

BROOKLYN NEWS
EDITORIAL

Don't forget shots!

A week seems like forever to a schoolkid, and most of them probably haven't even noticed that classes start again a week from tomorrow. Parents have.

Don't doubt it for even one of those minutes they've been counting for weeks now, waiting for the big day to arrive.

Moms and dads of students entering public, private or parochial schools and day care centers for the first time have a lot of things to take care of. That makes it easy to forget that new students have to have a health examination and proof of immunization against a whole list of diseases.

They include polio, mumps, measles, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, rubella, flu, hepatitis B, chickenpox and varicella. Older students, those in intermediate, middle, junior high or high school, also need to have proof of a tuberculosis test.

Most kids have had these shots and the test. If yours haven't or you aren't sure, you can check out the details of the requirements at nyc.gov/Schools/Offices/Health, or get more information by calling 311.

It could save you a lot of trouble just when you don't need it. On the first day of school.

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Misguided city budget cuts are disaster for our elderly

Given that New York City was recently named one of the World Health Organization's Global Network of Age-Friendly Cities, this is the perfect time to ask, "How are we doing in living up to that honor?"

The answer is, perhaps, less positive than we'd like to admit.

Yes, New York City is growing older — with a projected 44% increase in those 65 or older by 2030.

It's also growing poorer, with one out of three of your elderly neighbors living on \$10,000 or less a year.

This city was once the national leader in providing cost-effective, community-based senior services — funding the first senior center in the nation in the Bronx in 1943, which grew to a citywide network of 300 centers and service providers.

Unfortunately, this safety net protecting the 1.3 million New Yorkers over age 60 is now being systematically devastated by budget cuts in a misguided attempt to balance the budget on the backs of the vulnerable elderly.

Here are just a few of the devastating cuts that are robbing them of independence, social connections and nutritious meals.

- 20% cut in Department for the Aging's funding of senior centers and programs — a loss of \$30 million in 2009-2010.

- 26 community senior centers forced to close this year.

- 40% [\$10 million] cut to a program serving seniors just above the Medicaid



Bobbie Sackman

BE OUR GUEST

poverty line, causing hundreds of elderly people — average age 84 — to lose all or part of their home care or be stuck on waiting lists for years.

- Elimination of all funding for a social day care program for seniors with Alzheimer's disease.

- Centers and meals-on-wheels feeding seniors on a budget of \$2.20 per meal as city fails to offset any of the 14% increase in food costs since 2006.

These facts and figures tell only part of the story. The human toll of these cuts is heart-wrenching.

- Listen to the daughter of a Holocaust survivor on the city's decision to eliminate all funding for the Alzheimer's day care program: "My dad

... worked his whole life, raised a family and contributed greatly to the community. ... It [the defunded program at Riverdale Senior Services] has been a godsend for him as well as for my family."

- Put yourselves in the shoes of the 70-year-old woman who lives alone, suffers from diabetes, depression and incontinence and has been on a waiting list for home care at a South Bronx community

organization since last year. Because the city slashed this program by 40%, she has no chance of receiving care.

- Who is going to replace the takeaway weekend meal for 100 South Bronx elderly now that the Presbyterian Senior Services Davidson and Jackson Senior Centers no longer can provide it?

- To hear more stories of vulnerable New Yorkers, in their own words, go to www.cscs-ny.org/advocacy/media/fy11_budget_cuts.php

On top of the human tragedy, these cuts provide only an illusion of saving money.

For example, for many elders who lose home care [approximately \$11,200 per year], the city could end up spending \$123,420 per year in Medicaid funds to maintain each in a nursing home.

New York City is certainly facing the worst financial crisis since the 1970s, but attempting to dig out of it by slashing essential services for the city's elderly is neither fair nor wise.

It certainly is not the hallmark of an "age-friendly city."

Bobbie Sackman is director of public policy for the Council of Senior Centers & Services of New York City Inc., a non-profit organization founded in 1979 to serve and represent New York City's senior centers and service providers and dedicated "to promote the quality of life, independent living, productivity and dignity of older adults and their families." Visit www.cscs-ny.org for more information.

'These cuts provide only an illusion of saving money.'

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

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What about tollbooth workers?

What? No bailout for MTA tollbooth workers? I guess teachers are more important.

Unions should be ashamed of themselves. They should reform contracts to keep their brother workers on the job!

Jerry LaForgia

Everything's Obama's fault!

As a naturalized American who is sponsoring two people for citizenship, I can assure you our immigration system isn't broken. It takes years, involving meetings, filings and background checks, and costs thousands in filing and legal fees, but it works.

What is broken is this inept, corrupt and anti-American Obama administration.

Brad Morris

Maybe if N.Y.C. had a border, too...

The reason New York City stands opposed to the new Arizona immigration law is because it does not border a foreign country. The city has not walked

the walk to talk the talk. Put New York or any state in the same exact situation Arizona faces and I'm sure similar, if not more stringent, laws will be enforced automatically.

Come on, people. Why do we have white picket fences around our houses?

Thomas Chin

Longing for the good old days

After watching the Yankees play at the new Yankee Stadium, I find that the field dimensions are not the same. Center field and left-center seem a bit deeper, and right field looks much shallower.

Charles Garcia

Too many bosses at Postal Service

The U.S. Postal Service has posted a \$6 billion loss this year, already. Who runs this agency, Lehman Bros.? The Postal Service is too top-heavy. It has too many postmasters and too many supervisors. That is where the waste is, at the top. The taxpayers will get stuck with another bailout.

Carl Swanson

EVOKING HER LIFE OF SERVICE



They usually serve up legislation, but this time Councilmen Domenic Recchia (l.) and Vincent Gentile (r.) serve lunch to seniors on day of service honoring Mother Teresa's birthday.

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