Community Bulletin -- December 2010

LIZ KRUEGER November 30, 2010

| ISSUE: **CONSTITUENTS CORNER**

Message from Liz . . .

Every year, starting around Thanksgiving going through New Year's Day, many of us re-visit the age old questions of thinking about how things have gone during the last year. Have we accomplished our personal goals? Where are we compared to a year ago? What are we thankful for? What will be our resolutions for the New Year? And what is our shared responsibility for improving our community and the lives of others?

There are plenty of different ways to answer. I am reminded of why I got involved in public service work nearly 30 years ago. Much of my career has been invested in efforts to alleviate hunger, through my work with Food Banks and other fine anti-poverty organizations. Unfortunately, 30 years later, our public policy failures combined with a serious economic downturn has resulted in a growing hunger crisis here in our City and throughout our Country. The Food Bank for NYC (www.foodbanknyc.org), an organization I am proud to have helped found back in 1983, explains the current NYC reality this way:

“Hunger is caused by food poverty, or a lack of geographic and financial access to nutritious food. In New York City, one of the richest cities in the world, food poverty is around every corner. Throughout the five boroughs, approximately 1.4 million people — mainly women,

children, seniors, the working poor and people with disabilities — rely on soup kitchens and food pantries. Approximately 3.3 million New Yorkers experience difficulty affording food for themselves and their families, an increase of 60 percent since 2003.

Financial pressures such as unemployment, health issues, health insurance issues and low wages continue to strain the budgets New Yorkers with low to moderate incomes. Low-income New Yorkers often have to choose between providing enough food for themselves or their families and paying the month's rent or utility bills. Middle-income New Yorkers are also feeling the pressure, reporting increasingly difficulty affording groceries. With food prices steadily rising, struggling New Yorkers' ability to buy food for themselves and their families is at a crisis level.

To make matters worse, more than 3 million New Yorkers live in low-income neighborhoods that lack access to affordable, nutritious food. With their budgets already strained, and the prevalence of low-cost, low-quality food in these neighborhoods, these residents face significant challenges in leading a healthy lifestyle — leading to high concentrations of diet-related conditions such as diabetes, obesity and hypertension.”

There are many wonderful charitable organizations throughout our great City, and I don't mean to tell you which are the most deserving of assistance. But, I do hope that during this end of year season of reflection, that if you are able to help others, you will think about how to help neighbors most in need of the basic necessities of life: food, shelter and hope for the future.

Happy Holidays to you and your family!

Senator Liz Krueger's Senior Roundtable

A Program for Boomers & Seniors

“Aging in Place: Is It Right for Everyone?”

Part II of A DISCUSSION ABOUT CAREGIVING

This will be the second of a five-part discussion for caregivers and the older people in their lives.

Thursday, December 16, 2010

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.*

Lenox Hill Neighborhood House

311 East 70th Street

(between 1st & 2nd Avenues)

with special guests

Joanna Leefer, Caregiver Associate

Garry Gutterman, Director of Housing, Met Council on Jewish Poverty

*Continental Breakfast will be served

PLEASE RSVP – SPACE IS LIMITED

To RSVP or for further information, contact

alicefisher.nyc@gmail.com or call (212) 490-9535.

Bus Lane Camera Enforcement Has Started:

In late November, the New York City Department of Transportation began bus lane camera enforcement of the new Select Bus Service bus lanes along First and Second Avenues. The new cameras were recently authorized by New York State, and I was a strong advocate for this critical new enforcement measure, which will result in more efficient bus service along the M15 line. Drivers must stay out of an active bus lane except to make the next available right turn or quickly drop off or pick up passengers. If you drive, park, or stand in a bus lane during hours of operation you face fines ranging from \$115 to \$150. In addition to the cameras, NYPD regularly patrols bus lanes and issues violations for bus lane infractions. MTA New York City Transit also enforces the bus lane rules.

Free Mediation Services:

Safe Horizon Mediation Program offers mediation and conflict resolution services and training to the New York City community. Mediation is a process that allows individuals or institutions involved in a dispute to meet voluntarily in a safe environment and discuss the issues dividing them. A mediator facilitates the discussion in a neutral and confidential manner to help people better understand the situation and reach mutually agreed-upon solutions. Issues can range from conflicts with neighbors or landlords to financial/debt issues to workplace conflicts. There is no cost to mediation and setting up an appointment is quick and simple, with convenient hours and accessible locations. For more information, call

or visit the Manhattan Mediation Center at 346 Broadway, Room 400W (Visitors' Entrance at 108 Leonard Street), (212) 577-1740 or e-mail mediation@safehorizon.org.

Apply to Join Your Community Board:

The Manhattan Borough President's Office is currently accepting applications for Community Board membership! Community Boards are charged with representing community interests on crucial issues of development, land use, zoning, and city service delivery. Serving on a Board is an incredible opportunity to shape neighborhoods, improve service delivery, and be at the forefront of sound community-based planning. Three Community Board information sessions will be held in the coming weeks:

- Wednesday, Dec. 8th, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, 1 Centre Street, 19th Floor
- Monday, Dec. 13th, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, 163 West 125th Street, Room 8A
- Thursday, Jan. 6th, 6:30 – 8:00 pm, 1 Centre Street, 19th Floor

To RSVP for an information session, please call (212) 669-4465 or e-mail conference@manhattanbp.org. To find out more about Manhattan's Community Boards, learn how to apply for membership, or download an application, visit http://www.mbpo.org/free_details.asp?id=64. Applications are due by January 14th, 2011.

Affordable Housing Opportunities in Manhattan:

Douglass Park is now accepting applications for 69 one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments under construction in 300 West 128th Street in Harlem for low and moderate income individuals and families. Rents for these units will be \$511 to \$1127 depending on unit size and income. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$19,337 to \$55,140, depending on unit and family size. Applications will be selected by lottery. Applicants who submit more

than one application will be disqualified. Preference will be given to New York City residents. Applicants residing in Community Board 10 will receive priority for 50% of the units. In addition, visually/hearing impaired applicants will receive priority for 2% of the units, applicants with mobility impairment will receive priority for 5% of the units, and applicants who are New York City municipal employees will receive preference for 5% of the units. To request an application, download from: www.douglassparkNYC.com or mail a postcard to: Douglass Park c/o: Richman Property Services, Inc., 1010 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 301, New York, NY 10018. Completed applications must be returned by regular mail only (no priority, certified, express or overnight mail will be accepted) to a post office box listed on the application, and must be postmarked by December 21, 2010.

Genesis FSLM Partners LLC is now accepting applications for 85 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments under construction at 311 West 141st Street, 203-205 West 119th Street, and 2078-2080 Frederick Douglass (112th Street) in the West Harlem Section of Manhattan for moderate income individuals and families. Rents for these units will be \$872 to \$2186 depending on income and unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$31,680 to \$134,400, depending on unit and family size. Applications will be selected by lottery. Applicants who submit more than one application will be disqualified. Preference will be given to New York City residents. Applicants residing in Community Board 10 will receive priority for 50% of the units. In addition, visually/hearing impaired applicants will receive priority for 2% of the units, applicants with mobility impairment will receive priority for 5% of the units, and applicants who are New York City municipal employees will receive preference for 5% of the units. Applications may be requested by regular mail to Genesis FSLM Partners LLC c/o P.O. Box 666, Triborough Station, New York, NY 10035 or online at www.Genesisapts.com. Please be sure to include a self-addressed envelope with your request for an application. Completed applications must be returned by regular mail only (no

priority, certified, express or overnight mail will be accepted) to a post office box listed on the application, and must be postmarked by December 27, 2010.

WGHA Harriet Tubman Apartments is now accepting applications for 36 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments under construction at 142 West 143rd Street and 148-152 West 143rd Street in the West Harlem Section of Manhattan for low and moderate income individuals and families. Rents for these units will be \$379 to \$890 depending on income and unit size. To be eligible, applicants must have incomes between \$17,320 to \$44,112, depending on unit and family size. Applications will be selected by lottery. Applicants who submit more than one application will be disqualified. Preference will be given to New York City residents.

Applicants residing in Community Board 10 will receive priority for 50% of the units. In addition, visually/hearing impaired applicants will receive priority for 2% of the units, applicants with mobility impairment will receive priority for 5% of the units, and applicants who are New York City municipal employees will receive preference for 5% of the units.

Applications may be requested by mail from: WHGA Harriet Tubman Apartments Lottery, 303 Park Avenue South, PMB 1122, New York, NY 10010 or download the application at

www.phippsny.org/housing_app.html. Completed applications must be returned by regular mail only (no priority, certified, express or overnight mail will be accepted) to a post office box listed on the application, and must be postmarked by January 19, 2011.

Heat Season Rules:

The City Housing Maintenance Code and Multiple Dwelling Law requires building owners to provide heat and hot water to all tenants. Building owners are required to provide hot water 365 days per year at a constant minimum temperature of 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Between October 1st and May 31st, a period designated as "Heat Season," building owners are also required to provide tenants with heat under the following conditions:

- Between the hours of 6AM and 10PM, if the outside temperature falls below 55 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Between the hours of 10PM and 6AM, if the temperature outside falls below 40 degrees, the inside temperature is required to be at least 55 degrees Fahrenheit.

Tenants who are cold in their apartments should first attempt to notify the building owner, managing agent or superintendent. If heat is not restored, the tenant should call the City's Citizen Service Center at 311. For the hearing impaired, the TTY number is (212) 504-4115. The Center is open 24-hours a day, seven-days a week.

Fair Pay Enforcement

During the special legislative session last month, the Wage Theft Prevention Act (WTPA) (S8380/A11726) was approved by the Assembly. Since this legislation had already passed the Senate, it now goes to the Governor, who is expected to sign it. This legislation will protect thousands of hard-working men and women from unscrupulous employers who steal their earnings by paying less than minimum wage, misclassifying them as independent contractors, forcing them to work off the clock and various other schemes. This important legislation will increase penalties and strengthen enforcement of laws protecting workers from nonpayment and underpayment of wages.

Every day countless workers across the State face rampant abuse on the job. Recent studies have found that a large number of employees are illegally earning less than minimum wage, while others are being paid less than their agreed upon wage. Additionally, employees often do not receive the overtime pay they earn, and are left in the dark regarding their employers' methods for calculating wages and benefits.

The National Employment Law Project estimates that more than \$1 billion is stolen annually from NYC workers by unscrupulous employers. Advocates project that the WTPA would bring in approximately \$50 million in increased savings and revenues to help State government save valuable programs currently threatened by the fiscal crisis.

Under current law, there is little penalty for employers who violate wage requirements. Penalties for wage theft are so low that there is, in fact, a financial incentive to simply steal workers' wages. Responsible businesses can't compete when law-breaking employers are driving down pay rates.

The Wage Theft Prevention Act will increase penalties, increase protection of workers who speak up, as well as add additional enforcement tools that the Department of Labor and Courts can use to investigate cases and collect the money that workers are owed.