



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## Senator Sanders Recognizes Diabetes Awareness Month With Free Informational Session

[JAMES SANDERS JR.](#) December 3, 2015

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In recognition of November being Diabetes Awareness Month, State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village) held a free Diabetes Informational Session on Tuesday at the Rockaway Boulevard Senior Center in South Ozone Park, where attendees not only received advice from medical experts on how to cope with the disease, but also enjoyed a live cooking demonstration, a 20-minute Zumba class, and a complimentary dinner, so delicious, it was

hard to believe it was diabetic friendly.

"My mother had diabetes so I understand what it does and the toll that it takes on a person," Sanders said. "We can do something about diabetes. Most of that is our diet. We can change that, and therefore change how we live and have a better quality of life. No matter where we are, let's take control of diabetes, so it doesn't control us."

The three-hour event, which was attended by some 60 people, featured a myriad of diabetic-related information including how to recognize the symptoms of the disease, using testing supplies, preventing diabetic food pain, proper nutrition, diabetes and holiday eating and the dangers of diabetes and smoking.

Presenters included representatives from St. John's Episcopal Hospital, St. Francis Hospital, Mercy Medical Center, the American Diabetes Association, CVS and Vets Inc. It also included a live cooking demonstration by Cornell University Cooperative Extension and a 20-minute senior Zumba class led by Suzanne Windland of Queens Library.

The diabetes event discussion was kicked off by Dr. Sheldon Markowitz, chief of endocrinology at St. John's Episcopal Hospital, who stressed the importance of healthy eating and exercise in order to treat diabetes instead of relying entirely on medications. There are 29 million American living with diabetes, he noted, and one out four of those are unaware that they have the disease.

"If you have diabetes, you keep it under strict control with diet, exercise and oral medication," Markowitz said. "Of those three factors, the most important factor is diet. If you're a good patient and you take your medication every day, that's wonderful, but that's not going to get your diabetes under control. You can even be good about taking a walk every day to get exercise, but if you're going to have a couple of Hershey bars today and a pint of

Haagen-Daz tomorrow, and visit McDonald's and have a Big Mac and french fries the next day, there is no medication that's going to control that."

Linda Ameroso and Bobby Maknoon of Cornell Cooperative Extension prepared a quick saute of collard greens to illustrate that healthy cooking can also be easy and delicious, handing out samples of their creation to attendees. They also touted the health benefits of other greens such as kale, Swiss chard and bok choy. At the end of the event participants were quizzed on what they learned and those with correct answers were given a bunch of fresh greens to take home.

The event also featured a complimentary diabetic-friendly dinner prepared by Sharon Sweeting-Linsey of Vets Inc., a certified dietitian and nutritionist, along with gourmet chef, Eric Hawkings. It included oven baked chicken with fiesta peppers, rosemary baked potatoes, garlic sauteed kale greens, arugula and romaine salad with cherry tomatoes and balsamic vinegar, and plain yogurt with sliced fresh fruit.

The event was co-sponsored by AARP and BlocPower.