



# FELDER FOCUS



## BATTLING THE BAG TAX



When New York City decided to impose its will on residents via a tax on plastic carry-out bags, Senator Simcha Felder and his colleague Assemblyman Michael Cusick took up the fight *(see full story on page 3)*

### Honoring The Tuskegee Airmen



See story on page 5

### Sick of Waiting for Your Meds?



See story on page 10

### You Need A What? To Do This?



See story on page 4

# Senator Felder Saves Free Transportation



Free after-school transportation was endangered this year, until Senator Felder stepped in. “For decades, many families suffered from an inequitable, dangerous denial of transportation services for certain New York City school children,” explained the Senator. “Boys and girls had different bus stops, so mothers with a son and daughter had to leave at least one unsupervised. More, older Yeshiva students were dismissed late afternoons, so parents were forced to pay for private transportation to bring children both to and from school.” The average cost for transportation was \$1200 per child. Those who couldn’t afford the out-of-pocket expense had to let their children use city buses. During the winter, when dismissal occurred after dark, that was an additional safety concern.

It was only a few years ago that Senator Felder’s State budget bill finally amended the state’s school transportation law. “It wasn’t easy getting it

passed,” he recalls. “Liberal Democrats screamed that it would cost the city \$300 million, a bizarre exaggeration rooted in their accountability to the unions, who didn’t want to lose bus services.” But our Senator and his colleague Assembly Member Helene Weinstein fought hard and won. Their new law guaranteed transportation from city public or private schools for all children from K through 6th grade, even those dismissed after 4 pm, at no cost to parents; it mandated that all stops be no more than 600 feet from a child’s house; when two or more school age children in a family attended more than one school, the family could pick one stop for all children involved. Because they were now reimbursed appropriately for transportation, schools could afford new, safer, air-conditioned busses.

During the program’s first year, 9,500 children benefitted. By year two, the number reached 14,300. This year, more than 20,000 kids needed transportation and \$25 million was needed to continue funding the program. By Feb. 1st the City was ready to stop the program. The City also interpreted the statutory language as something that could be revisited each year. The solution, which involved increasing the budget and devising language so more children would be eligible, required agreements with the State Education Department and the NYC Department of Education. “I’m pleased to report we accomplished our mission,” said Senator Felder. “Free transportation for our children is too important to lose and our families will have those benefits this year.”



## High School Diplomas For Vocational Students

The Senate unanimously passed Senator Felder’s bill which will amend the education law and create an alternative path to a diploma for students seeking a career technical education (CTE). Armed with this diploma, graduates would not only receive official recognition and credentials for their schooling and skills, but also have greater opportunities, principally among employers who require a high school level diploma.

“Despite how effective our current college-ready education system is, in many cases it ignores the needs of students who choose another path, such as students interested in a trade,” explained Senator Felder. “Many of our children excel in these types of skills but are denied this path to a diploma. It’s time for New York to correct that, to recognize the importance of vocational training, and to give all students equal opportunities and acknowledgment.”

## Education Tops Priorities



Senator Felder provided support to every public school and high school in his district that requested funding. In addition, he provided funding to special curriculum like Edward R. Murrow’s music program.



With executive staff at Bishop Kearney High School and staffer Mike Gregorio



Observing a classroom with Monsignor Cassato of St. Athanasius

# BAG TAX VICTORY

by Senator Simcha Felder

Contrary to the old saying, you *can* fight City Hall. But when you do, City Hall will certainly fight back — and they often fight dirty.

The recent construction and deconstruction of the unpopular Bag Tax is a case in point. The Bloomberg administration tried to push through a similar measure when I was on the City Council but we were successful in stopping it. This time, under the guise of an environmental mandate, the Council put together a small majority and voted to enact a 5-cent tax on plastic carry-out bags, which the mayor signed off on. Then the Council celebrated the new tax as if a holy mission had been fulfilled.

But City residents felt anything but festive. My phone began to ring the next day as news of the new tax spread. And I wasn't the only elected official inundated with calls. My colleagues in both the Senate and the Assembly who represent City residents could hardly believe the level of ire that this tax had prompted. The Bag Tax's champion on the Council admitted that his goal was to irritate New Yorkers. Mission accomplished.

But what I saw was more than irritation. The Council had overstepped its reach on several counts. Minimally, they had no right to levy a tax on New Yorkers. The jurisdiction to assess and collect taxes belongs to the State.

Of equal importance, the Council had proven to New Yorkers yet again that it wasn't representing the will of its constituents. Instead, it was dictating its own will. "We don't like plastic bags anymore," said the City, "so we'll make sure you don't, either."

Government decides people are too fat, so no more big sodas. Environmentalists decide that foam cups are no good, so ban them. Traditional circumcision seems a little dangerous so outlaw a 3,300-year-old custom... Where do we draw the line?

This is not how government is supposed to work. Elected officials should represent the interests of their constituents, not the other way around. So I listened to my constituents, who are overwhelmingly opposed to the new Bag Tax. More, I entered into discussions with colleagues in Albany and asked what their constituents were saying. Most concurred with what I found at home in Brooklyn: the Bag Tax was an unjust burden. So I decided to fight City Hall.

I introduced a bill to prohibit the imposition of any tax, fee or local charge on carry-out merchandise bags. My bill was co-sponsored by nearly a dozen of my Senate colleagues representing a bi-partisan effort to quash the Bag Tax. Assemblyman Michael Cusick introduced a similar bill, which quickly passed through the Assembly's Cities Committee, while mine passed through the Senate's Cities Committee unanimously. Then, on June 7, my bill passed in the Senate by a strong, bi-partisan majority — a far greater majority than the Council's Bag Tax enjoyed.

I must thank all of you for supporting these efforts. People complained that no one was fighting for them so we stood up and, together, our efforts led to thousands upon thousands of New Yorkers becoming actively engaged in this issue. Our online petition saw impressive activity, many of you spread the word on social media, and together we made great progress.

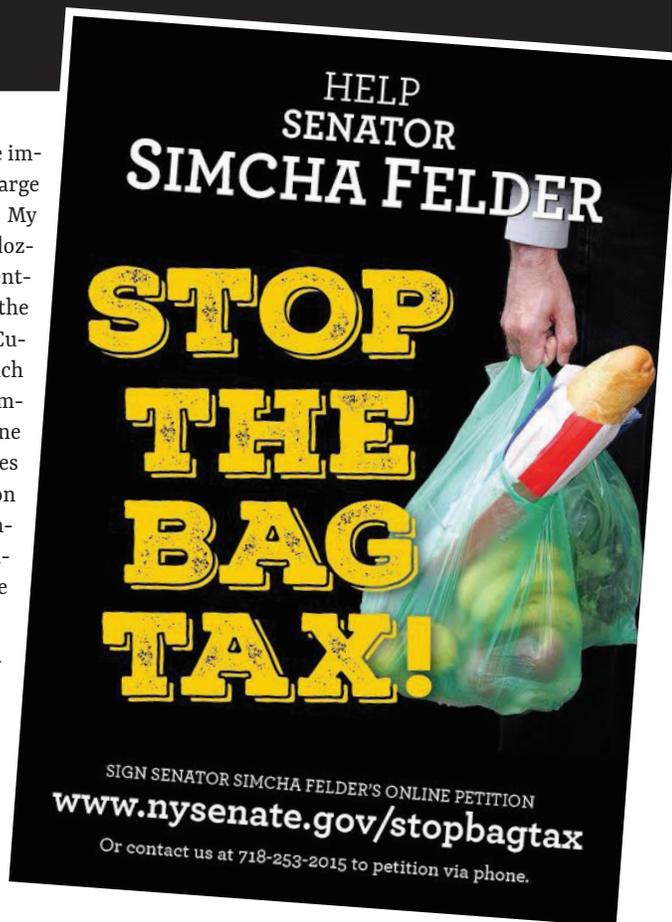
Unfortunately, the Assembly let us down. Following the Senate's passage of my bill, I was disappointed that the Assembly didn't bring the bill to a vote (no surprise — the Assembly failed us on EITC, too). Instead, they accepted an offer from the City to revisit the Bag Tax. The nickel-per-bag that would be collected beginning in October would now be postponed until February, allowing the Council

and Assembly to "work together on a solution."

What does this mean to all of us? It means the City's Bag Tax cannot become law before we return to session in Albany. We'll get a second shot at this before anyone is nickel-and-dimed at the grocery store. It means that together, we told the City that measures can't be forced on people for "their own good" when the majority of us disagree with the agenda. The Mayor will have a chance to reject this unpopular, unnecessary tax.

The foolish Bag Tax — a new darling of liberal progressives — can't become a reality until the City revises the law to the Legislature's satisfaction. Rest assured that Assemblyman Cusick and I will be watching closely. And you have to continue to help. Continue to tell your elected representatives on the Council and in the Assembly that New Yorkers don't want a tax on their carry-out bags. If the environment is really the concern, let's do something positive rather than impose a regressive tax on families.

In the mean time, let's take this victory for what it is: A victory.



With Assembly Members Michael Simanowitz and Michael Cusick

## Protecting Our Acts of Patriotism

The entire State Senate lined up behind Senator Felder's bill to prohibit the requiring of a permit to sing the National Anthem or recite the Pledge of Allegiance. Felder's bill followed an outrageous incident where middle school children were ordered to cease singing the National Anthem at a 9/11 memorial event.

"It's almost comical that a law should be required to protect people who want to sing our country's National Anthem or recite our Pledge

of Allegiance," said Senator Felder. "For generations, citizens of this great nation have been proud to express their patriotism by participating in these time-honored traditions. How in the world have we become so politically correct that benign acts of patriotism must be protected under the law?"

"I'm very pleased that my colleagues in the Senate stood strongly behind this common-sense legislation," the Senator concluded.



## Combating Prejudice with Understanding

Operation Understanding's mission is to build a generation of African-American and Jewish community leaders who promote respect, understanding and cooperation while working to eradicate racism, anti-Semitism, and all forms of discrimination. When the ensemble of college-age, young adults hailing from Washington, DC decided to visit Boro Park, Senator Felder's staffers Judah Wohlgeernter and Herzka Grunfeld (pictured with the students) gave them the grand tour along with a greater understanding of what Boro Park is all about.

What type of local businesses have emerged to serve the Orthodox community? How does local government work to address the wide array of needs and issues for those who live in such a diverse neighborhood? These were just some of the questions that Senator Felder's staff fielded.

"Operation Understanding is doing important work and I'm happy that they include Boro Park each year in their quest for knowledge of diversity," says Senator Felder. "This is a delightful group of open-minded young people eager to learn and we explained the unique identity of the Boro Park neighborhood, how Orthodox businesses work, and how the community works with government toward everyone's mutual benefit."



Senator Felder's staff gave the students from Operation Understanding the grand tour and some valuable lessons

## Legislative Highlights: 2016



It was a good year in Albany. Senator Felder and his colleagues were pleased to deliver a budget that shows a commitment to improving the economic opportunities and quality of life for all New Yorkers.

\* The STAR tax relief program—a huge benefit to home owners—was renewed allowing an average savings of \$350 per eligible household.

\* A new Middle Class Income Tax Cut means millions of New Yorkers will see the lowest rates since 1948. When the cut is fully phased in, individuals and small businesses will see an average

savings of \$700/year.

\* A new Paid Family Leave program will allow working New Yorkers to spend more time with a sick family member or new child.

\* Family Health Initiatives include cancer services programs, nutritional information for women, infants and children, chronic disease prevention, and prenatal care programs.

\* The Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage program was fully funded, helping seniors with their prescription drug costs and community services for the elderly.

# Honoring the Tuskegee Airmen



Senator Felder joined colleagues in Albany to honor four members of the Tuskegee Airmen on the group's 75th anniversary. "It was an honor to meet these brave men and express appreciation for their efforts on behalf of our state and our nation," said Senator Felder. The Tuskegee Airmen were the first African-American military aviators in the

United States Armed Forces who fought in World War II. Their unit included pilots, navigators, bombardiers, mechanics, instructors, crew chiefs, nurses, cooks and all the personnel who helped to maintain our military aircraft. The prestigious group flew over 1,500 missions by the end of the Second World War. The decorated

veterans were at the Capitol for the 2016 Legislative tribute to their 75th anniversary. In addition to inviting the men to the Senate Chamber, the Senate passed a resolution commemorating the special anniversary.

## More Help For Our Veterans

Senator Felder sponsored several important bills that the New York State Senate passed to help veterans. One helps veterans with disabilities afford their homes; the other helps develop services for aging veterans.

"Helping disabled veterans keep their homes allows us to support those who sacrificed so much to protect our freedom and way of life," said Senator Felder. "The property tax exemption bill, introduced by my colleague Senator Andrew Lanza from Staten Island, would benefit disabled veterans or their unmarried surviving spouses when the veteran's injuries were sustained as a result of military service. Veterans would be eligible for the exemption by having served in a combat theater or combat zone."

Senator Felder also sponsored a bill introduced by his colleague Senator Mike Ranzenhofer (Amherst) to create a Veterans Gerontological Advisory Committee. "This bill will help our aging veterans receive the care they deserve," said Senator Felder. "Our veterans deserve no less."



## Recognizing a Local Veteran

Each year, the Senate inducts notable New Yorkers who served in the armed forces into the New York State Veterans Hall of Fame. This year, Senator Felder was pleased to add Arthur Pearlman of Flatbush to the distinguished roll. Mr. Pearlman was born in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn. An accounting student at Brooklyn College, he joined the U.S. Air Force in November 1965 after speaking with a recruiter. Air Force testing showed an aptitude for electronics so, after completing Basic Training at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, Mr. Pearlman went to Biloxi, Mississippi to complete electronics courses before being assigned to repair radio and communications equipment on planes. "Wherever the planes went, that's where we went," he recalls. His first assignment was at Stewart Air Force Base in Newburgh, New York.

In 1968, Mr. Pearlman was sent to Saigon, Vietnam, where he would remain until August of that year. It was the height of the Tet Offensive and many of his comrades would not return home again. Mr. Pearlman spent a total of three years, two months and 29 days in service to the United States, retiring as a Sergeant. He sums up his memory of the military: "I loved it. If not for the fact that it's not a place to raise an Orthodox family, I might have stayed."

*If you know a distinguished veteran from the 17th Senate District, please contact Judah at 718-253-2015 or email [wohlgele@nysenate.gov](mailto:wohlgele@nysenate.gov)*



Senator Felder thanked Arthur Pearlman for his brave service as a Vietnam veteran



More than 1000 of Senator Felder's free Health & Safety booklets were distributed.



With Louis Welz, Larry Spiewak, Assembly Member Weinstein and Yehuda Schupper

COJO  
Help starts here.

and Senator  
**SIMCHA FELDER**  
PRESENT

# CHOL HAMOED EXTRAVAGANZA

CHOL HAMOED PESACH  
TUESDAY, APRIL 26TH

FROM 12:00 NOON TILL 5:00 PM  
CHESTNUT STREET  
BETWEEN  
EAST 15TH & EAST 17TH STREETS

**FREE HEALTHY SNACKS**  
LOTS OF ENTERTAINMENT, RIDES AND FUN!

- SOFT PLAY AREA
- MAGIC SHOW
- PERFORMANCES BY JEWISH MUSIC STARS
- JUGGLERS
- BALLOONS & MORE



All of the children were eager to enjoy the free rides.



Grateful parents thanked Senator Felder for sponsoring the free event.



HaRav Stein affixes a mezuzah at the Senator's new Boro Park office



The Senator with FDNY Chief of Department James Leonard, Commissioner Daniel Nigro and Yanky Meyer of Misaskim



Senator Felder joins Chaskel Bennett, Josh Mehlman and Naftali Miller to assist Chasdei Lev with Pesach packages



Senator Felder visiting with the students at Human Care.



Jonathan Goldsmith "The most interesting man in the world" visits with Senator Felder.



The FDNY provided fire protection information.



NYC Department for the Aging offered valuable information to seniors.



The NYPD registering electronic devices.



Mordy Wohlhender of Hamaspik Care exhibiting special needs information.



With Paul Mak, president of the Brooklyn Chinese American Association at the Annual Community Clean-Up Campaign



Councilman Chaim Deutsch and Senator Felder at the New York Community Hospital ribbon cutting



Handing out free bicycle helmets with Councilman Greenfield



With Michael Berman at the ribbon cutting for the Buzz in Flatbush



Discussing Ocean Parkway improvements with Assemblyman Hikind



# OCEAN PARKWAY UPDATE



In February, we informed you that the Ocean Parkway Safety Improvement Project was just getting started. Extensive work has already been completed, with new lighting installed from Church Avenue to Avenue L... and there's much more work coming including more countdown pedestrian signals, new speed display signs, traffic signals to replace stop signs on service roads, new pavement markings and high-visibility crosswalks, and new left-turn restriction signs on service roads.

Do you see those wooden gates around the trees? Those tell you that work is getting started.



## Respect for the Deceased: UPDATE

As the New York Times, the Daily News and others reported, New York City has offered at least 4,000 unclaimed bodies to medical or mortuary programs in the past decade.

But now, thanks to Senator Felder's law, medical schools will no longer receive these unclaimed bodies without the expressed consent of the spouse or next of kin.

For three years, Senator Felder and Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz reviewed cases like this while working together to protect the dignity of the deceased. This legislative session, their work paid off as Governor Andrew Cuomo signed their bill into law, prohibiting the release of bodies without the consent of family.

"It should go without saying that New York State should make every effort to respect and follow the wishes of the deceased and their family members," said the Senator. "Our new law will prevent further indignities by requiring the written consent of a spouse or next of kin before a body can be released. I am pleased

## The New York Times

N.Y. / REGION

### New York State Bans Use of Unclaimed Dead as Cadavers Without Consent

By NINA BERNSTEIN AUG. 19, 2016

The new law was sponsored by State Senator Simcha Felder, a Democrat who represents a Brooklyn district that includes neighborhoods heavily populated by Orthodox Jews or people of Chinese descent, and State Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz, a Democrat from another diverse district in Queens.

"After numerous cases of unclaimed bodies being delivered to medical schools for uses that may have been in stark contrast with the religious or personal wishes of next of kin, this law now makes it illegal to show such disrespect to the deceased," Mr. Felder said.

that both the Governor and New York State legislature overwhelmingly agreed that both the deceased and their families should be treated with the utmost respect."

## DAILY NEWS

NYDailyNews.com

### EXCLUSIVE: Two state lawmakers want to change law requiring morgues, hospitals to give unclaimed bodies to schools

ALBANY — Hold on to your dead.

Two state lawmakers from the city are looking to change a law that requires morgues and hospitals to hand over unclaimed bodies to educational institutions after as little as 48 hours.

"The death of a loved one is a very painful experience," said Senator Felder, "but there have been far too many cases when next of kin discovered their loss after their loved one's body was already disposed of. Unclaimed bodies were often released after as little as only 48 hours. This is a nightmare for people who are already grieving. These families wanted to bury their loved ones according to their own traditions, but by the time they discovered their loss, it was already too late."

## Touro's Free Tax Prep

Preparing Federal and State income tax returns is never an easy process, and often people need help. That's why Senator Felder teamed up this year with volunteers from Touro College's accounting department to make sure his constituents had the help they needed. Volunteers from the school's accounting department met with residents on the Touro campus and had their taxes prepared, expertly reviewed, and submitted electronically. Senator Felder, a graduate of Touro's accounting department, thanked the volunteers for helping serve the community.



Senator Felder and Professor Shammai Bienenstock observe an assisted tax preparation.



Senator Simcha Felder presented Mary Crisalli Sansone with a proclamation from the State Senate celebrating both her 100th birthday and her lifetime of community service. In the early 1930s, Ms. Sansone was an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers and later worked for the Social Service Department of the Red Cross during World War II. After starting a family in 1949, she returned to community work in the 1960s.



Samuel “Sandy” Saunders received a proclamation from the NY State Senate congratulating him on his milestone 100th birthday. Senator Felder, who made the presentation, was joined by NYC Councilman Chaim Deutsch at the Senior League of Flatbush to celebrate the event.

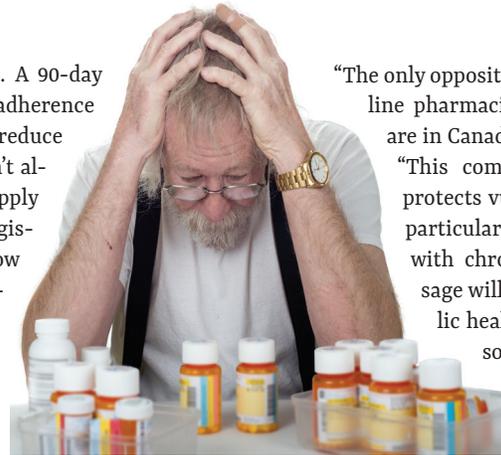
*May they continue to have good health and joy for another 120 years*

## Sick of Waiting for Meds?

It may soon be easier for patients to avoid co-payments and obtain larger supplies of their prescription medication from local pharmacies, thanks to the efforts of Senator Felder and Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz. The effort is designed to improve medication compliance, lower medical costs for New Yorkers, and make it easier for residents to maintain the needed supplies of their medications.

People on long-term medications are burdened by returning to pharmacies once a month or being forced to use mail-order pharmacies to refill their prescriptions. The result is often a decrease

in adherence to medication. A 90-day refill increases a patient’s adherence to their medication and reduce costs, but existing law doesn’t allow local pharmacies to supply 90-day refills. The new legislation, however, would allow local pharmacies to fill prescriptions, provided that the medication is not a controlled substance and that the patient’s doctor is in agreement.



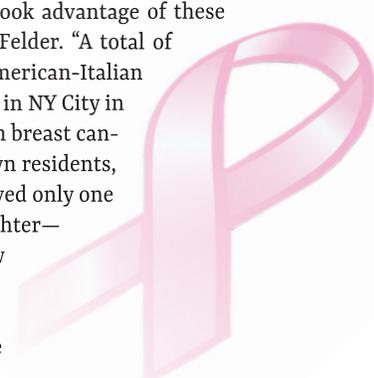
“The only opposition I expect is from on-line pharmacies, and most of those are in Canada,” said Senator Felder. “This common-sense legislation protects vulnerable New Yorkers, particularly the elderly and those with chronic illnesses. Its passage will be a huge win for public health and New York State so I’m hopeful that Governor Cuomo will soon sign our bill into law.”

## Our Cancer Screening Saves a Life!



At least one constituent detected breast cancer in time, thanks to Senator Felder’s no-cost mammogram screenings. Since taking office, the Senator has sponsored regular opportunities for women to receive these screenings.

“Last year, 250 of my constituents took advantage of these no-cost mammograms,” said Senator Felder. “A total of 22 women that were screened by the American-Italian Cancer Foundation’s mobile care clinic in NY City in 2015 were subsequently diagnosed with breast cancer. Four of these women were Brooklyn residents, and one was from my district. If we saved only one life—one family’s wife, mother or daughter—then I don’t need to elaborate on how important these screenings are. Being proactive when it comes to your health is vital, so I urge women to please take advantage of these opportunities.”





What is a Senate office all about?

It's more than just investigating and passing legislation that will improve the quality of life for New Yorkers. Throughout my career as a public servant, I've understood that my office must be a safe haven for individuals seeking help with problems that are often unique to them, as well as problems that many others may share. I've also learned that we cannot help everyone, but we must always try.

Here are some of the many cases that my staff and I recently worked on.

## Making Room for All Special Needs Children

When parents in Brooklyn learned that their special needs school was closing, they panicked, and understandably. There are too few accommodations for children in the district and placing a child on short notice is next to impossible. But these parents also knew who to call. Senator Felder worked for months with the commissioner of the Department of Education to make sure that not even one child was left without appropriate accommodations. "The challenges parents of special needs children have are hard enough—making their lives a little easier is my greatest pleasure," said our Senator.

## Phone Service Restored for Elderly

An elderly, disabled resident called Senator Felder distraught. He was frightened because his phone service had been disconnected. It turned out that the Lifeline program had received the wrong information from him. Senator Felder's staff recognized the potentially dangerous situation and quickly worked with the Federal program and Verizon to correct the matter and restore the gentleman's service.

## Proper Placement for a Disabled Woman

A disabled young woman needed placement in a group home but was being denied because of her classification. The parents had been working to place her for quite some time but to no avail. They reached out to Senator Felder who promptly looked into the matter. It was discovered that the woman had been mis-classified, based on a previous diagnosis. Within a relatively short time, the problem was resolved.

## FELDER FAVORITES: Parks and Public Libraries

"When I was growing up, the 18th Avenue Park was the Felder family's home away from home," recalls the Senator. "After years of neglect, I was proud to help restore the park to our families during my time on the NY City Council. And I am thrilled that Councilman David Greenfield has now taken this beloved park to the next level."



Senator Felder and his staff with Brooklyn Parks Commissioner Kevin Jeffrey and his chief of staff Marty Maher discussing renovations at Friends Field



Brooklyn Parks Commissioner Jeffrey, Councilman Greenfield and Senator Felder at the reopening of the 18th Avenue Park

## More Hours, Resources for Our Libraries

Brooklyn Public Library introduced Sunday hours at its Midwood and Borough Park branches with financial support from Senator Felder. "The Boro Park and Midwood Libraries are always bustling with residents," said Senator Felder. "Our residents appreciate the libraries and deserve six-day access to their books, computers, community pro-

grams, and valued spaces.

"Senator Felder's grant to the 43rd Street Library in Boro Park resulted in a generous collection of new books," said Sarah Weiss, the New York Public Library branch's Neighborhood Library Supervisor. "These new resources are greatly appreciated by our many patrons."



Sarah Weiss and Yossi Toiv join Senator Felder at the Boro Park Library



**Senator Simcha Felder**  
 1412 Avenue J, Suite 2E  
 Brooklyn, NY 11230

PRSRT STD  
 U.S. Postage  
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 New York Senate

## OCTOBER

### FREE FLU SHOTS

Thursday, October 6 • 10:00 am - 12:30 pm  
 Flatbush

## NOVEMBER

### FREE FLU SHOTS

Wednesday, November 2 • 10:00 am - 12:30 pm  
 Boro Park

## DECEMBER

### NO-COST MAMMOGRAM SCREENING

Wednesday, December 21 • 9:00 am - 4:30 pm  
 Flatbush

### NO-COST MAMMOGRAM SCREENING

Wednesday, December 28 • 9:00 am - 4:30 pm  
 Boro Park

### FREE CHOLESTEROL/GLUCOSE SCREENING

Tuesday, December 13 • 10:00 am - 12:30 pm  
 Boro Park

### METROCARD

Thursday, December 29  
 9:30 am - 11:30 am • Flatbush  
 12:30 pm - 2:30 pm • Boro Park

## SENATOR SIMCHA FELDER'S

2016 FALL EVENTS CALENDAR

**FLATBUSH**    **BORO PARK**  
 1412 Ave J #2E    4623 16th Ave  
 718-253-2015    718-484-3216

**CALL IMMEDIATELY TO SECURE  
 YOUR APPOINTMENT**

## FREE LEGAL SERVICES

Starting this October, you will be able to get  
**FREE LEGAL SERVICES** from NYLAG on the  
 1st Wednesday of every month in Senator Felder's Flatbush office, and on the  
 4th Wednesday of every month in his Boro Park office, from 10 am to 4 pm.

## New Boro Park Location Offers Extended Hours

Senator Felder's new office is located in the heart of Boro Park at the corner of 16th Avenue and 47th Street.

We've also extended our office hours allowing everyone a greater opportunity to come in.

## BORO PARK OFFICE HOURS:

- \* Sunday 12 to 3 \*
- Monday 9 to 6
- Tuesday 10 to 6
- \* Wednesday 9 to 8 \*
- Thursday 10 to 6
- Friday 10 to 1