

## Tabby & Fido may get tax break on chow

BY VICTOR G. MIMONI

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Pet owners around the state will have State Senator Toby Ann Stavisky to thank for making their lives a little easier, by introducing a bill to exempt pet food from sales tax.

Stavisky's bill, S2739 which was also sponsored by Queens Senators Shirley Huntley and George Onorato, has been received favorably in committee, according to a Stavisky spokesperson, as is the companion bill in the Assembly, A6354.

In her memorandum to the Senate, Stavisky pointed out to her colleagues, "When the sales tax was first enacted in New York State in the last century, it was described as a tax on luxuries."

Over the year, sales tax eats up roughly the cost of a month's food for a pet. Stavisky noted the tax "could be a hardship for senior citizens on fixed incomes who rely on their pets for comfort and companionship."

Sandra DeFeo, Co-Executive Director of the Humane Society of New York praised the tax break, which would also cover feed for exotic pets as, "a humane bill that will facilitate the humane care of animals and lessen the financial burden on people, many of whom consider their companion animals to be an integral part of their family."

Stavisky noted that with hard economic times, the tax is a dual-burden on animal shelters, both increasing their costs and the number of pets left with them by people whose finances have left them unable to care for their pets.

John Phillips, executive director of the New York League of Humane Voters, said, "No one should have to choose between food and family, and promised, "We will do everything we can to make sure that this bill becomes law."

Assemblymember Brian Kavanagh, the companion bill's sponsor thanked Stavisky "for her leadership in this effort," and said, "I look forward to working with her on this bill and other animal friendly legislation."

The respective bills are in the Senate's Investigations and Government Operations Committee and the Assembly Ways and Means Committee. If approved and signed by the Governor, the tax exemption would take effect at the start of the tax Quarter that started at least 60 days later.



Photos by Jessica Lyons

Hannah Klitsberg prepares her print.



Natasha Farrugia gets help from artist Jami Taback.

## Special printmaking workshop for kids

BY JESSICA LYONS

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A group of students at The Lowell School in Flushing were able to learn about printmaking as part of a special workshop conducted by professional artist Jami Taback.

Taback is the founder and director of Kids at Risk: Adventures in Printmaking, which focuses on assisting students who have social or behavioral challenges.

Lowell School Principal Susan Klein said that the Flushing location has 132 high school students. There is also an elementary/middle school in Bayside that has 110 students.

"Our students have learning differences, they have some special needs, which is why they are here," Klein said. "They flourish here. They get a lot more support than they would if they were in a large community high school."

Klein had received a letter from a principal at another school telling her about Taback's program. Around that same time, she had seen an article about Taback in Newsday and thought it was an "omen" that it was meant to be.

Taback, a resident of Kew Gardens Hills, was at the school four days doing the workshop, with about 10 students participating.

"Many of these students are the students who have expressed a desire to pursue art careers and excel in art," Klein said. "We wanted to bring in an additional experience for them that we ordinarily could not do because of not having our own equipment."

The students learned the printmaking process and created pieces that they can include in a portfolio for college review

"They're very talented, and they grasped the process right away," Taback said, adding that she forms a mentoring relationship with the students. "I had a very good time with them. They're good kids."

Junior Hannah Klitsberg, who wants to be an animator for a company like Pixar or DreamWorks, was one of the students who participated in the workshop. She said that learning printmaking gives her another skill that colleges will see when she applies.

"You get to create things," she said of the class. "You're surrounded by people who have the same interests."

Although many of the students will keep their pieces for their portfolios, they will be displayed in the school's hallways. Klein said that the students have been saying 'thank you' for having the workshop.

"They're very happy to have this opportunity," she said.

## Concert honors Holocaust survivors

BY NOAH ROSENBERG

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When The Margaret Tietz Nursing and Rehabilitation Center first opened in 1971, 85 percent of its residents were Holocaust survivors. Nearly four decades later, with that percentage having dwindled to less than 10, the center, whose mission has always been to care for survivors of the Holocaust, recognizes that time is not on its side.

Four years ago, Margaret Tietz's leadership, including Director of Public Affairs Linda Spiegel, met with Arthur Flug, the Director of the Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives at Queensborough Community College (QCC).

"We both realized the population [of Holocaust survivors] is diminishing," recalled Spiegel, who, along with Flug, set the wheels in motion to pay tribute to the survivors under her watch at the center.

Flug had, for years, taught QCC students

the craft of interviewing Holocaust survivors – notably those from Margaret Tietz – in an effort to preserve their stories, but he yearned to do more.

"We always thought there was something else we could bring to the survivors," he said. "We wanted to show some way of appreciating them."

Music, it turned out, was the perfect way to honor those whose lives had been uprooted, those who lived through concentration camps and death camps – and those who perished in them – while commemorating the cultures and traditions left behind in Europe.

This past Sunday, March 15, marked the Fourth Annual Holocaust Memorial Concert held at Margaret Tietz – bigger, Flug said, than last year's.

But, while more than 100 people showed up in the center's recreation room and cafeteria – the event is open to the public – only six of those in attendance this year

were survivors.

The few were certainly proud, though. Twelve-year resident and Holocaust survivor, Mania Kitchell, was presented with a citation and, Flug said, "you could just see her face glowing."

"You can see the residents there – some in wheelchairs – tapping and nodding away, and clapping," said Flug, who, despite the reflective nature of the concert, called it a "haimische" occasion – "a really friendly, happy, family-type event."

The two-hour affair featured 18 members – ages six to 12 – of JEM (Jewish Educational Music), who, led by Cantor Sol Zim of the Hollis Hills Jewish Center, and accompanied by piano and guitar, performed around 10 songs.

Margaret Tietz and QCC's Holocaust Center are both on board for a fifth annual concert.

"We're going to do one next year," Flug said, without pause. "You just keep doing it so people remember."