

Tietz dedicates its refurbished facility

Nursing and rehab center honored

by Jason Pafundi
Chronicle Contributor

The Margaret Tietz Nursing and Rehabilitation Center in Jamaica Hills celebrated its grand reopening on Friday with a ceremony attended by elected officials, rabbis from around Queens and guests.

The \$16 million project took two years to complete and was funded through government loans and with the help of Beth Abraham Family of Health Services, the parent group of Margaret Tietz.

“We wanted a more modernized facility,” said Mike Fassler, president and CEO of BAFHS. “The rehab center wasn’t built for today, but now it is.”

As part of the renovations, the nursing

center redid every room from top to bottom, which, according to Executive Director Joseph Seminaro, was quite challenging.

“It was very difficult to make the improvements with residents still in the building,” Seminaro said.

The common areas and dining facilities were upgraded, each room got brand new furniture and window treatments and the rehabilitation facility was completely redone.

Jonathan Chung, an occupational therapist, said the changes will do so much for the quality of life at the center.

“It makes the center more appealing, easier for families to visit in a more comfortable environment,” Chung said. “It makes the patients feel at home while their not at home.”

The center — originally opened in 1971 to care for Holocaust survivors — is a 200-bed skilled nursing facility that provides sub-acute and long-term care.

The professional staff includes board certified physicians, physical therapists, registered nurses, registered dietitians, psychologists, recreation therapists and even a doctor of holistic and Chinese medicine.

During a ceremony, the elected officials in attendance were given the opportunity to speak, and every one of them had kind words about the center.

“Margaret Tietz is such an important institution in the community,” said Assemblyman Rory Lancman (D-Fresh Meadows). “They are a valuable resource and a very good friend of the community.”

Assemblywoman Grace Meng (D-Flush-



Elected officials, rabbis and Margaret Tietz staffers cut the ribbon celebrating the refurbishment of the center. The enhancements, including new furniture in every room, new common areas and a new rehabilitation facility, took two years to complete at a cost of \$16 million. PHOTO BY KEN BROWN



A new rehabilitation center was among the enhancements made to the Margaret Tietz Center in Jamaica Hills. PHOTO BY JASON PAFUNDI

ing), whose grandfather spent time at the facility, said the support he and the family received was top-notch.

“The compassion was just overwhelming and touching,” Meng said.

Though the center caters mostly to the Jewish community, it is open to patients of any background.

Councilman Peter Koo (R-Flushing) said that the Chinese community is “really lucky to have Margaret Tietz.”

Also in attendance were Deputy Borough President Barry Grodenchik, Councilman

Jim Gennaro (D-Fresh Meadows), Assemblymen David Weprin (D-Little Neck) and Michael Simanowitz (D-Flushing) and state Sen. Toby Stavisky (D-Whitestone).

Stavisky said that legislators are “tough people” and that when they send loved ones, especially parents, to a facility like Tietz, it must be because of the quality of care.

And Grodenchik, who was representing Borough President Helen Marshall, echoed the sentiments of the others, saying that Margaret Tietz is the “gold standard for care in Queens County.”

Flushing doc talks ‘Contagion’

Film explores outbreak in sophisticated way, DiJohn says

by Jason Pafundi
Chronicle Contributor

“Contagion,” the recent thriller starring Matt Damon about the spread of a deadly virus, has left many to wonder whether such an outbreak is possible in today’s world and how close to reality is the fictional movie.

Dr. David DiJohn, the director of pediatric infectious disease at Flushing Hospital Medical Center, one of the epicenters of the outbreaks of West Nile virus in 1999 and the H1N1 influenza in 2008, said the idea isn’t impossible and similar outbreaks have happened already.

“We seen things like that through history,” DiJohn said. “With H1N1 influenza, we saw how widespread that became very, very quickly with most countries in the world reporting significant numbers of cases in a very short time period. And that lasted for many, many months.”

He said that there have been many examples of outbreaks like the one depicted in the movie.

In the early 1980s, AIDS, DiJohn said, “probably started in a small part of the world, and in the modern, jet-travel age got out and became very widespread.”

He said the movie did a good job depicting things that have happened and things that could happen again.

Prevention of a deadly viral outbreak

depends on how an agent gets transmitted, DiJohn said.

For example, HIV, which causes AIDS, and herpes simplex are spread through close physical contact, most commonly through sexual contact, and they are somewhat limited in how they are transmitted.

Other things, he said, can be transmitted in respiratory droplets or by other forms of direct or indirect contact, and the film delved into the concept of transmission through fomites, which DiJohn said was “interesting and sophisticated.”

A fomite is an inanimate object, like a door knob, that can be important in transmitting a virus, he said.

DiJohn noted that if someone with a virus sneezes and is smart enough to cover their face with their hands, but then touch a computer keyboard or a door knob or another person’s hand, that is a quick way to spread an infection.

He said the movie does a good job emphasizing that a virus doesn’t necessarily have to be transmitted through direct contact, a common misnomer.

A lot of viruses start in underdeveloped parts of the world where people don’t have access to vaccines and other medicines or diagnostic methods, making outbreaks in those areas much more likely.

According to DiJohn, new viruses appear all the time and there is surveillance



Dr. David DiJohn of Flushing Hospital Medical Center says the film “Contagion” does a good job depicting the spread of a deadly virus.

PHOTO COURTESY FLUSHING HOSPITAL MEDICAL CENTER

being done to see where something is located, how it spreads and how viruses change.

“Influenza is notorious for being able to reinvent itself through a process called reassortment,” DiJohn said. “There is surveillance out there to see how these changes occur.”

“There are always new things that emerge, viruses that change, and we need to continue to be vigilant.”

Restore buses

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ordinarily be eligible,” Marge Feinberg, a DOE spokeswoman, said in an email.

Feinberg wrote that the DOE in 2010 discontinued busing for 5,000 students in 71 schools across the city “as a result of the tight budget.”

But parents and legislators questioned how the city was saving money on its decision for JHS 194 when many of the buses that now transport the fifth- and sixth-grade students are more than half empty.

“The city is paying for MetroCards, so what’s the cost savings here?” asked Assemblyman Michael Simanowitz (D-Flushing), who noted that he and Assemblyman Ed Braunstein (D-Bayside) are supporting legislation sponsored by the Assembly’s Staten Island delegation to mandate the city to provide yellow bus service to all students in third through eighth grade who live more than a mile away from their school.

Many parents said they are especially concerned about their students’ safety while they ride two or three city buses for up to four hours a day.

“We moved into College Point knowing the have great schools, and they can’t get there now,” said College Point resident Annemarie Martinez Murphy. “I don’t know Monday through Friday if my son is safe.”

Darren Kaplan, also of College Point, said the route school officials suggested his 13-year-old daughter take to school includes walking half a mile, past a registered sex offender’s house, from her house to the bus.

“When it snows, we don’t get plowed, and my daughter is supposed to walk a half mile?” Kaplan asked. “If she takes the wrong bus, she’ll end up in the Bronx.”