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## **NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS HITS THE STREETS TO ISSUE ADVICE, NOT VIOLATIONS**

### ***DCA's 6th Annual "Business Education Day" Connects to Businesses in 15 Retail Areas Citywide***

New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Jonathan Mintz joined DCA inspectors and representatives from the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) today on the Lower East Side to kick off the agency's 6th Annual Business Education Day.

DCA hosts Business Education Day annually to share compliance tips with New York City businesses instead of issuing fines or violations. Throughout the day, dozens of DCA staff, joined by representatives from SBS, community organizations, business associations, and elected officials visited more than 1,200 businesses in 15 high-traffic retail areas, from Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, and Bayside, Queens, to Delancey Street on the Lower East Side, and East Tremont Avenue in the Bronx.

"Without a doubt, the single most effective way to make sure consumers get treated fairly is to make sure businesses know the law in the first place," said Commissioner Jonathan Mintz. "Every year on Business Education Day, DCA goes business-to-business answering questions and providing information about how to do right by customers."

DCA teams went block by block meeting with business owners, managers, and employees. While teams pointed out potentially unpermitted practices they observed, they issued no violations. Instead, teams advised owners on how to comply with New York City consumer protection laws and answered specific questions posed. Business Education Day teams also distributed relevant compliance materials in multiple languages, including DCA's *10 Things Every Business Should Know*. Additionally, teams took the opportunity to provide business owners with information on how their employees may claim the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), a federal, state, and City tax credit that can return as much as \$6,000 to families earning less than \$39,000 a year. The EITC is a critical anti-poverty initiative and key focus of DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment.

Neighborhoods visited as part of DCA's 6th Annual Business Education Day include:

Brooklyn: Bay Ridge/Bensonhurst; Bedford Stuyvesant/Clinton Hill/Fort Greene; Prospect Heights/Park Slope; Sheepshead Bay/Brighton Beach; and Williamsburg

Bronx: Throgs Neck; Westchester Square; Hunts Point

Manhattan: Chelsea; Lower East Side; Upper East Side

Queens: Bayside; Flushing; Richmond Hill/Jamaica

Staten Island: New Dorp

Routine inspections conducted Citywide over the past year show an overall 90 percent compliance rate with Consumer Protection Laws for businesses, most notably in refund and receipt compliance. In fiscal year 2008, DCA fielded nearly 170,000 311 requests for information, successfully resolved more than 7,600 consumer complaints, and secured more than \$8.4 million in consumer restitution – a nearly 60 percent increase from the previous fiscal year's restitution numbers. Moreover, licensing requirements are now at an 88 percent compliance rate, up from last year.

Free copies of all information packets, including DCA's *10 Things Every Business Should Know* and EITC materials in 12 languages, are available by calling 311 or visiting DCA online at [www.nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers).

DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law and other related business laws throughout New York City. Ensuring a fair and vibrant marketplace for consumers and businesses alike, DCA licenses more than 60,000 businesses in 55 different categories. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses about their rights and responsibilities. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at [www.nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers).