

Hungry for soup kitchens

3 new Masbias set for Jewish nabes

BY JOYCE SHELBY

WHEN THE kosher soup kitchen Masbia opened in Borough Park nearly four years ago, it served a total of eight patrons.

"Now, we have nights when we go over 200," said Alexander Rapaport, Masbia's executive director. And the need is growing.

With hunger and poverty growing in the Jewish community, Masbia is now planning to open three more kosher soup kitchens — two in Brooklyn and one in Queens. The first on Lee St. in Williamsburg is expected to open in June.

Among Jewish communities in Brooklyn, Williamsburg has the highest level of poverty, with 64% of households earning less than \$35,000, according to a UJA-Federation study.

The council is looking for a second site somewhere in southern Brooklyn to serve needy residents in Midwood, Flatbush, Sheepshead Bay, Brighton Beach and Coney Island.

The third kitchen will be in central Queens to serve Jackson Heights, Rego Park, Forest Hills and Kew Gardens.

"We're focusing on the areas with the highest concentrations of poor, working poor and middle-class people who have lost jobs and can't make ends meet," said William Rapfogel, director of Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty, which is partnering with Masbia in operating the soup kitchens.

The new facilities will be patterned after Masbia, which is set up like a restaurant, with artificial plants surrounding tables to offer diners a sense of privacy.

"This is about making sure people have a dignified way to have a meal in a clean, safe environment," Rapfogel said.

Social workers will regularly visit to make sure diners take advantage of other services they might be eligible for, such as children's insurance or Medicaid.

Rapaport said he was concerned particularly about the increasing numbers of children being brought to Masbia for meals. On a recent night, he counted 61 youngsters.

"We used to average around 20 a day," Rapaport said.

The downturn in the economy has led to a rise in middle-class diners at Masbia, Rapaport said. "Their shame is so much bigger. They don't know where to call for food stamps. They don't know where food pantries are. People have just fallen into this situation."

Brooklyn Daily News reporter Joyce Shelby died last week at the age of 62. This was the last story she wrote. To see the News' tribute to our own Joyce Shelby, visit: NYDailyNews.com/ny_local/Brooklyn



Masbia soup kitchen director Alexander Rapaport (l. above) has been serving meals to more people as the economy has worsened, he said. The soup kitchen will be opening a branch in Williamsburg, another in the boro and a third in Queens. Photos by Aaron Showalter & Neil DeCrescenzo

More Local News

Self-defense event

A public safety event to bring to light the importance of self-defense will be held at Long Island University on Saturday.

Presented by Councilwoman Letitia James, participants include representatives from the district attorney's office and the 88th Precinct who will offer safety tips.

The event is from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the university's gym. LIU is at DeKalb and Flatbush Aves.

Kids to cook healthy

To help spur healthy eating habits in public schools, Councilman Vincent Gentile will join Borough President Marty Markowitz and the nonprofit HIP4Kids for a cookshop event at a Bath Beach elementary school today.

Chef Christopher Daly founded the HIP4Kids organization nine years ago to help youngsters learn how to eat healthier and to offset obesity and Type II diabetes in children.

Beginning at 10:30 a.m., HIP4Kids chefs will teach Public School 163 students food preparation and then enjoy the fruits of their labors.

Visit www.Hip4Kids.org for more about the organization.

Free tax help available

Free income tax preparation for families earning less than \$45,000 and singles earning less than \$20,000 annually is being offered through April 15 by the St. John's Bread and Life Program.

Tax preparers certified by the Internal Revenue Service will provide assistance with forms, and advice to those filing for special tax credits.

Afternoon services are offered 1 to 7 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays at the organization's Bedford-Stuyvesant location, at 795 Lexington Ave. Hours on Saturdays are from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call (718) 574-0058, ext. 113.

Gayle DeWees

BROOKLYN NEWS OFFICES

News Desk (718) 875-4455

News Fax (718) 875-7795

E-mail your news and pictures to **BrooklynNews@nydailynews.com**

Sports Fax (212) 210-1678

E-mail your sports information to **BoroSports@nydailynews.com**

The name and logo of Brooklyn News is a trademark of Daily News, L.P., and may not be used or copied in any manner without the express prior written consent of Daily News, L.P. All submissions become the property of the Brooklyn News and may be used by Brooklyn News in any form or medium. Brooklyn News is not responsible for the return of unsolicited submissions.

© 2009 Daily News L.P.

The Brooklyn News is published by the Daily News L.P., 450 W. 33rd St., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Brooklyn News Offices:
P.O. Box 3314, New York, NY 10116

Advertising (212) 210-2355

JoAnn DiNapoli - jdinapoli@nydailynews.com

Home Delivery 1 (800) 692-NEWS

Buy a foreclosed home without leaving the sofa

BY CLARE TRAPASSO

AS POTENTIAL buyers seek deep discounts at foreclosure auctions across the five boroughs, some savvy bidders are choosing to skip the crowds.

More companies are conducting auctions online. But experts are divided on how this growing trend could affect the outer boroughs, which have been hit particularly hard by foreclosures.

"It's truly the wave of the future," said Richard Wyman, director of on-line auction sales at Real Estate Disposition Corp. in Irvine, Calif.

His company let online bidders buy properties at the March 8 Javits Center auction. Today, it's holding an on-line auction of homes in Queens, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

"You have every walk of life coming to the online platform," Wyman said.

But Anthony Sabino, a professor of law and business at St. John's University in Queens, isn't so sure that's a good thing.

"Because there's a lot of Queens, Brooklyn and Bronx homes up for foreclosures, you can expect a substantial amount of them to be auctioned off online," Sabino said. "But if these buyers aren't who they say they are and they don't have the money, then the homes are going to go right back into foreclosure."

Sabino said he's concerned that if a home goes into foreclosure a second time, the price will plummet even

further, and that could bring down neighborhood real estate values as well.

Foreclosures in Brooklyn and Queens accounted for 76% of the city's total last year, according to the Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy at New York University.

Online bidder Richard Coia, 52, of Spencerport, N.Y., finds those concerns a bit far-fetched.

When the real estate litigation attorney registered with Real Estate Disposition Corp., he had to undergo a credit check and be approved before he could bid.

Only then was he able to log into the auction, where he bid on properties while listening to the real-life auctioneer.

"Once you familiarize yourself with it, it's very, very easy," he said. But to avoid surprises, he cautioned potential bidders to visit the properties in person.

"You should never bid blindly," Coia said.

As technology improves and the foreclosure crisis continues, real estate experts believe online auctions will grow further.

"It's sort of a natural progression," said Jonathan Miller, president of Manhattan real estate appraisal firm Miller Samuel Inc.

"In the age of eBay, I think investors may feel more empowered to make purchases online," he said. "We buy everything else online."