

2009-J223

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION honoring RAJE, the Russian Division of Gateways, and commemorating its Inaugural Dinner on February 9, 2009

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend organizations of high purpose and worthy accomplishment whose endeavors have a significant impact on the lives of those they serve; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern and fully in accord with its long-standing traditions, it is the intent of this Legislative Body to honor RAJE, the Russian Division of Gateways, and to commemorate its Inaugural Dinner, to be held at the National Ballroom in Brooklyn on February 9, 2009; and

WHEREAS, Since 1998, the Gateways Organization has dedicated itself to education in values and ethical living, and to reconnecting people with their Jewish heritage; and

WHEREAS, Gateways' vibrant divisions address the needs of the broad spectrum of the Jewish experience; recognizing that more than 15 percent of American Jewry is Russian speaking, Gateways established its Russian Division, RAJE (Russian American Jewish Experience) to provide intergenerational programming for the Russian speaking American Jewish community; and

WHEREAS, The dynamic, thriving RAJE center in Brighton Beach serves as an educational, social, and community center and bustles with activity round the clock seven days a week; and

WHEREAS, Forty years ago few could imagine the bright future awaiting members of the Russian Jewish community then living in the Soviet Union and, it was barely a generation ago that the American Jewish community came together to help achieve freedom for Soviet Jewry; and

WHEREAS, Nearly a million Jews from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) have

made their home in America, including thousands upon thousands in New York City and New York State, and given the opportunities of our great nation, many have flourished; and

WHEREAS, Yet the seeds of spiritual and communal destruction implanted by the Soviet regime helped create a crisis of Jewish and communal identity which, if left unabated, could jeopardize the survival of this important Russian American community; and

WHEREAS, To address this monumental challenge, the RAJE Leadership Fellowship was created to train and inspire a new generation of community leaders; and

WHEREAS, In just two years, 932 university students and young professionals have completed the program featuring a full semester of intense educational and leadership development programming which culminates in a 14 day educational trip to Europe and Israel; already, alumni are forming a core group of young leaders among the Russian American Jewish community; and

WHEREAS, This Legislative Body is justly proud to commend RAJE for its purposeful endeavors and commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the rich religious, ethnic, and cultural heritage of the Russian American Jewish community which has become such a valued and integral part of the community of the City and State of New York; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to honor RAJE, the Russian Division of Gateways, and to commemorate its Inaugural Dinner, to be held at the National Ballroom in Brooklyn on February 9, 2009; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to RAJE - Gateways.