

Neighbor News

The Community Newsletter of Queensboro Council for Social Welfare

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Digital TV Converter Coupons

The date for converting from analog to digital TV is right around the corner. You've been hearing commercials for over a year now. On midnight February 17, 2009, TV stations across the U.S. will stop broadcasting in analog and switch to 100 percent digital broadcasting. If you have an older model TV that doesn't have a digital tuner built in and you don't subscribe to a cable or satellite provider, you won't be able to receive over the air signals. The government is offering \$40 coupons for people who need a converter box. The last day to apply for the coupon is March 31, 2009, there is a limit of two per household. If you have a coupon check your expiration date, as they are only good for 90 days.

Do Not Call Registry

The national registry was created to make it easier and more efficient to stop getting telemarketing calls you don't want. You can register online at www.DONOTYCALL.GOV or call toll-free, 1-888-382-1222 (TTY 1-866-290-4236), from the number you wish to register. Registration is free. Personal home or cell phone numbers can be added to the registry.

Flu Shot Time!

Every year more than 2,500 New Yorkers die of flu and pneumonia. Anyone can catch the flu. It spreads from person to person with just a sneeze or cough. Just one shot can protect you and your loved ones all season long. To get your flu shot, talk to your doctor or call 311 for more information.

Homebuyers

The NYC Dept. of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) created the HomeFirst Down Payment assistance program which provides qualified homebuyers with up to 6% of a home's purchase price toward the down payment or closing costs on family home, a condominium, or a cooperative. For information call 718.468.8025.

Barrier Free Living

Barrier Free Living, Inc. (BFL) serves individuals who have a disability (ADA defined), and are abused, physically, verbally, financially, sexually, or emotionally. All individuals with disabilities deserve to live dignified and safe lives, free of abuse. For additional information call; 24 hour Hotline (212) 533.4358, 9am-5pm, Mon.-Fri., after 5pm calls are forwarded to Safe Horizon, (1-800.621.HOPE) Services are offered in English, Spanish, Italian, French, Haitian Creole, & Romanian.

Asking For Help

Life's day-to-day problems or a special situation can leave you feeling overwhelmed and depressed. You may need help but feel you have nowhere to turn, just by thinking about asking, you are taking the first step: admitting that you need help. Always remember while it feels hard to ask for help at one time or another, everyone needs help. To talk with someone, to help yourself, telephone the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-784-2433.

Late Amnesty

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services has confirmed another late amnesty opportunity. The application period will commence on February 1, 2009 and end on January 31, 2010. This program is not a new immigration program; it is a reincarnation of the old amnesty which will run for a period of one year. All eligible applicants will be issued temporary resident status after a successful application which you will be able to convert to permanent resident status after at least 19 months as temporary residents of the United States. If you have any questions, please call the New York Immigration Coalition 212-627-2227.

Infant Protection Act

Parents who are unable to care for their newborn infants may anonymously and legally leave their infant at a safe place such as a hospital under New York State's Abandoned Infant Protection Act. The infant must be a newborn, five days old or younger. Enacted in 2000, the law is designed to prevent the tragedies that occur when infants are abandoned by parents. Safe locations include firehouses, hospitals, crisis nurseries or schools. Parents must promptly notify an appropriate person of the child's location and act with the intent that the child be safe from physical injury. For more information regarding the Abandoned Infant Protection law about when and where a person may responsibly leave an infant, please call: 866-505-SAFE.

Stalking

First and foremost in the event of stalking or harassment incidences, call the police and alert them to your problem.

- ◆ Seventy-six percent of females killed by an intimate partner were stalked prior to the murder. Stalking involves intentional and repeated behaviors that place an individual in fear for his or her safety.
- ◆ If you or a friend or family member are a victim(s) of stalking or are being harassed, there are some instructions to follow. Document the incidences in a log. Keep it current and in a safe place because if there is future police involvement, you will have some needed proof.

There are a multitude of precautions a victim has to take. Some of them are:

- ◆ Do not negotiate with a stalker. If you have an order of protection, keep it with you at all times.
- ◆ Vary your routes from home, school, or your place of employment.
- ◆ Travel with a cellular phone that is pre-programmed to dial 911.

For further information, call Safe Horizon at 718-291-2555 or the Stalking Resource Center, a program of the National Center for the Victims of Crime, Victim Assistance, 1-800-FYI-Call, Monday through Friday, 8:30am to 8:30pm or SRC@ncvc.org.

Help Available

Call QCSW's I&R Dept., 718-468-8025 for information on social services in Queens, including housing and domestic violence services.

Heat Season

The 2008/2009 "heat season" began Oct. 1st and continues through May 31, 2009. During heat season, residential owners with tenants are required by law to maintain an indoor temperature of at least 68 degrees Fahrenheit between 6:00 A.M. and 10:00 P.M. when the outdoor temperature falls below 55 degrees. If you do not have sufficient heat during this period, call 311 to make a report and the City will assist.

Low-income renters and homeowners can get help with heating costs and heating emergencies through the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP). HEAP provides grants to eligible New Yorkers to help pay heating bills. HEAP can also provide emergency assistance in circumstances such as gas and utilities shut offs and boiler break-downs. The benefit does not have to be paid back.

HEAP eligibility is determined by whether the household income is below the current NYS income guidelines. HEAP may be able to offer a benefit even if heat and utilities are included in the rent or the applicant lives in subsidized housing and pays directly for heating costs. For further information, call QCSW's Information & Referral Program, 718-468-8025 or 311.

Owner Entry

In New York City, owners may enter a tenant's apartment for three general reasons: emergency repairs, non-emergency repairs or improvements, and apartment inspections. Emergency repair requires no advance notice to the tenant. However, access for non-emergency repairs and improvements requires a minimum of one week's advance written notice, and access for inspection requires a minimum of 24 hours advance written notice.

Child Abuse Reports

Reports of child abuse or neglect can be reported by calling:

311 for NYC residents; ask to be connected to the State Central Registry;

800-342-3720, the general public's direct number for the State Central Registry;

800-635-1522, the mandated reporters' hotline for reporting child abuse or neglect.

For more information on ACS, mandated reporters, and other child welfare and safety topics, please go to the ACS Website at: www.nyc.gov/acs.

For more information regarding preventive services available in your neighborhood, parents can call 311 and ask for ACS's Prevention and Parent Helpline.

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