

HAMASPIK GAZETTE

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News of Hamaspiik Agencies and General Health



HamaspikCare Broadens CDPAP, PCA Services to Orange County Residents

Home-care agency now providing more home-care services to upstate public

As part of its never-ending goal of bringing as much home care as possible to as many people in need as possible, HamaspikCare has just scored big again.

As of February 2012, the Licensed Home Care Services Agency (LHCSA) is now providing CDPAP and PCA home care services to Orange County residents on Medicaid, the public healthcare program for the poor and disabled.

The Consumer Directed Personal Assistance Program (CDPAP) is a program for Medicaid members that operates in several New York State counties.

With CDPAP, qualifying individuals in need of personal assistance and the many forms thereof—often seniors who just need a little help around the house or with running errands—can get a professional caregiver at no cost.

HamaspikCare Administrator Yoel Bernath explains that unlike other home care services, the recipient

directs the aide's actions and scheduled visits with CDPAP, as

opposed to the pre-assigned tasks performed by visiting nurses, therapists, HHAs or PCAs.

"This empowers the consumer to direct his

or her own care," he says.

As its name implies, CDPAP also benefits individuals of any age or situation, so long as they are on Medicaid, are capable of directing their own care, and have a legitimate need for home care services.

For several years, Hamaspiik of Rockland County ran its own version of the CDPAP program, dubbed PACE for Personal Aide Consumer Empowerment. The program provided Rockland County residents with the multifaceted home care assistance for which they qualified.

Enter HamaspikCare.

With the advent of its successful LHCSA services division, Hamaspik underwent some strategic streamlining and reorganization, with its PACE program being folded into HamaspikCare.

Now, in addition to residents of Rockland County, individuals in need residing in the suburban and



WORLD OF GOOD With Epcot behind him, this gentleman (and fellow 61st St. Briderheim residents) is still the very picture of post-vacation optimization (See full story, E4)

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Affordable Care Act to Face Supreme Test of Constitutionality

High court to analyze President Obama's signature legislation

On Monday, March 26, the United States Supreme Court will hear opening arguments for the legal pros and cons of the Affordable Care Act, widely considered the signature achievement of the Obama

Administration thus far.

The Affordable Care Act marked the second anniversary of its signing this Friday, March 23.

The case before the Supreme Court is being brought by 26 state

Attorneys General joined by several non-profit organizations.

The historic court case follows several previous decisions by lower courts in the past year upholding the legality of the law in whole or in part.

The central debate over the Affordable Care Act remains its "Individual Mandate"—a clause that would impose mandatory insurance coverage or a fine on every American starting in 2014.

Other parts of the law have already gone into effect, such as coverage of children up to age 26 under their parents' newly-purchased plans, more coverage of preexisting conditions, and free tests for a number of conditions and diseases.

Proponents argue that not purchasing a health insurance plan constitutes interstate commerce and therefore, since the Constitution's Commerce Clause empowers Congress to regulate interstate commerce, the U.S. government has the power to impose such a mandate.

And on a March Monday, the spectacle of confirming the constitutionality of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act finally begins, with the Supreme Court allocating a historic five-and-a-half hours of deliberations spread over three days.

A final ruling is expected in June or July.

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O P W D D

Community Habilitation

Providing: Personal worker to achieve daily living skill goals

Home Based Respite

Providing: Relief for parents of special needs individuals

After School Respite

Providing: A program for after school hours and school vacations

Supplemental Day Hab Program

Providing: an extended day program

Camp Neshomah Summer Day Program

Providing: A day program during summer and winter school breaks

Individual Residential Alternative

Providing: A supervised residence for individuals who need out-of-home placement

Individual Support Services

Providing: Apartments and support for individuals who can live independently

Family Support Services

Providing: Reimbursement for out of ordinary expenses for items or services not covered by Medicaid

Day Habilitation

Providing: a Day program for adults with special needs

Article 16 Clinic

Providing: Physical therapy · Occupational therapy · Speech therapy · Psychology · Social work · Psychiatry · Nursing · Nutrition

Environmental Modification

Providing: Home modifications for special needs individuals

Supported Employment

Providing: support and coaching for individuals with disabilities to be employed and maintain employment

Enhanced Supported Employment

Providing: Job developing and coaching for people with any type of disability

Medicaid Service

Coordination
Providing: An advocate for the individual to coordinate available benefits

Home Family Care

Providing: A family to care for an individual with special needs

Intermediate Care Facility

Providing: A facility for individuals who are medically involved and developmentally delayed

IBS

Providing: Intensive Behavior Services

Plan of Care

Providing: Support for the families of individuals with special needs

D O H

Traumatic Brain Injury

Providing: Service Coordination · Independent living skills training · Day programs · Rent subsidy · Medical equipment · E-Mods · Transportation · Community transmittal services · Home community support services

Early Intervention

Providing: Multidisciplinary and supplemental Evaluations · Home and community based services · Center based services · Parent/child groups · Ongoing service coordination · Physical therapy · Occupational therapy · Speech therapy · Special education · Nutrition · Social work · Family training · Vision services · Bilingual providers · Play therapy · Family counseling

HamaspikCare

Personal Care & Support Services

Providing: Home Health Aides · Homemakers · Personal Care Aides · Housekeepers · HCSS aides

Counseling Services

Providing: Dietician/Nutrition counselors · Social Workers

Rehabilitation Services

Providing: Physical therapy · Speech therapy · Occupational therapy · individuals

PACE-CDPAP

Providing: Personal aides for people in need

Care At Home

Providing: Nursing · Personal care aide · Therapy · Respite · Medical supplies · Adaptive technology · Service coordination

Nursing Home Transition and Diversion

Providing: Service Coordination · Assistive technology · Moving assistance · Community transitional services · Home community support services · E-Mods · Independent living skills · Positive behavioral interventions · Structured day program

Child & Adult Care Food Program

Providing: Breakfast · Lunch · Supper · Snack

Social and Environmental Supports

Providing: Minor maintenance for qualified

Social Model

Providing: A social day program for senior patients

Nursing Services

Providing: Skilled observation and assessment · Care planning · paraprofessional supervision · clinical monitoring and coordination · Medication management · physician-ordered nursing intervention and skill treatments

HCR

Access To Home

Providing: Home modifications for people with physical disabilities

RESTORE

Providing: Emergency house repairs for senior citizens

HOME

Rehabilitation Program

Providing: Remodeling dilapidated homes for low income home owners

NYS ED

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Providing: Employment planning · Job development · Job placement

Job coaching

Intensive and ongoing support for individuals with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities to become employed and to maintain employment

NYS HA

Training

Providing: SCIP · CPR & first aid · Orientation · MSC CORE · AMAP · Annual Updates · Com-Hab/Respite · Family Care training · Supportive Employment

Central Intake

Providing: The first contact for a person or family in need of Hamaspik services

Hamaspik Gazette

Providing: A bilingual monthly newspaper informing the community of available Hamaspik services

Parental Retreats

Providing: Getaways and retreats for parents of special needs individuals · Parent support groups

More Office Space, More Room for Community Services

*Hamaspik of Rockland County
opens new building wing*

The long-awaited new wing of Hamaspik of Rockland County's administrative offices at 58 Rt. 59 in Monsey was finally "opened for business" on Monday, March 5, 2012.

The expanded new section, which saw new offices and workspaces put to immediate use, had been under construction for over 12 months.

From steel beams, frame, roof and walls to carpeting, economical pre-owned furniture and everything in between, the new floor space took shape over a year of work by a number of superb regional contractors, including Busch Contracting, Express Electric, Eycland Security, Hashomer Alarm, Non-Stop Plumbing and Heating, Prime Security and Rockland HVAC.

A minor logistical operation was organized and executed on Friday, March 2 and Sunday, March 4, with slightly more than half the administrative employees packing their office items in labeled boxes on Friday and a professional moving crew relocating said boxes to their new assigned workspaces on Sunday.

By Monday, with the telephone and computer networks long having been reconfigured to incorporate the large new wing, everything was set up and ready for an ordinary workday.

The new section now houses offices for Hamaspik of Rockland County's accounting and bookkeeping operations; Directors of its Residential, Day Services and Nursing Home Transition/Diversion (NHTD) programs; several Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSCs); and its Community Affairs department (which includes the Yiddish and English *Gazettes*).

A brand-new and spacious Central Intake hub is incorporated in the new wing, as well as a contemporary front desk office space. Maintenance and development staffers also have offices in the new section, and several sizable training and conference rooms are also

on site.

In keeping with Hamaspik's mission of serving the disabled and significant others in need, a new elevator allows access to the new section. Likewise, a new wheelchair lift creates an "accessibility bridge" right next to the half-flight of stairs connecting the old and new sections.

Throughout the months of planning and sometimes-tedious construction, Hamaspik's superlative maintenance, technical-support and development team put in endless hours of devotion, including numerous late nights, early mornings and long Sundays.

That team includes Director of Development Zalman Stein, whose hands-on proficiency produced an optimally-designed, technology-ready and ergonomic work environment; Maintenance Manager and in-house tech guru Aaron Rubinstein, whose multifaceted mastery of all things mechanical, electronic and otherwise daily operations-related ensured a workspace that got and stayed up and running; and Maintenance Manager Jacob Weiss, a talented contractor and handyman whose contributions were (and remain) indispensable to the new wing.

Backing up that threesome were Hamaspik of Orange County Acting Executive Director Moses Wertheimer, Maintenance Manager David Daskal and IRA Maintenance Manager Samuel Falkowitz, all of whom assisted in the run-up to, and execution of, the final move into the new building.

The expansion frees up considerable floor space in the old section and provides ample room for new programs in the new section, allowing existing programs like the popular HamaspikCare Licensed Home Care Services Agency (LHCSA) to operate even more efficiently... and future plans to take root. ■



Moving Day: A now-settled spacious new reception area

Autism in the News

A new analysis suggests that changing the American Psychiatric Association (APA)'s definition of autism would sharply reduce the disorder's skyrocketing diagnosis rate.

About one out of every 100 U.S. children is currently diagnosed with some form of autism—and many experts now argue that the vague criteria for autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) have driven the vast increase in ASD diagnoses since the DSM was last updated 17 years ago.

Autism is currently seen as a spectrum of disorders ranging from the often-mild Asperger syndrome to the non-communication of full-blown autism and Pervasive Developmental Disorder - Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS).

The new definition would merge all three disorders into one "autism spectrum disorder," and eliminate

Asperger's and PDD-NOS as recognized forms of autism.

The new definition is being proposed for the upcoming fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), the industry's authoritative "bible" of mental-health disorders.

The DSM-V's new definition might make it harder for many people who would no longer meet the criteria to get autism-related health, educational and social services.

As a result, a robust debate is taking place in the autism professional, advocacy and parent communities.

School budgets, already stretched by costly special-education programs for children with autism, stand to benefit from fewer diagnoses, while students and other individuals with high-functioning autism

diagnoses may lose vital services—possibly pitching parents against school systems and other services-givers.

Mental-health professionals are equally divided over where to draw the line between unusual and abnormal.

Some, like Child Study Center director Dr. Fred R. Volkmar of the Yale School of Medicine, believes the new definition could "nip" the autism diagnosis surge "in the bud."

But previous projections have concluded that far fewer people would be excluded under the change, according to Dr. Catherine Lord, director of the Institute for Brain Development, a joint project of New York-Presbyterian Hospital, Weill Medical College of Cornell University, Columbia University Medical Center and the New York Center for Autism.

As far as the APA is concerned, "the proposed criteria will lead to more accurate diagnosis and will help physicians and therapists design better treatment interventions for children who suffer from autism spectrum disorder," said James Scully, the APA's medical director.

What's more, the organization said the public will have another opportunity to weigh in on the potential changes. The APA will open up an additional public comment period this spring.

The DSM-V's new definition of

autism is expected to be finalized by December 2012. The new DSM is projected for completion by May of 2013.

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A review of Year 2004 Medicaid records of over 28,000 children and young adults with autism ages five to 21 has found that the more publicly-funded after-school respite services they got, the less likely they were to be hospitalized for psychiatric episodes. The finding is sure to resonate with many parents of children with autism who have found their kids have benefited, some greatly, from such respite programs.

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A study of several hundred teen licensed drivers with high-functioning autism has found that they're better drivers than their typical peers, with 12 percent having received tickets or been involved in accidents compared to the 31 and 22 percent of all teens who have respectively gotten tickets and been in accidents.

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The mid-January appointment of Peter Bell, a leader with advocacy group Autism Speaks, to the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities has stoked some opposition within the autism community. Mr. Bell has previously raised the possibility of specific vaccines causing autism, despite numerous scientific studies having discredited that claim.

*

In a new study, Columbia University researchers found the uncommon *Sutterella* bacteria in about half of tissue samples surgical-

ly retrieved from the guts of children with autism—but not finding any *Sutterella* in samples from children without autism. Researchers don't yet know the bacteria's relationship to autism, if any.

*

Florida Atlantic University researchers have found that babies learn to talk not just by hearing but also by reading the lips of those speaking to them—but shift their attention from speakers' mouths to eyes once they develop basic language skills, typically around 12 months old.

However, researchers also found that one-year-olds with autism continued focusing on lips and did not shift attention to speakers' eyes.

The researchers say their findings suggest a potential new way to diagnose autism at an earlier age than is currently possible, which is about 18 months.

In related news, researchers found that the brain pathways of 28 babies who later developed autism were over-developed by six months of age—but, interestingly, under-developed by age two. The finding may lead to new diagnoses and/or interventions as early as six months of age.

In a similar vein, British researchers found that babies ages six to ten months who later developed normally apparently produce two clearly different brain signals when responding to faces looking at or away from them. In contrast, most of the babies who later developed autism seemed to produce similar brain signals regardless of being looked at or away from.

HamaspikCare Broadens CDPAP

Continued from Page 1

rural expanses of Orange County can also get CDPAP services through HamaspikCare too.

The expansion brings the HamaspikCare brand of caring to a community that has long associated the Hamaspik name with authoritative competence and effectiveness.

*

In like manner has HamaspikCare now also been approved by the Orange County Dept. of Social Services to provide its Personal Care Aide (PCA) services to Orange County residents.

The services, which provide trained and professional PCAs to qualifying individuals with home care needs, are a notch of involvement up above CDPAP services.

Unlike the CDPAP program, which does not need to be provided by a home-care agency (but can be), visits from a PCA may only be obtained through a LHCSA like HamaspikCare.

This is because, unlike visiting CDPAP aides and the free-ranging freedom they provide, PCAs may only perform personal care or personal hygiene tasks specified by the providing agency and the Plan of Care.

For the same reason, PCAs must have also received state-mandated training to ensure uniform standards of patient safety and caregiver professionalism.

HamaspikCare's team of PCAs continue to proudly bear the Hamaspik banner as they dispense superlative care across the region—care that now will be available through the Orange County DSS too.

*

"We're providing CDPAP services ten-plus years in Rockland County," says Bernath of the new arrangement sure to benefit Orange County's entire beneficiary community—"so I'm confident that Orange County will receive an equal-quality service."

■

Turning People into Great Socializers at Hamaspik of Rockland County

Men's Day Hab program helps individuals improve social skills

"Great [fill-in-the-blank]s are born, not made," the universal saying goes.

But, as anyone who's ever taken lessons in anything knows, it's not terribly true.

The fact that ordinary people can be trained in or otherwise taught any skill—and, as often occurs, get amazingly good at it—puts the lie to the notion that growth is the realm of the gifted.

But breaking out of one's self

isn't just for aspiring musicians, singers or public servants. With authoritative instructors or even books, one can acquire a functional command of home improvement, gourmet cuisine or personal (or, dare we say it, Wall Street) finance.

And, contrary to conventional wisdom, quality instruction produces better socializers too.

At the Hamaspik of Rockland County Men's Division program, learning to become one of those bet-

ter socializers is now a significant part of the ongoing curriculum.

The program was originally launched in response to parental input at an Individual Service Plan (ISP) meeting between an individual's parents and the Day Hab's staff.

So the Day Hab's curriculum is really parent-driven?

"It's needs-driven," explains Director of Day Services Zishe Lowy, mentioning that the program runs no less than seven specific groups for skills needed by its four-dozen-plus participants.

And one of those skills groups, for higher-functioning Day Hab regulars, teaches them social skills.

At a recent social-skills group, the topic was interpersonal communications skills, Day Hab Manager Pinchas Knopfler reported in his weekly in-house newsletter. Towards that end, the young men learned the importance of eye contact, playing an eye contact game as helpful as it was humorous.

Sitting across each other at a

table, the gentlemen were given stickers to affix to their foreheads. Working in pairs, one had to fix his gaze upon his counterpart's sticker-adorned forehead and count "one" aloud. The partner had to respond with "two," and the two would go back and forth until the number six, all while eyes stayed focused on the other's forehead.

The group then moved on to the topic of positive thinking—how keeping a positive attitude about one's self affects not just one's self, but also the immediate social environmental too.

Led by Mr. Lowy, the group was told the story of the Manhattan tour bus driver who tamed a group of disgruntled and tired tourists after a scheduling mishap, transforming the negative atmosphere on the bus immediately after their boarding into a buoyant one by the time he dropped them off an hour later.

Perhaps the expression ought to be rephrased, "Great socializers are taught, not born." At least at Hamaspik.



Socialization training

In and Out of Florida, Kingdom of a Different Kind of Magic

For 61st St. residents, trip and post-trip positivity reigns supreme

For Yossi Moskovits, Manager of Hamaspik of Kings County's 61st St. Briderheim Individualized Residential Alternative (IRA) group home, it was long a dream.

For well over a year, Mr. Moskovits had been thinking about taking "his boys" on the therapeutic, restorative and all-around beneficial scenery change commonly known as a vacation.

But no ordinary vacation this.

Besides the logistics of lodging, transportation and food for the residence's residents, Moskovits and team would have to see to their medical and physical care throughout as well.

And just to be ready to do that, a daunting number of logistical hur-

"It was successful from the first second of planning to when we came home," says Mr. Preisler.

Sounds simple enough. But the logistical tasks required to pull off the trip without a hitch would have impressed any military airlift commander.

Planning took its first step beyond the theoretical last year around Passover time, when Mr. Moskovits made the strategic decision to save now and spend later, forgoing a short-term summer trip for his boys then so that the home would have the financial resources for a far more extensive outing in the relatively near future.

The fiscal conservatism allowed Hamaspik, acting as representative

for such a multifaceted endeavor. "They really deserve a thanks," Moskovits says.

At the same time, Mr. Moskovits secured a green light for trip planning from Hamaspik of Kings County Executive Director Mr. Joel Freund.

With permission for detail-planning granted, the Manager then consulted with Hamaspik of Kings County nurse Judy Schwartz, RN to iron out the individuals' complex medical needs for the duration of the trip.

Mrs. Schwartz, whose duties include ensuring the regular and properly-dosed administration of any and all medications required by the individuals in the agency's residential programs, insisted on a rigorous "medical itinerary" before granting Moskovits permission to take the residents out of town—and out of state, to boot—for nearly a week.

Then came the IDs—a saga worthy of an article in its own right. It goes like this.

Flying to Florida required passports. Some residents didn't have passports. Getting passports required official New York State identification cards. Some didn't have those. And getting IDs required Social Security cards and/or birth certificates—which some individuals, for whatever reason, didn't have either.

Mr. Moskovits and staff thus found themselves on a controlled wild goose chase across a number of New York City bureaucracies and administrative offices until a formidable trail of paperwork was assembled and the critical documents, ID cards and passports were at last secured.

An impressed Executive Director Freund praised Moskovits for his work, confessing that he hadn't thought the Home Manager would succeed with the paperwork where others had failed.

"I saw the *Yad Hashem* [Hand of G-d—ed.] every step of the way," Moskowitz tells the *Gazette*. The Home Manager also extends special thanks for Hamaspik of Kings County MSC Supervisor Moshe Shechter for his critical assistance in procuring all necessary IDs.

In particular, he cites the astonishing chain of providence that unfolded before his eyes whilst visiting a New York State DMV office, an institution notorious for interminable wait times.

It was the morning of Monday, January 2, 2012 when the Manager took his place on a line of "indecipherable" length with several 61st St. residents who needed to obtain official IDs.

One of the individuals shortly began making a fuss, and despite

staff's best efforts to calm the situation, the commotion was heard by a DMV administrator... who proceeded to pull Moskovits from the line and inquire whether he'd be able to help move things along faster.

A surprised and grateful Manager quickly answered in the affirmative, then explained the purpose of his visit.

"I never saw anyone so prepared with all the details!" said the administrator according to Moskovits, after the latter handed him a wad of paperwork. The administrator then phoned his supervisor.

A voice was shortly heard over the facility's PA system ordering clerks to halt the number-based line and allow the special-needs individuals, and their staff, to proceed directly to the counters where three clerks plus the supervisor himself tended to them, bypassing the entire lengthy line.

The DMV staff efficiently ironed out several paperwork snafus and within mere minutes, the Hamaspik party was on its way out of the building.

"I wanted to jump out of my skin" for joy, Moskovits told the *Gazette*.

Apparently integration, and appropriate sensitivity, for special-needs individuals created in the post-Willowbrook era has arrived at the New York State DMV.

With official IDs secured, Briderheim leadership got busy that very day with the next step of trip planning: purchasing airline tickets.

Mr. Moskovits began making inquiries of various airlines, finally settling on a clutch of direct-flight, round-trip bookings from Newark International Airport to Orlando, Florida.

A cozy villa at the lovely and conveniently located Emerald Island Resort venue in Orlando, recommended by the Laufers based on previous usage, was likewise reserved in short order.

As he got into "vacation mode," Moskovits reports consistent and considerable support from Executive Director Freund. He was "very willing" and "very caring," Moskovits says.

Working within the economical but sensible budget given to him by Mr. Freund, Moskovits was able to plan the trip's finances without exceeding the allotted sums.

Next came another critical and massive part of the trip's planning: packing! (Where do we start?)

One week before the Sunday, February 12 departure date, Moskovits distributed duties to each of his devoted employees.

With "Bridersheimers" and staff bringing along everything they could possibly need, the trip was essentially a four-day relocation to and from Florida—food, kitchen and dining utensils, wheelchairs and other medical equipment, clothing, personal belongings, medications and more.

One DSP thus was responsible for preparing and packing all utensils and kitchen items. Another did all the necessary shopping. And all also helped their assigned residents pack their bags.

At the same time, 61st chef Mrs. Gottesman prepared tray after tray of freezable delicacies to be heated to fresh perfection on a hotplate



A push to serve: A JetBlue ground crewmember admirably assists a happy 61st St. traveler on the way to Florida

dles would have to be overcome, and against discouraging odds.

So the 61st St. Briderheim went ahead and did it.

Was it a regular vacation? "Not for the workers!" jokes 61st St. Direct Support Professional (DSP) David Preisler, one of those very hard-working workers.

This is the story of how Yossi Moskovits and his staff, a veritable captain and crew, set sail on an improbable voyage to Orlando and back—and gave "their boys" a vacation of flying colors.

Blazing a paper trail



Integration, Disney style

payees for the residents' regular cash allowances from Social Security Disability (SSD) and other programs, to build up enough cash reserves to pay for a trip to Orlando—plane tickets, villa rental, local trips and all.

Moskovits also judiciously cut back on various minor expenses, the better to save even more money for the upcoming jaunt.

With financial planning securely scheduled, the Home Manager met in October 2011 with Mr. and Mrs. Lipa Laufer, the devoted co-Managers of Hamaspik of Orange County's Acres Briderheim IRA.

The Laufers, veterans of more than one trip to Florida with their entire home, were more than happy to offer their young peer their invaluable experience and advice on pulling the trip off.

Perhaps chief among the Laufers' pointers was the suggestion to schedule the trip for the January-February off-peak season, when the weather—and the crowds—would be considerably more manageable.

The husband-and-wife team also happily provided their experience-born lists of tasks and items required

Packing it in



Just like home: The villa



Road to good times: A "61st-er" and DSP on the Autopia

upon unpacking in Florida. Said items included chicken cutlets, burger patties, pastrami sandwiches, a wide selection of side dishes and more. "She did a superior job," says Mr. Moskovits.

(A Monroe-based Vaad HaKashrus [Kosher Committee] expert was consulted on the proper execution of the trip's food program, ensuring the agency's adherence to its customary high kosher-food standards even while out of town.)

Transporting all of that via commercial airliner was out of the question—so intrepid 61st St. DSPs Moshe Samuel and Levi Stern were tapped for a veritable side adventure of their own: piloting a Honda Pilot SUV, and supplies-laden trailer, all the way down to Florida.

But, Moskovits notes, tending to "a billion" minor details that make the difference between passable and perfect in the weeklong run-up to the trip wasn't the only thing going on.

As the days to takeoff drew closer, the home moved into a very excited "mode," says the Manager—with residents whom some thought would never grasp the concept of "vacation" did indeed grasp it, and how.

One of the schools attended by a resident called 61st to ask, "How are you going to handle him on the plane? You think he's going to get it that he's going on a trip?!" the Manager relates. "But that day, he was jumping around, 'We're going to see Mickey! We're going to see Donald! We're going on vacation!'"

The joy at the approaching getaway approached that of an upcoming wedding in the family, Moskovits adds. The enthusiasm was "to no limit," he says.

Further ramping up the exhilaration were the gifts one of the home's high-functioning residents began receiving once word got out among neighbors that "the boys" were going to Florida.

Besides all his community friends calling in to wish him a great trip, the young man collected a bit of snacks for the road and even a new digital camera.

And leaving no detail spared, Mr. Moskovits even took out travel



Waves of joy: On the ferry to the theme park

insurance plans for each member of the travel party.

"I felt an enormous pressure," he says, "taking a major *achrayis* [responsibility—ed.] for 15 people under my wing."

Over the Shabbos weekend before the great escape, with almost everything already packed and ready to go, the mood was decidedly elevated among residents and staff alike.

Within one hour of the post-Shabbos Havdalah ceremony came Saturday nightfall, the home's entire staff came in to finish up any remaining packing.

The U-Haul trailer parked in front of the house had already been loaded with a veritable warehouse of supplies: wheelchairs, a hotplate, a plethora of disposable items, utensils, refrigerator and even a freezer. (In keeping with HamaspiK's strict residential kosher-food policies, no fresh cooking would be done on the premises while on vacation, with everything pre-made and only needing reheating.)

Final loading consisted of stowing a large number of coolers filled with food items and dry ice—food-stuffs that had been graciously stored over the weekend in a local commercial freezer belonging to the community-minded Klein's Ice Cream company.

With the trailer filled with all necessary items, Samuel and Levy headed out at 9:30 p.m. to Florida, driving all night to arrive in the Sunshine State the next day, with

only a brief stop in North Carolina interrupting their two-driver trip.

The twosome used the Sunday hours before the party's arrival to set up the villa with fridge, freezer and other items, and then to be at the airport with comfortable rented vans with which to transport them to their vacation destination—just another length HamaspiK goes to serve individuals with special needs.

Happiness takes flight

The big day had arrived, and the young men were thrilled to the gills.

After their morning school routines, the gentlemen returned to 61st's premises at 1:00 p.m., where they showered in preparation for the journey and collected carry-on sandwiches, snacks and other comestibles. One DSP also carried a handbag loaded with flight medications.

A 2:30 p.m. Minchah afternoon prayer service was held in the home's dining room complete with the special Tefilas Haderech traveler's prayer, and with spiritual duties out of the way, a flotilla of HamaspiK Transport Vans driven by HamaspiK of Kings County Director of Residential Services David Mizrahi, 38th St. Shvesterheim Manager Israel Indig and Maintenance Manager Naftali "Tully" Tessler whisked the boys off to the first leg of their grand escapade: Newark International Airport.

JetBlue's departure-terminal crew was remarkably sensitive and helpful, notes Preisler, with porters and supervisors even asking to pose for photos with the group while assisting them through a troublesome TSA security check.

Once on the airplane, a maiden flight for most, the individuals were settled into their contiguous seats in the first three rows by attentive HamaspiK staff backed by patient fellow passengers and air crew. (They even got the extra-legroom seats free of charge!)

Excitement was literally in the air as the craft roared off the runway Sunshine State-bound at approximately 6:30 p.m., and as the 2.5-hour flight got underway, the individuals enjoyed the sandwiches and drinks distributed earlier by their Direct Support Professionals.

Shortly after touchdown, the individuals and their minders were



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Monsey
845.352.2082

allowed off the aircraft first courtesy of JetBlue's respectful crew and passengers. A brief visit to baggage claim produced a few essential suitcases and other cargo items, and the party stepped out into the balmy Florida outdoors to find Messrs. Samuel and Levy waiting at the airport's curb with rented vans.

A relatively short ride over to the Emerald Island Resort saw the entire group settling in at about 10:30 p.m., with the DSPs bustling about getting the grinning but weary travelers immediately ready for bed after their big first day.

But the real work only began once the boys were sound asleep.

Staff found themselves up to

ically-needed makeover. With the boys out of the way, very old carpeting on all staircases was removed and replaced with solid flooring, all furniture was pulled back from walls to allow for a fresh and very overdue interior paint job, and, most important of all, the home was subjected to an early and very thorough Passover cleaning.

So far, 61st's team hadn't missed a single beat—and the vacation was only beginning.

Being there

Official Day One of Vacation dawned with the young men being woken up by staff at the leisurely



Outreach: A "61st-er" shares a special moment with a particular world-famous mouse

2:30 a.m. unpacking and stowing away individual-designated boxes of daily outfits, essential medications and other items, ensuring that the vacation would be executed with almost-military precision and planning.

Meanwhile, back in Brooklyn, Maintenance Manager Tessler was already hard at work giving various key elements of 61st's interior a crit-

hour of 9:00 a.m.

Those tireless DSPs—the aforementioned Messrs. Preisler, Samuel and Stern plus Abraham "Avrumi" Horowitz and Chaim Mordechai Lunger—had been up at 6:45 a.m. (despite less than five hours of sleep) to attend a local synagogue for the local minyan group morning services and then prepare breakfast.

After their morning routines of showers, dressing and traditional prayers, the individuals and staff converged around a large table for a breakfast fit for a king, courtesy of Mr. Preisler's deft kitchen work. Morning medications were also administered.

The young men were then granted free time to just relax and hang out around the comfortable villa.

After a nourishing lunch was served shortly before 12 noon, vans were then loaded up—and the first major outing of the vacation got underway: the Magic Kingdom of Disneyworld.



"Nose" his stuff: A Disney Cast Member delightfully disarms



Rev-elry: DSP Samuel (l) on the road with a resident

The magic was in the air virtually from the first moment the young men and their staff stepped foot in the park. Almost immediately after entering, a young Disney “cast member,” Bob, stepped over and personally asked if he could be helpful, apparently using intuition and experience to detect the group of first-time visitors.

Near the entrance is a popular, and long-lined, “Meet Mickey and Minnie” indoor attraction allowing visitors to get their portraits with the iconic Disney characters. In deference to their disabilities, Bob gave the group entry through the attraction’s exit, allowing them to bypass a lengthy wait and pose with the living cartoon legends.

Making 61st’s first visit even better, while the group was visiting Mickey and Minnie, their new friend Bob roped off prime sidewalk viewing space for a parade about to pass outside. Bob then ushered them over to their assigned spots as soon as they exited the attraction—an unrequested but most appreciated touch of service, and the perfect way to start a Disney day.

For the next several hours, the young men enjoyed non-stop fun, with each individual registering maximum excitement regardless of function level. “I can’t believe how much they enjoyed it,” Moskowitz reports—“every ounce of it.” And the group received royal treatment from Disney staff at every ride, he adds. “They gave us superior service wherever we went.”

In the evening, having closed their Disneyworld visit with an exciting light and fireworks show, the group found itself on a Disney boat being transported back to the parking lot, and by 8:30 p.m., they were headed back to their villa.

Once back at Emerald Island, the young men showered and received appropriate medications, and then sat down to a barbecue dinner with a happy family atmosphere filling the air.

By 11:00 p.m., the exhausted but happy individuals were enjoying sweet dreams in bed. “To see those faces when they went to sleep was worth a million dollars,” says



At a gateway to G-d’s wonderful world

Moskovits.

Different day, same thing

The same exhilarating experiences repeated themselves on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

After the standard morning routine, the vacation’s second day (and Thursday) began with a brief but enjoyable swim in the facility’s private pool for several of the young men.

After lunch, the boys headed over to the Epcot Center, where Disney cast members and guests alike gladly allowed the group to enter attractions via exits, or proceed ahead of them on lines. “They treated us very nicely,” recalls Moskowitz. “People were asking us where we’re from.”

They also managed to squeeze in an early-evening visit to the Magic Kingdom to catch the spectacular Fantasmic! show—where they were also given a special seating section.

Wednesday saw the Hamasplik group take in Disney’s Animal Kingdom safari park, where they were provided with a disabled-accessible vehicle for their rolling tour of G-d’s living wonders. The individuals and staff also enjoyed a live bird show and a rollercoaster ride.

(For staffers Samuel and Levy, Wednesday afternoon was also marked by packing the trailer with

as many non-essentials as possible, going to sleep early and rising early the next morning to drive the Pilot back to New York.)

On Thursday, given that the group would be departing that night, the standard morning schedule was followed by a slightly abbreviated afternoon.

The group left the villa (after staff had stayed up quite late the previous night packing) at noon, visiting Fun Spot USA, a smaller local outdoor amusement park, where they thrilled to several rounds of bumper-car riding and go-carting.

“It was the cherry on top of the pie,” says Moskowitz of the vacation-culminating day trip.

In all venues visited, plenty of pre-packed snacks, drinks and suntan lotion were readily on hand as the gentlemen proceeded through their days, keeping them energetic, hydrated and sunburn-free as they visited family-friendly, appropriate rides and attractions.

Significantly, the individuals and their caregivers collected a sizable number of positive comments from fellow revelers throughout their park peregrinations, with many asking staff where they were from, others meeting Chasidic Jews (disabled or otherwise) for the first time, and a number even noting the cleanliness of their attire (which the DSPs laundered every day) and the normalcy of their appearance.

Out of the sky

With their belongings already packed, the individuals and staff headed straight to Orlando’s airport after three fun-filled hours in the park and a quick but satisfying lunch on the go.

Fortunately, the party’s slightly late airport arrival was abetted by their flight’s one-hour delay, allowing them to afford the 60 minutes consumed by a laborious TSA security check which, perhaps typically, saw the federal personnel make a fuss over the group’s yogurts.

The public’s accommodation of a sizable party of individuals with special needs continued on the JetBlue return flight to Newark, with the plane’s captain himself asking forward-cabin passengers to volunteer their seats to allow the

Hamasplik group to be seated contingently.

No less than eight gracious travelers surrendered their higher-cost front-row seats, earning the thanks of both JetBlue’s crew and Hamasplik’s grateful staff.

A light but nourishing late-night dinner was served, and the 2.5 hour return flight to Newark passed uneventfully, landing at 10:30 p.m.

In a reversal of the departure process, three Hamasplik Transport Vans were at the curb waiting for the 61st “Bridersheimers” and their DSP teams. After quickly collecting their minimal suitcases and boarding the vans, the group arrived back at their home sweet home by 11:15 p.m. and shortly went to sleep after showers and the rest of their bedtime routines.

The real magic kingdom

The next day, Friday, February 17, was the boys’ first day back into their ordinary daily routine. But things were not the same, and would not be for quite some time.

And that’s a good thing.

“They came back ridiculously happy,” reports a proud Home Manager, boasting of an excitement and a markedly boosted morale that carried forward for several weeks.

Direct Support Professional Preisler notes that while some cannot explain their sentiments, all were “talking about it a month before and a month after.”

“It’s still the talk of the home,” Moskowitz adds. “If I had known what it would do, I would have made it a longer trip. It was amazing. They complained it was too short—that’s how we know it was good.”

In terms of “vacation therapy,” how did the individuals benefit?

Everyone says “I need a break” from time to time, explains the Home Manager—including special-needs individuals. “There’s no question they benefited,” he continues, citing the changes of scenery and location as well as the new experiences of flying, staying in a villa, and, of course, experiencing the world-famous Disney parks of Orlando.

As Chaim Lunger sees it, the

boys benefited not just from the accommodations and provisions, but from the scheduled system by which it was all purveyed.

In contrast to the DSPs’ standard daily work with the individuals, “Here, it was to give them fun,” opines DSP Preisler. “Normally they go to work, or exercise, or therapy, or school, et cetera, every day—but here it was just fun and relaxation. They had more time to take it easy.”

“Every individual enjoyed every second of the trip,” he adds. “And if the individuals enjoyed themselves, we enjoyed ourselves—even if we had to work from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 a.m.”

And what did the boys like the most on the trip? “Everything!” opines Lunger. Preisler concurs. And Moshe Samuel points out that the balmy weather only made a great getaway even better. “It was one great time from beginning to end,” he adds.

But what was the best part of that? “Seeing how much the individuals enjoyed themselves—how much fun they had,” he replies.

The overall success of the trip, however, remains its lasting legacy—a success that left DSPs marveling at the positive behavior of individuals expected to be negatively affected by a changed environment, and a success that the Home Manager attributes to number of key staff.

“I would like to thank all of those who helped me pull this through and made this amazing dream into a reality,” wrote Moskowitz the day after returning from Florida.

Cited for praise were Executive Director Joel Freund, Director of Residential Services David Mizrahi, Maintenance Manager Tully Tessler, 38th Street Home Manager Yisroel Indig, MSC Supervisor Moshe Shechter, Acres Bridersheim Home Managers Mr. and Mrs. Lipa Laufer—“and, of course, our devoted, amazing staff ... who fulfilled the dream.”

“I could say one thing,” says Mr. Moskowitz. “Hashem was walking with me”—evoking a kingdom not of magic, of one but positivity and faith. ■



Hydrotherapy?



Not over yet: Good vibes continued well after this last ride

Proliferating Purim Party Plethora Has Hamaspik Happily Hosting Hit Happenings

Across our agency, aggressive action was apparent as bursting baskets of baked goods were carefully conveyed from caregivers to consumers on a day designed to denote distinct delight.

Everyone everywhere evinced energetic emotions in enacting the fabulously fun and feel-good food-forwarding forays to family and friends, giggling and guffawing and

gesticulating whilst giving gastronomic gifts.

Heightened happy Hamaspik homes and happenings had holiday-inspired individuals intricately and intensively involved in the ins and out of the jovial and joyous Jewish jubilation that kaleidoscoped lovingly laboriously into a logistical mish-mash of Mishloach Manos missions and much more.

Notwithstanding the notably numerous operations overtaking pre-Purim programming that qualitatively and quantitatively raised the roofs of sessions, syllabi, settings and schedules throughout the totality of units in our user-centered universe, a very vivacious vitality was wondrously widespread when the extravagant and ecstatic expressiveness of the zesty one-day zeitgeist zoomed zippily (that's not really a word, but who cares?) into town.

Translation? Purim!

From several reports sent in from across Hamaspik, here's how the holiday—and the run-up to the holiday—was celebrated.

As Purim approached, the Women's Division of the Hamaspik of Kings County Day Hab baked cookies for Mishloach Manos (lit. "Sending of Portions"), the age-old custom of sending food packages to friends and family to share the celebration of the day—the survival of the Jews of the ancient Persian Empire in the face of an annihilation decree.

That overturned decree had been enacted by the historical villain Haman, creating the holiday of Purim... and a traditional symbol of villainy that the young women recreated by forging a piñata-like "Haman" out of shredded paper.

Over in the Men's Division, the onset of the month of Adar was marked with the decoration of their main recreation/activity room, a festive lunch and dancing to live music.

The Hamaspik of Orange County Day Hab Women's Division likewise ushered in the month with an "Adar Breakout!" event complete with wacky getup and no shortage of silly games. And because the month is astrologically symbolized by the constellation Pisces, or fish (itself symbolizing prosperity and abundance), the young women crafted a giant paper fish.

"Purim is in the air!" declared Issue 3 of the *Respite Scoop*, the official in-house newsletter of Hamaspik of Rockland County's After-School Respite program.

"We already started to feel the excitement

and anticipation in the atmosphere" as early as February 19, continued the *Scoop*, as the young individuals decorated Purim-themed popcorn cones on Sunday, danced to Purim music on Monday, made gragger noisemakers on Tuesday, decorated a Purim bulletin board on Wednesday and thrilled to their staffs' silly costumes on Thursday.

Under the leadership of Respite Coordinator Eli Neuwirth, the Boys Division of the Hamaspik of Rockland County's After-School Respite program ushered in the holiday spirit with a pre-Purim party filled with costumes, party snacks and live music performed by Direct Support Professional (DSP) Avrumy Balsan.

With hardworking DSPs Shea Levy, Shua Rothman, Yosef Zambler and Yaakov Errera on hand, the young boys and teens joined hands and danced in a big circle around the room for nearly 45 minutes—a pre-Purim party made all the more exciting with the surprise participation of former Hamaspik DSPs Ari Steinmetz and Chaim Ausch—both whom were readily recognized by the individuals, who proceeded to give them "big" hugs, Neuwirth reports.

The Hamaspik of Rockland County Women's Day Hab program engaged in all standard pre-Purim activities: putting together Mishloach Manos packages, baking cookies, mounting a clown poster on a wall bulletin board, and distributing Mishloach Manos packages to numerous public servants in appreciation for their past and/or current assistance to Hamaspik.

A very special Mishloach Manos package was also assembled and presented to the program's beloved Mrs. Helen Spitz, the Day Hab's art teacher, in genuine appreciation of her contributions upon her leaving

the agency.

On Tuesday, March 6, the program also enjoyed an exclusive pre-Purim party on the premises of the recently-expanded administrative offices of Hamaspik of Rockland County. After a sit-down meal, music and other festivities, the group of young women stepped out into the rear parking lot where they released a barrage of colorful balloons into the sunny sky.

Hamaspik of Kings County's long-established South 9th Shvesterheim marked the arrival of Adar with a "Drink Festival" at which the residents donned delightfully ludicrous drinking straws shaped like wearable eyeglasses, then sampled any number of fruit punches, freshly squeezed fruit juices and other non-alcoholic beverages.

Much-loved Hamaspik of Rockland County Men's Day Hab regular Shmuel Miller was feted with his own birthday party that was made the central pillar of the Day Hab's pre-Purim party.

Purveying plenty of Purim spirit with a judicious serving of silliness, Hamaspik of Orange County's Men's Day Hab Program once again convened Congregation Who Cares? of Kiryas Joel (yes, you read that right), an annual exposition of wacky nonsense revolving around the temporary coronation of the Rebbe of Who Cares? (this time, Mr. Shloimy Reisman) and his presiding over equally-nonsensical proceedings.

Oh, and across Hamaspik's group homes across three counties, dozens of residents of all ages enjoyed in-house parties on Purim Day that were: awesome, bustling, cool, dynamic, exhilarating, fantastic, gregarious, happy, inspiring, jubilant, (at least a bit) kooky, laugh-out-loud, musical, nifty, outstanding, perfect, quality, record-breaking, superlative, terrific, unbelievable, vigorous, whimsical, exceptional, young-spirited, zany or otherwise good.

Other than that, nothing much to report.



"Happy Purim!" Individuals on a Mishloach Manos mission

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Caption here: Caption here

IN THE KNOW

All about... concussion

Banged your head? What's the big deal? A very big deal, as it turns out.

Modern medical science now knows that moderate or even mild blows to the head, especially in adolescence and even more so in childhood, are serious and, too often, permanently damaging.

A concussion is a blow to the head that causes the brain to hit the inside of the skull. When a concussion happens, brain damage at some level often also happens.

The bad news is that many concussions go undiagnosed—with residual effects lingering for days, weeks or more. The good news is that many concussions only cause temporary effects.

And the better news is that medicine, and society, is getting better and better at diagnosing, treating and counteracting concussions—and preventing them in the first place.

In the meantime, here's everything you need to know about concussion.

Definition

A concussion is a type of *traumatic brain injury*, or TBI, caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head that can change the way the brain normally works. Concussions can also occur from falls or blows to the body that cause the head and brain to move quickly back and forth.

Key facts

- All concussions are serious
- Most concussions occur without loss of consciousness
- Recognition and proper response to concussions when they first occur can help prevent further injury
- When in doubt, sit them out—don't go back to sports or work before getting concussions medically and thoroughly checked out

Symptoms

The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be subtle and may not be immediately apparent. Symptoms can last for days, weeks or even longer.

Some of these symptoms may appear right away, while others may not be noticed for days or months after the injury, or until the person

starts resuming their everyday life and more demands are placed upon them.

Sometimes, people do not recognize or admit that they are having problems. Others may not understand why they are having problems and what their problems really are, which can make them nervous and upset.

The signs and symptoms of a concussion can be difficult to sort out. Early on, problems may be missed by the person with the concussion, family members, or doctors. People may look fine even though they are acting or feeling differently.

Symptoms of concussion generally fall into four categories:

- Thinking/remembers
- Physical
- Emotional/mood
- Sleep

Within thinking/remembers, symptoms include: difficulty thinking clearly, feeling slowed down, difficulty concentrating, and difficulty remembering new information (amnesia).

Within physical, symptoms include: headache, fuzzy or blurry vision, nausea or vomiting (early on), dizziness, sensitivity to noise or light, balance problems, feeling tired or having no energy.

Within emotional/mood, symptoms include: irritability, sadness, increased emotion, nervousness or anxiety.

Within sleep, symptoms include: sleeping more (or less) than usual, or trouble falling asleep.

The most common symptoms of concussion are headache, amnesia and confusion. The amnesia, which may or may not be preceded by a loss of consciousness, almost always involves the loss of memory of the impact that caused the concussion.

Primary symptoms

- Primary concussion symptoms include:
- Headache or feeling of head pressure
 - Amnesia surrounding the traumatic event
 - Confusion or feeling as if in a fog
 - Temporary loss of consciousness
 - Dizziness or "seeing stars"
 - Ringing in the ears
 - Nausea or vomiting
 - Slurred speech

• Fatigue

Secondary symptoms

Secondary symptoms may occur right away, or several hours or even days after the injury:

- Psychological adjustment problems and depression
- Irritability and other personality changes
- Concentration and memory complaints
- Sensitivity to light and noise
- Disorders of taste and smell
- Sleep disturbances

Children's symptoms

Because infants and toddlers tend to fall fairly frequently, head trauma is very common among them. However, concussions can be

difficult to diagnose in young children who don't talk because they can't readily communicate how they feel. Nonverbal clues of a concussion may include:

- Change in eating or sleeping patterns
- Loss of balance, unsteady walking
- Lack of interest in favorite toys
- Listlessness, tiring easily
- Irritability, crankiness

Long-term symptoms

- Cumulative effects of multiple brain injuries. Evidence exists indicating that people who have had multiple concussive brain injuries over the course of their lives may acquire lasting, and even progressive, cognitive impairment that limits functional ability

- Second impact syndrome. Sometimes, experiencing a second concussion before signs

Alzheimer's Research and Treatment

Front-line news and developments

New Alzheimer's criteria proposed, challenged

A new study shows that if new proposed criteria for the diagnosis of cognitive problems were to be applied, almost everyone currently diagnosed with a mild form of Alzheimer's disease would be downgraded to not having the condition.

Instead, people diagnosed as having "mild" and "very mild" Alzheimer's would be reclassified as having mild cognitive impairment (MCI), currently recognized as an intermittent stage between the normal loss of mental function that comes with age and the development of dementia.

However, some experts insist that mild cognitive impairment is merely Alzheimer's in its earliest form, not a separate diagnosis, and that broadening its definition will only cause confusion.

Bad sleep linked to Alzheimer's

Disturbed sleep is associated with preclinical signs of Alzheimer's disease, researchers

have found.

In a small study in cognitively normal people, frequent awakenings and a habit of lying awake were linked to higher levels of markers of the brain plaques that are a hallmark of Alzheimer's disease.

However, researchers cautioned that it's not clear if there's a cause-and-effect relationship or, if there is, which way it runs. Further research is needed to determine why this is happening and whether sleep changes may predict cognitive decline, researchers further said.

Alzheimer's disease begins long before there are any symptoms, but signs of the beta-amyloid plaques that build up in the brains of Alzheimer's patients can be detected in some cognitively normal people.

Previous studies have suggested that adequate sleep helps the brain flush itself clean of a daily buildup of beta amyloid, with some currently unknown process slowing that daily flush an apparent factor in the development of Alzheimer's. ■

and symptoms of a first concussion have resolved may result in rapid and typically fatal brain swelling. After a concussion, the levels of brain chemicals are altered. It usually takes about a week for these levels to stabilize again. However, the time it takes to recover from a concussion is variable, and it is important for athletes never to return to sports while they're still experiencing signs and symptoms of concussion.

• **Epilepsy.** People who have had a concussion are at risk of developing epilepsy within the first five years after the injury. However, developing epilepsy as a result of concussion is rare, and the evidence linking the two is weak

Causes

The human brain has the consistency of gelatin. It's cushioned from everyday jolts and bumps by the cerebrospinal fluid that it floats in, inside the skull.

When a violent (or even not-so-violent) blow is delivered to the head and neck or upper body, it can cause the brain to slide back and forth forcefully against the inner walls of the skull.

Specifically, the *contra-coup effect*, in which the brain first pitches forward and then back, can cause damage to the brain and its function.

This damage can be compounded by the fact that the inside of the skull is coral-like, not smooth—and bruising, bleeding or other damage can also occur when the brain physically hits the sharp, coral-like ridges of the skull's inner surface.

Sudden acceleration or deceleration of the head—resulting from events such as car crashes or being violently shaken (Shaken Baby Syndrome)—also can cause brain injury.

These injuries affect brain function, usually for a brief period, resulting in signs and symptoms of concussion.

A brain injury of this sort may even lead to bleeding in or around the brain—causing symptoms like prolonged drowsiness and confusion. These symptoms may develop right away or even later—but such bleeding in the brain can be fatal. That's why anyone who suffers a brain injury needs to be monitored in the hours afterward and receive emergency care if symptoms worsen.

Risk factors

- Falling, especially in young children and older adults
- Car crashes
- Physical abuse
- Military combat
- Previous concussion
- High-risk contact sports like football, hockey or soccer, a risk heightened without the presence of proper safety equipment and supervision

Diagnosis

A blow to the head, neck or upper body can be definitively diagnosed as a concussion if it causes symptoms like headache, dizziness, nausea, loss of consciousness—or any period of confusion or loss of memory or events.

These symptoms may not appear until hours or days later. Brain imaging may be

required to determine whether the injury is severe and has caused bleeding or swelling in the skull.

Neurological exam

Diagnosing a concussion typically begins with a comprehensive neurological exam. This evaluation tests the following body functions for normal levels:

- Memory and concentration
- Vision
- Hearing
- Strength and sensation
- Balance
- Coordination
- Reflexes

However, normal results in many these tests, particularly in memory and concentration, does not mean the patient is fine. Further tests are required to definitively diagnose a concussion.

Brain imaging tests

A computerized tomography (CT) scanner is the standard test to assess the brain right after injury. A CT scanner takes multiple cross-sectional X-rays and combines all the resulting images to produce detailed, two-dimensional images of the skull and brain. During the procedure, you lie still on a table that slides through a large, doughnut-shaped X-ray machine. The scan is painless and generally takes less than ten minutes.

Brain imaging isn't always required after a concussion. The patient is more likely to need a scan if he or she:

- Is an older adult
- Fell from a height of more than three feet (one meter)
- Was hit by a car or ejected from a car seat in a motor vehicle accident
- Is under the influence of alcohol or other drugs
- Is unable to recall the accident for at least 30 minutes after it occurred
- Have persistent trouble with short-term memory—meaning, retaining new information—after completely regaining consciousness
- Vomited multiple times
- Had a seizure
- Suffered bruises, scrapes or cuts on the head and neck
- Is confused or has any other neurological symptoms, especially if the symptoms get worse

Most concussion-caused brain injuries actually do not show up on CT or MRI scans—but the absence of visible damage does not mean that no brain injury has occurred. Thus, most concussions are ultimately diagnosed by patients “being different”—by exhibiting markedly changed behavior consistent with concussion.

Observation

After a concussion, the patient may need to be hospitalized overnight for observation.

If the doctor says it's okay to be observed at home, someone should check on the patient every few hours for at least 24 hours. The patient may need to be awakened periodically to make sure he or she can be roused to normal consciousness.

Treatment

Overview

Approximately 85 percent of concussion patients recover quickly and fully. But for the remaining 15 percent, symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer.

In general, recovery may be slower

among older adults, young children, and teens. Those who have had a concussion in the past are also at risk of having another one and may find that it takes longer to recover if they have another concussion.

Rest

Rest is the best way to allow the brain to recover from a concussion—with the key being to not subject the brain and body to any mental or physical exertion.

For children who've suffered concussions, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends both physical and mental rest. This means avoiding general physical exertion as well as activities that require mental concentration, such as playing video games, watching TV, texting or using a computer (excessive usage of all, incidentally, the AAP now strongly cautions against in the first place). School workloads should also be temporarily reduced.

Prevention

Protect your children

To lessen risk of head injuries to children, pad countertops and edges of tables, block off stairways and install window guards. Don't let kids play sports that aren't suitable for their ages.

Proper safety gear

Wear appropriate protective gear during sports and other recreational activities. Always use the appropriate protective gear for any sport you or your child undertakes. Make sure the equipment fits properly, is well maintained and worn correctly. Follow the rules of the game and practice good sportsmanship. When bicycling, motorcycling, snowboarding or engaging in any recreational activity that may result in head injury, wear protective headgear.

Seat belts

Wearing a seat belt may prevent serious injury, including concussions and other head injuries, during a traffic accident.

Make your home safe

Keep your home well lit and your floors free of clutter—meaning anything that might cause someone to trip and fall. Falls around the home are the leading cause of head injury for infants, toddlers and older adults.

Water safety

Don't dive into water less than nine feet (three meters) deep. Read and follow posted safety rules at water parks and swimming pools.

Wear sensible shoes

Wear shoes that are easy to walk and maneuver in, especially if you're older—always put function above the foolishness of bad fashion.

Summary

A concussion—or anything that resembles a concussion—must be taken seriously. If you even suspect a concussion, take yourself or your loved one to a doctor immediately, report all symptoms, and err on the side of caution. With concussions, too much care is better than too little care, and you're better off safe than sorry.

Hamaspik thanks Dr. Wayne A. Gordon, Ph.D., Jack Nash Professor, Dept. of Rehabilitation, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, for critically reviewing this article. ■

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Public Health and Policy News

March: Brain Injury Awareness Month

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month, in which the government encourages the public to learn about treating and preventing brain injuries, a common form of which is concussion (see *In the Know* in this month's Gazette). Likewise is post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) the signature "invisible wound" of thousands upon thousands of U.S. military members returning home from tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan.

In that vein, the Pentagon is now funding an innovative project based out of the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio that has veterans visiting such big box stores like Wal-Mart, to condition them to the bustling crowds and noise otherwise misperceived as threats.

Ryan again pushing Medicare overhaul

House Budget Committee Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) says his fiscal 2013 budget proposal will include a premium-support model to reform Medicare—and will also include traditional fee-for-service Medicare as an option for the nation's seniors.

That model was introduced last December by Ryan and Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) as a way to give seniors a choice between private health plans and traditional Medicare. Ryan, who disclosed his plans in a Wall Street Journal guest column posted Monday night, also made clear that his budget does not make changes for those Americans in or near retirement.

"We also introduce a competitive-bidding process to determine the growth of government's financial contribution to Medicare," Ryan wrote. "Forcing health plans to compete against each other is the best way to achieve high-quality coverage the lowest cost, and implementing these reforms in Medicare can have the effect of lowering healthcare costs for everyone," he continued. "This is the key to increasing access and affordability while preventing government debt from threatening the health security of seniors and the economic security of all Americans."

Ryan's plan would gradually raise the eli-

gibility age to 67 by 2034 and cap Medicare spending growth at Gross Domestic Product growth plus 0.5 percent. It would also turn Medicaid over to the states in the form of a federal block grant, "constraining Medicaid's growing cost trajectory by \$810 billion over ten years," according to the text of the plan.

In response, several Provider groups, lawmakers blasted Ryan's plan.

National Association of Public Hospitals and Health Systems President and Chief Executive Officer Bruce Siegel said, "These unprecedented cuts to Medicaid would damage the ability of safety net providers to offer high-quality health care to millions of vulnerable patients – just as the country is emerging from a deep recession. Safety net hospitals, which provide access to emergency rooms, trauma centers, neonatal units, and much more, depend on a robust Medicaid program to help cover the cost of serving all Americans, regardless of ability to pay. Medicaid works."

Chip Kahn, president and CEO of the Federation of American Hospitals, also issued a statement in which he said the organization is "deeply concerned" (PDF) about the House Budget Committee's budget resolution and said that it would worsen current Medicare and Medicaid "underpayments" to hospitals.

"Hospitals are committed to meeting the healthcare and economic needs of our communities, but the needed coverage expansions must be maintained, and the federal government must do its part by providing fair and appropriate payments," Kahn's statement said. "The House budget proposal undermines these key requirements and threatens hospitals' ability to maintain our commitment to our communities and our patients."

Democrats on Capitol Hill also chided their GOP colleagues about the plan, which includes sweeping reforms to the nation's tax code.

"By pitting traditional Medicare against private plans that don't have to play by the same rules, many seniors would face higher premiums and out-of-pocket costs," Senate Finance Committee Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.) said in a statement. "And the Ryan plan does not include a minimum requirement for benefits in private plans offered to seniors, meaning it would empower insurance companies to pick and choose what services they offer, ending Medicare's promise of depend-

able, guaranteed benefits."

Many U.S. families struggling with medical bills

One-third of Americans are in families that are having trouble paying for health care, a new government report shows.

Data for the first six months of 2011 found that one in five families has difficulty paying medical bills, one in four pays bills over time and one in 10 can't pay medical bills at all, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

"There are families in this country that are experiencing a financial burden of medical care, and the chance of being in a family experiencing a financial burden of medical care decreases with age," said lead report author Robin Cohen, a statistician in CDC's National Center for Health Statistics.

Insurance, public or private, frequently determines whether families can pay their health care expenses, Cohen noted.

"But even among people with private insurance, about 16 percent had trouble paying medical bills and six percent couldn't pay at all," Cohen said.

People over 65 with private health insurance are least likely to be financially burdened by medical care, while people without insurance have the highest burden, she said.

Bank of America discriminates: Feds

The federal government has charged one of the nation's largest banks with discriminating against those with disabilities.

Officials at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development alleged in early March that Bank of America held customers with disabilities applying for home mortgages to a different set of standards.

Specifically, they said the bank applied "unnecessary and burdensome requirements" to borrowers with disability income and even asked some loan applicants to provide information from their physicians.

"Holding homebuyers with disabilities to a higher standard just because they rely on disability payments as a source of income is

against the law," said John Trasviña, assistant secretary for fair housing and equal opportunity at HUD. "Mortgage companies may verify income and have eligibility standards but they may not single out homebuyers with disabilities to delay or deny financing when they are otherwise eligible."

In related news, U.S.-based leading international food processor Tyson Foods will pay \$35,000 and furnish other relief to settle a disability discrimination lawsuit filed in late February by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The EEOC had charged that Tyson Foods refused to hire a former employee because he had epilepsy.

At the same time, the U.S. Dept. of Justice settled a disability discrimination case involving a disabled veteran in Utah, resolving a lawsuit alleging that a Park City, Utah, condominium association and its management company violated the Fair Housing Act by refusing to grant a resident's request for a reasonable accommodation.

Largest-ever healthcare-fraud scheme busted

Texas doctor Jacques Roy and multiple accomplices were charged in March with bilking Medicare and Medicaid of nearly \$375 million over a five-year period—the largest healthcare fraud case in American history to date. The enormous scheme involved thousands of fraudulent patients and intermediaries.

Fraud investigator commits fraud

A former investigator with the New York State Welfare Inspector General's Office pleaded guilty to illegally obtaining unclaimed funds following an investigation launched by New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli.

Gabriel Camacho, prosecuted by the Manhattan District Attorney's office, was sentenced on February 21 to community service and ordered to pay restitution.

"Fraud is fraud, but it is particularly egregious when it is committed by a public servant charged with investigating fraud," said DiNapoli.

Over 10,000 participating in GuLF STUDY

Nearly two years after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, over 10,000 cleanup workers and volunteers have enrolled in the Gulf Long-term Follow-up (GuLF) STUDY, a national effort to determine if the oil spill led to physical or mental health problems.

Reaching the GuLF STUDY's target goal of 55,000 participants would make it the largest health study of its kind.

Dementia care, gratis, worth \$200 billion a year

Unpaid costs for people caring for loved ones suffering from dementia were an estimated \$202 billion in 2010 alone, according to a recent report on National Public Radio (NPR).

Nearly 15 million people fall into the role of "unpaid caregiver" for those sick with dementia, according to the Alzheimer's Association. ■



So, What's Happening in Your Health Today...?



Heard the one about the dentist...?

A new Swedish study notes that about 50 percent of adults fear dentists at some level (five percent severely)—but that these fears can be broken down with humor at dentists' offices.

Toast your bread, not your pants

Seat warmers in cars may ease frigid winter commutes, but dermatologists now warn that extended exposures to seat heaters can lead to a skin condition called "toasted skin syndrome."

Two recent reports in the *Archives of Dermatology* describe cases of the rash apparently caused by pressing the back of the legs to warmed-up seats for prolonged periods.

Toasted skin syndrome, known as *erythema ab igne* (EAI) by doctors, is caused by exposure to heat, although it neither a burn nor serious.

The treatment is simply to avoid contact with the heat source that caused it. Eventually it will fade, but the discoloration could last for months.

Norovirus alert

The norovirus "stomach flu" microbe is hitting record national levels lately. The highly contagious, highly unpleasant but otherwise harmless microbe typically causes sudden vomiting, diarrhea and stomach cramps for 24 to 48 hours, usually requiring no medical intervention. It is mainly prevented through good personal and facility hygiene.

Disabled adults likelier victims

Adults with disabilities are significantly more likely to be victims of violence than those who are typically developing, according to a new global analysis.

Those with disabilities experience physical or other attacks at one-and-a-half times the rate of their typically developing peers—while individuals with mental illness face a risk four times greater than the general population.

The findings come from a report published in *The Lancet* that reviewed 26 studies examining the experiences of 21,500 people with physical and mental disabilities from seven countries — the United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Taiwan, the United Kingdom and South Africa.

In related news, another study found that many adults with disabilities do nothing all day, a problem the

New York State OPWDD, other agencies and their community partners have long combated.

Macular degeneration genes found

New research has identified more than 50 genes that can predict age-related macular degeneration (AMD), one of the leading causes of blindness worldwide. People with AMD-afflicted eyes were especially likely to have an overexpression of 20 of these genes.

In related news, a ten-year study of 511 older women found that those with more mental decline by decade's end also showed more eye blood-vessel deterioration—possibly indicating that checking for damaged eye blood vessels could be new means of checking for mental decline.

Farming bad for kids?

Over 26,000 kids and adolescents get injured on U.S. farms and ranches each year, racking up costs of more than \$1.4 billion, according to new research.

The study, released mid-March in the journal *Pediatrics*, is the first to give an overall estimate of lethal and non-lethal child injuries related to farm life in America.

Using the Childhood Agricultural Injury Surveys from 2001 to 2006, researchers found that less than a third of the accidents were work-related and only 84 were lethal. Most of those involved farm equipment, explosions or falls.

"There are a lot of hazards for kids on farms, but there are also a lot of good things going on," said a researcher. "They are learning work ethics, they are learning responsibility."

Safer stairs for kids

Fewer kids are hurting themselves on the stairs than were a decade ago, according to a new report—but a U.S. child still goes to the emergency room with a stair-related injury every six minutes, on average.

Study author Dr. Gary Smith, head of the Center for Injury Research and Policy at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, says staircases should include built-in gates at the top and bottom of stairs, as well as handrails that are easy to grip firmly.

Like parent, like child...

In yet another entry straight from our "We Won't Say, 'See, We Told You So!'" File, a new study of adopted children has found that tod-

dlers are more likely to become easily upset and act out if their parents anger quickly and overreact to their children's behavior.

"Parents' ability to regulate themselves and to remain firm, confident and not overreact is a key way they can help their children to modify their behavior," said lead researcher Shannon Lipscomb, an assistant professor of human development and family sciences at Oregon State University. "You set the example as a parent in your own emotions and reactions."

The original 3D: playing outside

Here's another reason Mom was right when she said not to "sit playing computer games all day": Too much time spent playing video games may lead to impulsive behavior and attention problems in children, and vice versa, according to a new University of Iowa study.

Another study found no differences in physical activity over a three-month period between a group of children given "active" or "fitness" video games that required players to dance or otherwise physically move, and a group given "non-active" video games.

Driving the point home, Italian research published in March issue of *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* found that kids' physical activities before taking mental acuity tests boosted their mental processing speeds by ten percent.

Poorer kids drink too much juice

Juice is good, but too much juice is bad—and many young children from low-income families drink too much juice, new research shows.

In a University of Michigan national children's health poll, it was found that about 50 percent of kids in low-income families drink more than the one-cup daily serving of juice recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) for kids aged six and under.

Lefties, righties hold cell-phones differently

Left-brain thinkers (a.k.a. righties) are more likely to use their right hand for writing and other everyday tasks—and they're also more likely to hold their cellphone to their right ear, even though there's no difference in hearing between their right and left ears.

The reverse is true for people who are right-brain dominant (a.k.a. lefties), according to the study by researchers at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit.

Old flu drug speeds brain injury recovery

A federally funded study, published recently in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, reports that a cheap flu medicine whose side benefits were discovered accidentally decades ago can significantly speed recovery from severe brain injuries caused by falls and car crashes.

In the study, severely injured patients given the drug amantadine got better faster than those who received a dummy medicine. After four weeks, more people in the flu-drug group could give reliable yes-and-no answers, follow commands or use a spoon or hairbrush—things that few of them could do at the start. Far fewer patients who got amantadine remained in a vegetative state, 17 percent versus 32 percent. Many doctors began using amantadine for brain injuries years ago, but until now there's never been a big study to show that it works.

Each year, an estimated 1.7 million Americans suffer a traumatic brain injury, with falls, car crashes, colliding with or getting hit by an object, and assaults the leading causes.

Amantadine, an inexpensive generic, was approved for the flu in the mid-1960s. The first inkling that it might have other uses came a few years later when it appeared to improve Parkinson's symptoms in nursing home patients who got it. It was found to have an effect on the brain's dopamine system, whose many functions include movement and alertness, and it was later approved for Parkinson's. It's now commonly used for brain injuries.

Rapid flu tests effective: studies

With the 2012 flu season just beginning (as reported in *Gazette* #94), two studies published in late February in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* suggest that so-called rapid diagnostic influenza tests provide flu diagnoses that are accurate enough to allow faster patient treatment and help prevent the spread of the illness. Other common flu diagnostic tools like viral cultures and RT-PCR tests respectively take up to ten days to complete, and are expensive and require specialized equipment.

Bert Holbrook, 1929-2012

Mr. Bert Holbrook, a Waseca, Minnesota resident recognized in November 2008 as the world's oldest man with Down syndrome, died of natural causes on March 16, 2012. He was 83.

Many with Down syndrome have heart problems and other health

conditions. Until recently it was rare for those with the chromosomal disorder to reach old age.

Holbrook was the world's oldest man with Down syndrome; 87-year-old Joyce Greenman of England holds the current record of world's oldest woman with Down syndrome.

Doctors grow new heart part inside patient's body

A number of recent breakthroughs using stem cells have seen doctors essentially creating brand-new body parts for patients with those body parts missing, or too damaged or delicate for replacement with standard artificial transplants.

Such cases have included seeding stem cells around a glass tube custom-made to replicate the precise individual shape of a patient's cancer-ravaged and unsalvageable windpipe. With the stem cells turning into tissue cells and forming a rudimentary organic pipe, the glass tube was removed and the remaining organ transplanted into the patient, saving his life.

Other similar cases revolved around creating various blood vessels and other bodily tubes. After years of research as well as building on Japanese precedent of a decade ago, a Yale University doctor and his team successfully implanted a bio-absorbable tube this past August in the chest of a four-year-old girl—then seeding the tube with stem and other cells from the girl's bone marrow.

The first-of-its-kind procedure resulted in the successful generation of tissue around the implanted tube, which slowly disintegrated as designed, leaving an effective blood vessel in its place that provides the child's heart with critical oxygenated blood.

Effectively, doctors used stem cells to grow a new body part inside their patient's body—a world first. The patient, four-year-old Angela Izzirary of Bridgeport, Connecticut, now has near-normal stamina where she once would turn blue and weak.

Some 3,000 U.S. babies are born each with the condition known as hypoplastic left heart syndrome, in which hearts have only one ventricle, or pumping chamber, not the normal two, resulting in lower levels of oxygen delivered throughout the body.

National DNA Day

National DNA Day, to be held April 15, 2012, is a unique day on which U.S. students, teachers and members of the general public are encouraged to learn more about genetics and genomics.

The day commemorates the completion of the Human Genome Project in April of 2003, and the discovery of DNA's double helix. ■

"Tickling the ivories" may not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think "valued outcome."

But at one of Hamaspik's programs, valued outcomes—social-services lingo for a specific personal therapy goal—may just now revolve around a piano.

Such valued outcomes, as penned into the individual's Individualized Service Plan (ISP), can include such personal growth goals as "learning to read and write,"

Happenings around Hamaspik

"getting a decent job" or even "getting better at socializing."

And with a new upright piano recently donated to the Hamaspik of Rockland County Day Hab Women's Division, located at 221 Rt. 59 in Spring Valley, music is expected to become at least an informal part of

the daily proceedings, reports Day Hab Manager Mrs. Esther Raizy Kresch.

Farleigh Dickinson University-educated bookkeeper Yitzchok Weiss officially joined the Hamaspik employee family on Monday, March

19, assuming a key accounting position with Hamaspik of Rockland County. Welcome!

Getting out and about into the world is what community integration, and Day Hab, is all about at Hamaspik's ongoing programs for special-needs individuals—which is why the young women at Hamaspik of Orange County's Day Habilitation Program were recently seen browsing the shelves at a Barnes and Noble bookstore in upstate Orange County, as well as visiting their local branch of M&T Bank, where they cashed checks against their personal accounts.

Eim HaBanim [lit. "Mother of the Sons"], a mother-to-mother postpartum support volunteer organization operating in upstate Kiryas Joel, tapped the volunteer power of Hamaspik of Orange County's Day Hab program by having its young women join them for "farina runs"—paying early-morning visits to new mothers to serve up fresh steaming bowls of hot breakfast cereal, and the selfless love that only individuals with special needs can convey.

The Article 16 Clinic operating in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn under the auspices of

NYSHA (the New York State Hamaspik Association) has become that community's leading resource for comprehensive special-needs psychological evaluations, reports Clinic Manager Shlomo Reichman in a recent NYSHA Clinic newsletter.

Hamaspik of Kings County welcomed a new employee on Monday, March 12, as Mrs. Esther Taub took the reins of Assistant for that agency's Day Hab program.

Residents and accompanying staff of the South 9th Shvesterheim group home in Brooklyn enjoyed yet another fun-filled party at the home of Hamaspik agency psychologist Alan Blau, this time on Sunday, March 4, a few days before the equally fun-filled holiday of Purim. With a fabulous scrapbooking activity and a sumptuous lunch, the girls had a great time.

In preparation for the holiday of Purim (see "Proliferating Purim Party Plethora," page E7), Hamaspik of Rockland County's team of Medicaid Service Coordinators (MSCs) were seen hard at work on Tuesday, February 28 packing up Purim gift packages for the individuals with special needs whom they serve—an extra measure of love from an agency that always goes the extra mile.

Keeping the agency on the cut-



Hands-on approach: The physical therapy room at the NYSHA Article 16 Clinic

Affordable Care Act

Continued from Page 1

The stakes are high for both sides.

A finding for the law's constitutionality would constitute a supreme vindication for a president weakened by an anemic economy, rising gas prices and sagging approval numbers.

A ruling against the law would embolden Mr. Obama's opponents, both those running against him in the GOP primary and those constituting grassroots opposition such as the Tea Party.

A recent cost estimate for the law released by the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) determined that the Affordable Care Act would cost \$1.7 trillion over ten years upon taking full effect.

To the chagrin of proponents and opponents alike, that estimate comes after an earlier CBO estimate projected that the law would cost only \$900 billion over ten years.

Other concerns about the law revolve around its projected reduction of America's population of the uninsured to from 47 million to 17 people within a few years—a significant achievement, but one that may still leave millions without any health insurance coverage.

Concerns have also been raised that those currently ensured by their employers may lose their coverage in a few years due to increased employer costs created by the law's new regulations.

The most recent poll by the non-partisan Kaiser Family Foundation found support for the law at a level

nearly identical to that of its March 2010 passage. Currently, 41% support of the American public support the ACA, with 40% opposing.

The poll found, however, that Republican opposition was far more intense than Democratic support.

In related news, it was reported that the Supreme Court is under unprecedented public pressure, mainly from the media, to allow the live broadcast of the historic proceedings. For a number of compelling reasons, though, the high court is highly unlikely to relent.

Though the court currently bars any recording devices in its historic chambers, it does release audio recordings of its regular proceedings on a weekly basis. Cameras and microphones remain barred.

The arguments also come in the

wake of considerable political jockeying around the proceedings, with foes having called for liberal justice Elena Kagan's recusal and friends having issued calls for justices Thomas and Scalia to step down.

As Solicitor General at the U.S. Dept. of Justice under President Barack Obama, Kagan may have argued for or assisted with the Affordable Care Act, its opponents claimed.

Justices Scalia and Thomas attending a dinner for the Federalist Society, a conservative group, along with lawyers with pending Supreme Court cases, smacked of bias, said proponents.

Supporters of the law also said that Justice Thomas' wife's vocal opposition to the law rendered Thomas incapable of impartiality.

All three are still slated for full participation in the proceedings, with the political jockeying from both sides having been struck down by Chief Justice John Roberts. ■



The sound of Day Hab: The old instrument in its new home

ting edge, Hamaspik of Rockland County's maintenance team—Director of Development Zalman Stein, Office Manager Aaron Rubinstein and Field Representative Jacob Weiss—installed a new InfiniTime punch clock system in early March.

The new system, which uses high-end biometric hand scans to record each employee's daily arrival and departure, replaces the soon-to-be-phased-out electronic card-swiping system.

The high-tech, computerized system utilizes terminals at both main office doorways for employees' regular usage, and brings the office up to date with many other Hamaspik facilities that have long been using the biometric technology for maximum efficiency. ■



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Letters or Address Change?

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