

# Combatting nurse shortage

## Schools join together to help hosps fill vacancies

BY JOYCE SHELBY

KIEVA SKINNER gave serious thought to becoming a nurse after she took a biology course in college.

"But when I read the curriculum for nursing and saw all that it entailed, I chose a road less challenging," said the East Flatbush resident, who became an administrative assistant.

Skinner began to rethink her goals when, while on leave to take care of her two young children, she read lots of parenting magazines. After seeing full-page "Promise of Nursing" ads sponsored by Johnson & Johnson, she decided to make her longtime dream a reality by returning to school.

The company's nationwide campaign was launched in response to a decade-long shortage of nurses that is only expected to get worse.

By 2020, the federal government predicts a 24% vacancy rate for registered nurses in New York State. That's more than double Brooklyn's 9.8% vacancy rate for nurses in 2005.

"We've increased the graduation rates of new nurses, so in the immediate future, we'll see a little drop in the shortage," said Roseanne Raso,

co-president of the Brooklyn Nursing Partnership.

"But by 2010, we'll see a big increase in the vacancy rate as baby boomers retire, and we won't be graduating enough nurses to fill the shoes of those nurses who are leaving," said Raso, who is also senior vice president of nursing at Lutheran Medical Center.

The partnership — made up of nursing school directors and heads of hospital nursing departments — was formed late last year to head off the anticipated shortages. "We are actively recruiting," Raso said. The group also is writing grants to increase the number of faculty at nursing schools.

Statewide, 3,000 qualified applicants couldn't get into nursing programs last year because of a shortage of faculty and facilities, the New York State Nursing Association estimated.

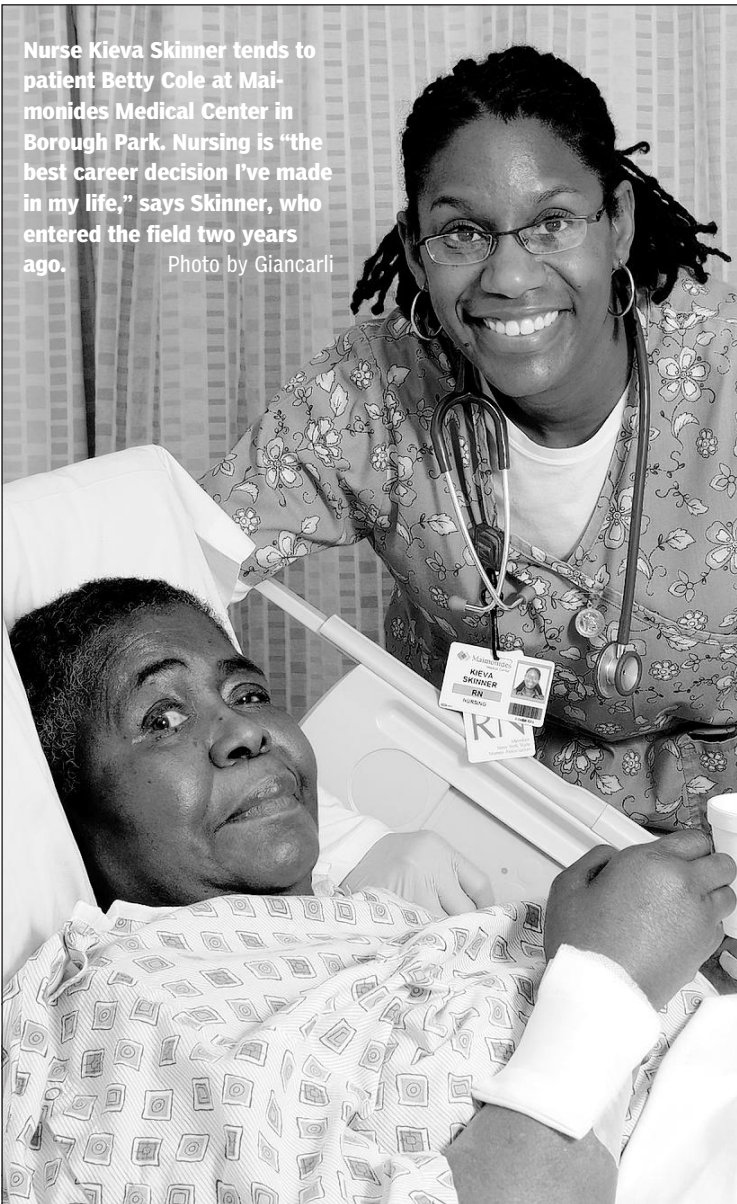
Locally, Long Island College Hospital will try to address that shortage by opening an evening nursing school program in the fall. Prof. Mary Gonzalez said final details are still being worked out.

Two years ago, Skinner graduated from Long Island College Hospital's daytime nursing program. She works in a surgical unit at Maimonides Medical Center in Borough Park. "I love nursing," she said. "This is the best career decision I've made in my life."

*jsheby@nydailynews.com*

Nurse Kieva Skinner tends to patient Betty Cole at Maimonides Medical Center in Borough Park. Nursing is "the best career decision I've made in my life," says Skinner, who entered the field two years ago.

Photo by Giancarli



### EXPLORE OPTIONS

For more information about nursing and nursing careers, visit [www.discovernursing.com](http://www.discovernursing.com)

# Chernobyl survivors urged to get health tests

BY TANYANIKA SAMUELS

EDWARD ATBASHYAN was a young soldier in the Russian Army when an explosion ripped through the Chernobyl nuclear plant on April 26, 1986.

As radioactive material poured into the air, he helped evacuate the thousands of people living near the plant. He spent more than three weeks at the site.

Two decades later, the aftermath of the nuclear disaster still lingers for Atbashyan in the insidious threat of thyroid cancer.

"I have always known that I potentially might have a future problem," said Atbashyan, 42, who now lives in Bellmore, Long Island.

Now a unique effort is underway to help Atbashyan and 200,000 other Chernobyl survivors living in the New York area, including a large number in Brooklyn.

Project Chernobyl, championed by a coalition of community groups and health professionals, aims to provide early diagnosis and treatment for at-risk members of the Russian community.

"We are trying to develop a system where the right people are getting the right test," said Dr. Igor

Branovan, of the New York Eye and Ear Infirmary, who is spearheading the effort. He is working to expand the program to Los Angeles and Chicago.

Over the last decade, physicians at New York Eye and Ear have noticed a high incidence of thyroid abnormalities in Russian immigrants from Belarus, Ukraine and southwestern Russia. A recent study showed the number of abnormalities was nearly triple that of the average New Yorker.

"While other incidents could be attributed to it, we decided the most likely source was some sort of exposure," Branovan said.

Thyroid cancer typically takes about 20 years to develop, and medical experts in Russia have long been expecting a spike. So, the trend among Russian immigrants in New York is not surprising, local health experts said.

With the backing of Assembly members Helene Weinstein (D-Flatbush) and Alec Brook-Krasny (D-Coney Island, Dyker Heights), Branovan helped secure \$535,000 in state funding to kick off the project.

The five-year plan is to launch in July with television and newspaper ads, advising Chernobyl survivors to call a special hotline.

Callers meeting certain criteria will be tested at a

participating neighborhood medical center and be alerted to their potential risk for developing thyroid cancer.

The project calls for the involvement of 12 to 15 medical centers citywide, with at least half of them in Brooklyn. The goal is to test 50,000 people each year.

"The likelihood is that most people will not develop cancer," Branovan said, "but an unfortunate few will get it."

Roza Nepomnashi, 53, who emigrated from Gomel, a city in Belarus heavily contaminated by the radiation from Chernobyl, already overcame thyroid cancer. But she is anxious to have her two children tested.

"I am scared for my kids because now we have a family history. I will get my kids in the program, just in case," said Nepomnashi, of Staten Island.

As for Atbashyan, having already overcome health problems stemming from the nuclear disaster, he is prepared to tackle any new ones head on.

"A lot of people are suffering directly or indirectly from this tragedy. So, this project is a great thing for people," Atbashyan said.

*tsamuels@nydailynews.com*

■ Stay on top of all the happenings there with Astoria resident Rich O'Malley's blog.

■ O'Malley, who has lived in Queens for over 30 years, will share with you all the local news, including arts and culture events, openings and closings, reviews and, most of all, the little things that make our corner of Queens so vibrant and fun. And you can talk back to him!



## WHAT'S UP IN ASTORIA?

[www.nydailynews.com/blogs/astoria](http://www.nydailynews.com/blogs/astoria)

THE BEST OF OUR CITY IS ONLY A CLICK AWAY!

### More Local News

#### Bid to recycle 'e-waste'

More than 22,000 pounds of unwanted electronics — such as computers, televisions and cell phones — was collected in Park Slope at the city's first electronic recycling, or e-waste, event last week.

Councilman Bill de Blasio (D-Park Slope), who organized the event, has proposed an e-waste bill that would require electronics manufacturers to foot the bill for recycling.

Denise Romano

#### Marty aide moves on

Eric Demby, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz's communications director, has resigned to take a job with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. He said he will begin his new post, as the arts group's director of communications and marketing, toward the end of the month.

#### AIDS center moving

An AIDS-prevention outpost will relocate from its current Boerum Hill storefront when its lease expires in October.

People of Color in Crisis, which provides prevention services for African- and Caribbean-Americans will try to relocate to downtown Brooklyn, said Michael Roberson, the group's acting executive director.

Jimmy Vielkind

#### Cyclones art contest

The Brooklyn Cyclones are giving youngsters 14 and under a chance to submit artwork to appear in the team's official game program. Winners will also receive a Cyclone prize pack, framed copy of the artwork signed by the entire team, and will get to throw a ceremonial first pitch before a game this summer.

To receive an entry form, call (718) 449-8497, or download one from the Web at [www.brooklyncyclones.com](http://www.brooklyncyclones.com). Entries must be received by May 18.

Denise Romano

### BROOKLYN NEWS OFFICES

News Desk (718) 875-4455

News Fax (646) 304-8759

E-mail your news and pictures to [BrooklynNews@nydailynews.com](mailto:BrooklynNews@nydailynews.com)

Sports Fax (646) 390-9526

E-mail your sports information to [BoroSports@nydailynews.com](mailto:BoroSports@nydailynews.com)

The name and logo of Brooklyn News is a trademark of Daily News, L.P., and may not be used or copied in any manner without the express prior written consent of Daily News, L.P. All submissions become the property of the Brooklyn News and may be used by Brooklyn News in any form or medium. Brooklyn News is not responsible for the return of unsolicited submissions.

© 2007 Daily News L.P.

The Brooklyn News is published by the Daily News L.P., 450 W. 33rd St., New York, N.Y. 10001.

Brooklyn News Offices:  
P.O. Box 3314, New York, NY 10116

Advertising (212) 210-2355

JoAnn DiNapoli - [jdinapoli@nydailynews.com](mailto:jdinapoli@nydailynews.com)

Home Delivery 1 (800) 692-NEWS