

Northeast Queens Jewish Community Council applauds the efforts of its partner, the Samuel Field Y, in stepping forward to strengthen the Central Queens Y (CQY). NEQJCC leadership pledged to assist the Y in government and community outreach as part of the strategic effort to re-make the CQY as a center for human services delivery.

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## *Jewish Week*

### **New Era For Central Queens Y**

*New board of directors at Central Queens Y opted for a new alignment with Samuel Field Y.*

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by Stewart Ain  
Staff Writer



An assessment of the needs of the 125,000 Jews in the communities served by the Central Queens Y in Forest Hills will begin in coming weeks following an administrative reorganization.

The assessment is being done in conjunction with the Samuel Field Y in Little Neck, which in July entered into a management agreement with the Central Queens Y. The agreement came after the Flushing facility nearly went bankrupt last year after losing 850 members in six years — nearly half its membership.

The Central Queens Y, an affiliate agency of UJA-Federation of New York, had such serious fiscal problems that UJA-Federation dropped its affiliation in 2005. It was restored in 2007.

“We were so concerned about fiscal oversight of the rather substantial money we gave the agency that we placed it on provisional status, meaning that each year we re-affiliated the agency,” said Louise Greilsheimer, UJA-Federation’s senior vice president of external and government relations.

“We gave them \$542,000 of unrestricted core support in the last three years and targeted grants totaling \$660,000,” she said.

Fiscal problems and a declining enrollment forced the Y last December to close Camp Edward Isaacs in upstate Holmes after 50 years of operation. But, Greilsheimer said, “in the end, they needed much more money,” and UJA-Federation demanded an evaluation of its leadership.

“Its board decided on its own to step down and it appointed an interim board to take on the responsibility of figuring out a way to improve its fiscal and physical plant and its programs,” she said. “We would not have continued funding the agency in the same way unless they made dramatic changes.”

Eight of the new board members were recommended by UJA-Federation for their expertise in such areas as real estate, finance and programming, and many sit on the boards of other institutions. The president of the new board, Steven Price, recommended the other three board members.

The new board took office in December, the same month 40 full-time staff and 125 part-time and seasonal staff were laid off.

The new board then examined a series of options, consulted with other agencies and area residents, and in the end opted to align with the Samuel Field Y — the other Jewish community center in Queens — and use its expertise to “move towards excellence,” Greilsheimer said.

In light of those developments, UJA-Federation granted the Central Queens Y a loan of \$500,000 “to help make some changes and shore up its finances,” she added.

Steven Goodman, executive vice president of the Samuel Field Y, said his staff is “trying to maintain and expand services [at the Central Queens Y] and adapt services to the needs of the community.”

“But this is a daunting problem because government funds have been diminished, private philanthropy has been down and there is a need for people to receive scholarships,” he said.

The Central Queens Y provides traditional Jewish community services, serving a large number of seniors, Russian refugees, and youngsters in pre-school and child care, Goodman noted.

On the other hand, the Samuel Field Y, he noted, “is similar to a family and human service agency because its core services are social and community services. We don’t have an on-site pool or health club, but rather a fully licensed geriatric mental health clinic, which serves all of Queens.

“We also have diverse programs for people with developmental, emotional and physical disabilities, and we have a family violence center and three naturally occurring retirement communities in eastern Queens. We are planning to look at ways of strengthening programs for seniors, day camps and after-school programs. And part of our goal is to bring services there for people with disabilities and to bring the resources of our geriatric mental health unit by opening an office there [subject to state approval]. ... We also provide home-based mental health assessment and treatment from our geriatric mental health program. ”

Goodman stressed that his “first priority is to make sure that all our programs are community responsive and of high quality. We want to fill some of the service gaps that have not been available for some of the populations.”

In addition, he said many functions of the Central Queens Y will be enhanced by the Samuel Field Y, such as cultural programs and programs in Jewish education. And there are plans to upgrade the Y building itself through funds from private philanthropy and government funding.

“The Central Queens Y had not applied for grants for years and years,” said a spokeswoman for UJA-Federation. “It just started applying in the last year or so.”

Goodman said that within six months to a year changes at the Central Queens Y should become noticeable.