

HURRICANE SANDY

store where I see a lady shopping for a pocketbook, four girls sitting and eating salad, this guy going to a restaurant with his wife — and I'm thinking, 'what are these people, stupid? They're crazy? There is a war zone going on five miles away. There is a disaster.' They have no idea."

"Up until the gas shortage, people didn't understand that a hurricane could affect people," Mr. Follman says incredulously, shaking his head.

When Hurricane Irene hit last summer, Sea Gate, part of Zone A, was nearly totally evacuated. "It was a ghost town," Mr. Follman said. But they came back afterward and found the town intact. That led to a laxity in the face of urgent evacuations ahead of Hurricane Sandy.

That attitude proved to be perilous last week. While there were no deaths or serious injuries, the damage to homes may prove the village's undoing. But many people who I meet say they are determined to keep the unified community together, even as disaster agencies say it could take years for them to be put back on their feet.

For now, residents want to know what the government is doing to help them.

"Every day I hear in the news that they are not being taken care of," Mr. Follman says. "Staten Island — I saw in the papers they're crying that they are being forgotten, Sea Gate is crying that

they are being forgotten and I hear that people in Far Rockaway are also complaining they are being forgotten. So the real question is, where are they at all?"

While FEMA set up a center in Coney Island, an approximate 20-minute walk away, Sea Gate residents complain that they are being ignored by the federal agency.

"How are they expecting, when there are thousands of people who live here and everybody lost a car — everybody who was in Sea Gate at the time, 95 to 98 percent of the cars were totaled and were picked up and are gone. There is no bus service here. How are they expecting people that can't go down to the Cyclone to register for FEMA?" Mr. Follman says. "We are 3,000 people waiting to make a FEMA application. Put your truck here. But they are not here. Nobody knows what FEMA is about."

Sea Gate currently has no single person who can speak for them, something the community is working to correct. But they make clear that vast sums of money will be needed before the once-affluent area can rebuild.

"Every house here needs a minimum of \$20,000, \$30,000 just for people to move back in," Mr. Follman says. "We need to help our families get their lives back together. There is not one person, almost, who is not going to need help here."

JCC-CGI Headquarters Severely Damaged

BY HAMODIA STAFF

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — Though the actual waters and storm winds have receded from Coney Island, Seagate, Brighton Beach and Manhattan Beach, the aftermath of the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy has paralyzed these communities and has destroyed JCC-CGI's facilities. The central administrative office of JCC-CGI, has coordinated services to 2,500 individuals every day — about 10,000 people a year in all five boroughs.

Not only was all the equipment, furniture, and files ruined — the walls, ceilings and floors were structurally damaged as well. Offices were located on the first floor, and the water level rose to above six feet.

"We have an offsite backup, we're working with our computer company in restoring our network so we can begin providing services to clients again," said Rabbi Moshe Weiner, executive director of JCC-CGI. "We are accessing internet-based telephones, and will receive calls at our regular phone number. We desperately need to find alternative office space to function

appropriately. We are starting to look, but it's important to have a space, there are a lot of walk-ins, especially the senior citizens of the area, but the available spaces have all been impacted by the hurricane."

Throughout the storm, JCC's home delivery meals program (300 meals a day) City Meals on Wheels made available additional packaged meals so hopefully none of the homebound clients missed meals, and the Ocean Parkway senior center was open throughout the storm.

Efforts are underway to restore critical services and reestablish contact with our client and staff base. However, the damage to the main administrative office is so extensive that estimates of restoring JCC-CGI's facilities stand at over \$1 million dollars in repairs for the main office alone.

"The time to respond is now, as even for those who are lucky enough to be insured, such payments can take weeks and months to process. The need is pressing and critical as so many families are living in unsafe conditions with some actually homeless," read a statement issued by the JCC. They are ask-

ing for donations so that they can rebuild their offices — the physical and the data capabilities — because so many local people depend on the JCC to meet so many of their needs.

In a related story, on Monday, as reported in the daily *Hamodia*, federal and local officials took part in a comprehensive tour of affected New York regions, including a walking tour of Sea Gate and Coney Island. The inspection was made by Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano; Fred Kreizman, Assistant Commissioner, Mayor's Community Assistance Unit; Pinny Dembitzer, President, Sea Gate Association; Chuck Reichenthal, District Manager, Brooklyn Community Board 13; Rabbi Moshe Wiener, Executive Director, Jewish Community Council of Greater Coney Island; and FEMA officials. The elected officials who joined the inspection were Senator Kirsten Gillibrand; Congressman Jerrold Nadler; Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney; State Senator Diane Savino; State Assemblyman Alec Brook Krasny, and Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz.



Surreal snapshots of devastation and solidarity in Sea Gate.