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## Sunnyside Shines and SBS commissioner promote Small Business Saturday

BY ANDREW SHILLING



When Javier Quezada, 31, opened the doors to Los Verdes back in January 2013, he said the support he received from the city's Department of Small Business Services (SBS) helped make the process practically seamless.

Quezada, originally from Elmhurst, said with help from the SBS New Business Acceleration Team, his restaurant was able to quickly obtain the proper permits and tackle the dreaded Department of Health and Mental Hygiene letter grade system.

"This business comes from Florida, and we thought with the help of the franchise we would have it all figured out, but that is really different here in New York," Quezada explained. "That's where business relations came in and they were able to help guide us through the whole process."

Last week, Quezada met with members of the local Sunnyside Shines business group and SBS Commissioner Maria Torres-Springer to discuss the state of small businesses in Sunnyside.

With the holidays just around the corner, Sunnyside Shines is planning the upcoming holiday window photo contest, as well as embraced the call from SBS by releasing a Shop Local Holiday Gift Guide to promote local small businesses for the Small Business Saturday event on November 29.

"The photo contest was so much fun last year," said Rachel Thieme, executive director of Sunnyside Shines. "It really inspired people to come out and snap some pictures around the holidays."

The top three voted businesses and most viewed photographs from participating photographers in the BID's holiday contest this year will receive anywhere from \$100 to \$300 in cash prizes.

And the guide, designed with the help of LaGuardia Community College, is aimed at promoting small businesses in the area by giving a breakdown of roughly 22 local Sunnyside stores.

"Sunnysiders understand the importance of shopping locally, but we wanted to make it even easier by publishing the gift guide and promoting local businesses on Small Business Saturday," Thieme said.

A kickoff event for Small Business Saturday is planned for November 29 at Bliss Plaza, located at Queens Boulevard and 46th Street, from 12 to 1 p.m.

“This Small Business Saturday and beyond, I encourage all New Yorkers to shop locally and support the small businesses that strengthen our city’s economy, create jobs, and add to the vibrancy of our neighborhoods,” said Torres-Springer.

Sitting at the table with local business leaders and the owners of Los Verdes, Torres-Springer explained that she hopes other entrepreneurs will also take the lead from Quezava by seeking help from one of the many business solution centers in Queens.

She also praised Sunnyside Shines for doing their part and energizing the local consumers at a time when business owners need it the most.

“Resources like the Sunnyside Shines Shop Local Holiday Gift Guide are creative, important tools to help promote local businesses and engage residents as they start shopping for the holiday season,” she said.