



The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy's new Web site — nycjewishtours.org — includes attractive slideshows of synagogue photos, a full calendar of tours, and a wealth of neighborhood information.

Economic woes, City Cuts Hurt UJC Services

By VOICE Staff

As we reported last year, Mayor Bloomberg's funding cuts to many city programs have forced the United Jewish Council of the East Side, along with many other social service agencies, to cut their budgets and, in some cases, reduce staffing and services.

Joel Kaplan, Esq., executive director of the UJC, explained that, in 2009, the agency has lost more than \$250,000 in funding from several sources. This has led to the Council reducing its popular Shuttle Van Service from five days a week to three, instituting a hiring freeze, cutting the hours of certain employees, eliminating its intergenerational outing programs, and eliminating certain positions.

The Council is also looking to cut costs by rebidding its legal, accounting, copier, and telephone contracts, and by offering a stipend to employees who can waive their health insurance benefits, because they're covered by a spouse's policy.

Council directors have also been working closely with the Met Council on Jewish Poverty and the UJA-Federation to advocate for funding and lobby elected officials to put a stop to the devastating cuts.

More than just a nuisance, the funding reductions are affecting services at a time when demand is high. "To date, we have seen an increased demand for a food pantry," Kaplan reported. "Our career counselor has seen a distinct spike in demand for her services, and we have new clients who are victims of the Madoff scandal."

Met Council Executive Di-

rector William Rapfogel explained that funding to the city's Department for the Aging was reduced 30 percent last year, a "brutal" move that affected agencies—like Met Council and the UJC—that hold 'extended services' contracts. These contracts apportion funds to nonprofit groups that, in turn, help local agencies (such as neighborhood community councils) serve specific populations.

The City Council was able to restore some 70 percent of the extended services program, Rapfogel said, but at the expense of other community and social service programs. "Families in crisis, career counseling, social workers, and housing services have all been cut, because the money was shifted to extended services," he reported.

Cuts to the city's Department for the Aging (DFTA) had a painful impact on the UJC's popular Adult Luncheon Club, Kaplan added. Both the home-delivery and congregate meal program budgets were cut, leaving no funding for administration. Unreasonably, the city expected the shortfall in the congregate meal budget to be met by the home-delivery budget, but neither is sufficient to cover the losses. The Council also lost funding from the Department of Youth and Community Development, and it is working to have both city departments reconsider its proposals.

"We have to thank Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver for ensuring that state funding has remained steady," Kaplan said. "But the city is making across-the-board cuts and unilateral program reductions, and that affects agencies such as ours."

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New 90-Minute Tours, Enhanced Web Site at LES Jewish Conservancy

By VOICE Staff

The Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy launched several exciting initiatives for the summer season, adding 90-minute, twice-a-week mini-tours to its regular schedule of neighborhood excursions, and upgrading its Internet presence with a redesigned Web site.

The mini-tours are held every Wednesday at 2 p.m. and Friday at 10:45 a.m. They're available from July 15 through October 9, explained Laurie Tobias Cohen, executive director of the Conservancy. "We want to showcase the neighborhood's history, and its vibrant contemporary community as well," she said.

The Wednesday mini-tour includes highlights of the Conservancy's popular, full-length "Crossing Delancey" tour, with a visit to the Orensanz Cultural Center (the oldest synagogue structure in New York) and Congregation Chasam Sopher (the longest-lived continuous congregation in New York). The Friday mini-tour includes highlights from the "Bialystoker the Beautiful" tour, with a visit to the Bialystoker Synagogue and Beth Hachasidim De'Polen on East Broadway's Shtiebel Row. Both depart from the Lower East Side Business Improvement District Visitor's Center at 54 Orchard Street and cost only \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors.

The Conservancy's 3-hour tours are held on Sundays and holidays throughout the season, and private group tours are available, as well. The full calendar of events is available at www.nycjewishtours.org.

New Web Site

The Conservancy's Web site—www.nycjewishtours.org—has been thoroughly re-

designed to provide a wealth of multimedia information about the Lower East Side and its historic synagogues.

The site now offers photos, videos, and a summary of each synagogue's history. It features bios of each tour guide and fascinating reports on the Conservancy's past and current preservation and education activities. Visitors from around the world will be able to plan their Lower East Side visit using the handy Frequently Asked Questions section and even pay for their tour reservations online. There's even a section with links and information on local hotels and eateries.

Lower East Side residents and tourists alike will benefit from this comprehensive resource.

In addition, Facebook members can become 'fans' of the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy. Dozens of enthusiasts—from tour guides to tourists enthralled with the Conservancy's offerings—have already signed up.

Book Launch Planned

On September 23, the Conservancy will host a book launch and reception in honor of Joyce Mendelsohn — author of "The Lower East Side, Remembered & Revisited." Columbia University Press has published an updated and expanded version of the book, which was originally released in 2001.

Joyce Mendelsohn—noted educator, historian and writer—is widely known for her walking tours and lectures on topics related to New York City's history. She developed the tour leader training program for the Lower East Side Jewish Conservancy, created curricula for the guides, and does regular in-service training as well. She also served as the first Director of Education at

the Lower East Side Tenement Museum.

The event will be held at the Orensanz Cultural Center at 6:45 p.m. It will include presentations and a visual display of synagogue images. Refreshments will be served, and all are invited.

Educational Curriculum a Success

The Conservancy's educational curriculum for schoolchildren — "A Day in the Life of an Immigrant Child"—saw a very successful spring season this year. Laurie Tobias Cohen reported that nearly 600 children, representing 23 schools and 25 classes, visited the neighborhood between March and June. "The program was universally well-received," she said.

The curriculum includes texts and visual material for classroom presentation, plus student exercises and first-hand visits to historic sites. "We use the neighborhood as the classroom," Cohen said. Students from prominent Yeshivas and day schools such as SAR, Moriah, HAFTR, Manhattan Day School, and many others enjoyed the program.

Cohen added that Dr. Golobcheck — educational advisor for City Councilman Alan Gerson — is working with the Conservancy to spread word of the curriculum among public school principals as well.

"The important thing is that we're able to share this resource with schools all over the metropolitan area," Cohen added.

For more information on the Conservancy's activities, please contact Laurie Tobias Cohen, executive director, at (212) 374-4100 Ext 1 or e-mail info@nycjewishtours.org. For tour schedules and other program information, visit www.nycjewishtours.org.



UJC staff proudly exhibit UJC social service information at the 50 & Beyond Community Expo. From Left- Margaret Pamphile, Josefa Bonet, Joanne Stapleton, Bella Zaltsman, Norma Klein & Martha Pollack.