

Marshall Talks Health Care, Economy With Chamber

After talking about the crisis of the healthcare industry in Queens, Borough President Helen Marshall struck a more optimistic tune when speaking about the economic future of the borough.

"It is said that construction is the engine that drives the economy, that's why I'm committed to ensuring the continuation of our major capital projects," Marshall said at a Queens Chamber of Commerce breakfast on February 10. "We are moving forward on Willets Point, Hunters Point South and dozens of smaller projects across the borough that will create jobs for residents and revenue for businesses."

The Chamber hosts the breakfast with Marshall and the entire borough board made up of representatives from the 14 community boards in Queens each year to give its members an opportunity to hear directly what is going on in Queens.

"Because small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and the current economic conditions are so dire, I am redoubling our efforts to work with the Queens Chamber and other partners to help Queens businesses prepare for, bid on and successfully complete government-funded projects," Marshall said.

During the beginning of the breakfast, Chamber Executive Vice President Jack Friedman urged those in attendance not to participate in the recession, and reminded businesses that there were many opportunities out there to enhance their company.



Queensborough President Chief of Staff Alex Rosa; Queens Borough President Helen Marshall, Georgiana Reese, New York Community Bank; Carol Conslato, Con Ed and Chamber First Vice President; Rachel Amar, Waste Management, Ralph Tragale, Port Authority of NY & NJ and Jack Friedman, Chamber Executive Vice President (back) at a recent breakfast meeting.

"There are a lot of great things happening in the borough and at the Chamber," Friedman said. Marshall also spoke about the vast array of cultural centers that Queens offers including the

Queens Museum of Art, Queens Theatre in the Park and Queens Botanical Garden. She said that many of these institutions are excellent venues for holding events and encouraged businesses to utilize the

great spaces. "Vital to the success of these efforts is the Queens Chamber of Commerce," Marshall said. "Now more than ever, we count on its members to Keep it in Queens."

Chamber Announces Keep It In Queens Contest Winners

Randolph McNeil of Blue Sky Landscaping and Kesia Hudson of the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning were the grand prize winners of the Queens Chamber of Commerce's "Keep it in Queens" contest. The winners receive prizes including earrings and bracelet, gift certificates to Atlas Park and a complete grill set.

The Keep it in Queens program, which the Chamber launched last fall, was designed as a joint initiative between the Queens Chamber of Commerce, Queens Borough President's Office and the city of New York to help connect Queens-based businesses to one another and to economic development projects in the borough.

In an effort to both excite businesses around the borough and increase membership to the program, the Chamber launched the Keep it in Queens contest last October. During the past three months, visitors to KeepitinQueens.com were able to register their business with the city and enter a contest to win prizes donated by enthusiastic Queens business organizations including the Shops at Atlas Park, State Bank of Long Island and American Golf.

In addition to the daily contests, there were three monthly drawings, and a final grand prize drawing.

McNeil, founder and owner of Blue Sky Landscaping, just recently joined the Queens Chamber of Commerce after his Business Coach advised him of the benefits.

"When running a small business you are always thinking of expansion," McNeil said. The key though, especially in these trying economic times, is to start with your home base." That is just one of the many reasons that the Chamber's Keep it in Queens initiatives "logistically, time and money wise, just make sense."

Hudson, Director of Marketing for the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning, agrees.

"We like to say that the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning is the best kept secret in Queens," Hudson said. "While the center is over 25 years old, there are still so many people that visit us who inform us that they have no idea we existed or didn't realize the magnitude of our services."

Although the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning has been members of the Chamber of Commerce for

years, they hope that their decision to join the "Keep It In Queens" program last December will increase the public's awareness of the center.

Even though the contest has ended, the Chamber's membership initiatives have not. In addition to the online resources at KeepitinQueens.com and the \$100 finders fee (in Queens Cash) offered for every business referred to join, the Chamber has also created a Facebook page and a LinkedIn Keep It In Queens Group.

The Chamber understands the value of staying connected with its members and wants to promote better communication between its members and businesses looking to join the Chamber. Joining these social networking groups is free and highly encouraged by both members and non-members.

To join these groups, learn more about the Keep it in Queens program, pledge online, or to see a full listing of the sponsors who donated to the Keep it in Queens contest prizes, please visit www.queenschamber.org.