

Wednesday, September 13, 2006

**DCA HITS THE STREETS FOR 4th ANNUAL BUSINESS EDUCATION DAY:  
TEAMS BLANKET SMALL BUSINESSES IN EVERY BOROUGH WITH  
INFORMATION ABOUT CONSUMER PROTECTION LAWS**

*DCA Teams Distribute Hundreds of Brochures and Answer Questions Without Issuing Violations; Groups Join Outreach Teams to Go Door-to-Door in 12 Neighborhoods Citywide; Aggressive Outreach Efforts Yield Increase in Citywide Compliance Rates*

New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz today launched the agency's 4th Annual BUSINESS EDUCATION DAY – an aggressive five borough effort to educate local businesses about the City's Consumer Protection and Licensing Laws, without issuing violations. DCA is targeting 12 neighborhoods citywide that have large retail areas or received consumer complaints. Staff from the NYC Department of Small Business Services, as well as community and business organizations joined DCA throughout the day. Teams went door-to-door visiting storefronts, meeting individually with managers and employees to explain the laws, answer questions, and distribute multi-language copies of the DCA's Ten Things Every Business Should Know pocket guide. Businesses were reminded how to get further information through the agency's web site and by calling 311.

"Most businesses want to do the right thing by consumers – and we want to make sure they have the tools to do so," said DCA Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "By going door-to-door and answering questions in person, we're sending a strong signal that the City's priority is helping them comply with the law."

Neighborhoods visited as part of BUSINESS EDUCATION DAY 2006 include Brighton Beach, Fulton Street, Midwood and Sunset Park in Brooklyn, East Fordham Road and Bay Plaza Mall in the Bronx, Hillside Avenue and Jamaica Avenue in Queens, Midtown Manhattan, and Stapleton and Forest Avenue in Staten Island. DCA distributed Ten Things Every Business Should Know pocket guides in English, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese including information about:

- Businesses that require a DCA license.
- Rules regarding refund policy and receipts.
- Scales and weighing merchandise.
- Posting prices.
- How businesses can resolve consumer complaints.

This year, while the DCA helped people with more than 100,000 requests for information, it also processed more than 7,550 consumer complaints and secured more than \$3.6 million in consumer restitution. Consumer complaints about home improvement contracting, debt collection practices, furniture and electronics sales, and used car sales were among the most common. Routine inspections conducted citywide over the past year show business compliance has increased citywide for a high 91% with Consumer Protection Laws (specifically refunds and receipts), and specific licensing requirements at 82%.

Susan Meeker, Executive Director of the West Brighton Local Development Corporation in Staten Island said: "Reaching business owners and managers face-to-face is the

best way to ensure they know what the rules are and how to conduct good business practices. We're happy to partner with the Department of Consumer Affairs in this effort to educate Staten Island businesses."

Copies of all brochures including the DCA's Ten Things Every Business Should Know pocket guide in English, Spanish, and Chinese, are available by calling 311 (or 212-NEW-YORK) or online at [www.nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers).

DCA's enforcement squads operate from borough offices located in Manhattan, Brooklyn/Staten Island, Queens, and the Bronx, allowing staff to work closely with Community Boards and other City agencies to coordinate efforts and respond to complaints quickly. DCA inspectors are cross-trained in a number of areas including routine testing of scales, consumer protection violations, license checks, and other areas. Cross-trained inspections have allowed for more comprehensive inspections at each location, resulting in the elimination of burdensome multiple visits to businesses.

DCA enforces the New York City Consumer Protection Law and other related laws at thousands of businesses. Ensuring a vibrant marketplace where consumers and businesses can benefit, the DCA licenses more than 60,000 businesses in 55 different categories. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and other informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. For more information visit DCA online at [www.nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers).