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Thursday, November 20, 2014

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Flatiron Partnership & NYC Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Launch 2014 Holiday Shopping Season in New York City

DCA Commissioner Julie Menin Joins Flatiron Partnership Executive Director Jennifer Brown to Launch “23 Days of Flatiron Cheer” and Offer 10 Savvy Shopping Tips

(New York, N.Y.) – NYC Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Commissioner Julie Menin, Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Business Improvement District (BID) Executive Director Jennifer Brown, and Flatiron businesses Eatly New York and Athleta today officially kicked off the 2014 Holiday Shopping season in the bustling Flatiron shopping and dining district and offered New Yorkers and visitors tips to protect their money during the season.

“Flatiron is one of the most dynamic and successful neighborhoods in New York City, offering people who live or work here or are visiting from across the globe everything they desire for a captivating and engaging holiday experience,” said Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Executive Director Jennifer Brown. “With a diversity of places to shop, dine and explore in the neighborhood, it’s time to celebrate the holiday season in the heart of New York City.”

“Black Friday and Cyber Monday bookend one of the busiest shopping weekends of the year and Department of Consumer Affairs wants to make sure that New Yorkers are getting what they pay for when they spend their hard-earned dollars this holiday season,” said DCA Commissioner Julie Menin. “A recent survey showed that New Yorkers plan to be cautious with how they spend their money this season so I encourage everyone to use our tips and to also ‘shop local’—we live in one of the most amazing cities with small businesses to shop at right in our own neighborhood like the ones here in Flatiron.”

“New York City is one of the most exciting places to visit, shop at and dine in during the holiday season, and Flatiron represents the spirit of the season. Athleta is excited to welcome shoppers from near and far to our newest Manhattan store on 18th & 5th to find gifts for all the fitness-loving friends and family in their lives. It’s an inspiring and motivating time of year - both qualities that our brand embodies,” said Athleta’s East Market Community Leader, Martha Kaplan.

"One of our favorite things about Flatiron is the dynamic landscape and proactive approach to creating an exciting environment for shopping, dining, and more. We're proud to be part of a neighborhood that caters to all walks of life and look forward to being a part of the community for many holidays to come," said Dan Amatuzzi, General Manager of Eataly New York.

23 Days of Flatiron Cheer

The event announced the third year of "23 Days of Flatiron Cheer," a near-month-long initiative of engaging family programming, giveaways, and contests showcasing the wealth of shopping and dining destinations in the district. The "23 Days of Flatiron Cheer" opening ceremony will be held on Monday, November 24 at 6:00 p.m. with the unveiling of a dynamic holiday installation – called *New York Light* - in the shadow of the landmark Flatiron building, one of the most photographed buildings in New York City, and performances and tastes of the district.

One of New York City's marquee holiday events, "23 Days of Flatiron Cheer" runs from Monday, December 1 to Tuesday, December 23. A calendar of events can be viewed at www.FlatironDistrict.nyc (link to: <http://www.flatirondistrict.nyc/>). This season's "23 Days" of activities include:

- An online competition in which anyone posting images, on a public social media account, of their encounter with *New York Light* on Instagram or Twitter - and tagging **#NewYorkLight** – is entered to win prizes from Flatiron businesses.
- Performances, including the Flatiron-based Peoples Improv Theater.
- Free, 90-minute, holiday-themed walking tours – led by professional guides – on Sundays at 11:00 AM in which participants explore the architecture and history of the neighborhood.
- The return of the giant prize wheel. People are encouraged to take a free spin – and win prizes from Flatiron shops and restaurants.
- Family-friendly activities including candy cane giveaways, and balloons. Children and adults of all ages are invited to drop by the North Public Plaza for free hot beverages.
- Free gift-wrapping in the North Public Plaza to anyone showing \$25 or more in receipts from a Flatiron establishment.

The Flatiron Partnership also celebrates the season of giving by giving back. Throughout the 23 days, the Flatiron Partnership will be collecting canned goods at the North Public Plaza to donate to the Food Bank For New York City.

Consumer Shopping Tips for the Season

With the holiday shopping season, including Black Friday, Small Business Saturday and Cyber Monday, approaching, DCA Commissioner Menin issued a list of 10 savvy shopping tips to New Yorkers and tourists. Additional shopping guides are available online at nyc.gov/consumers (link to: <http://www.nyc.gov/consumers>) or by calling 311.

- **Know your consumer rights.**
 - Stores can set their own refund policy but they must post the sign with all conditions or limitations near the register where you can easily read it. If no refund policy is posted, you can return any unused item within 30 days, and the business must give you the choice of cash or credit.
 - In NYC, a business must give you a receipt for purchases over \$20 automatically and upon request for purchases between \$5 and \$20. A receipt may not show a credit card's expiration date or more than its last five digits.
 - Businesses selling goods must post prices either on the item or on a sign where the item is displayed. It is illegal to charge more than that posted price.

Download *10 Things Every Consumer Should Know* from [nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers) (link to: <http://www.nyc.gov/consumers>) or call 311 to request a copy.

- **Create a budget and make a list.** Don't let holiday spending put you in debt. Decide what you want to buy and how much you want to spend in advance, start shopping early and watch your bank balance. You'll be less likely to overspend if you pay in cash or with a prepaid debit card—but be wary of hidden fees with prepaid cards. If you're struggling with debt and need help budgeting, make an appointment for free, financial counseling at the City's Financial Empowerment Centers by calling 311.
- **Compare prices.** Use websites, smartphone apps and social media to research products, compare prices, and find sales and discounts before you start shopping.
- **Know the rules about gift cards.** Gift card funds must stay valid for at least five years from when the card was purchased or money was last loaded onto it. All fees must be listed and no inactivity or service fees can be charged if the card has been used within the past 12 months. If you're buying an "experience" card (like a spa treatment, flight or hotel stay), buy one with a specific dollar value so you can benefit from these consumer protections. Even though there are more fee limitations, watch out for hidden fees; there is no cap on the monthly fee after 12 months of inactivity. Visit [federalreserve.gov](http://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerinfo/wyntk_giftcards.htm) (link to: http://www.federalreserve.gov/consumerinfo/wyntk_giftcards.htm) for the latest information on gift card rules.
- **Know your rights about layaway.** A "layaway plan" is a payment plan that requires at least four payments for an item that costs more than \$50. The written layaway plan must include a full description of the item, total cost of item, tax and any additional charges like delivery, cancellation plan use, duration of the plan, payment schedule, any late charges or penalties for missed payments, the store's refund policy, and where and when merchandise will be held for the consumer, including whether it has been removed from inventory.
- **Be on alert for holiday scams.** It's a busy time of year and unfortunately some people try to take advantage of people and their generosity. Shop at stores you

know, research charities before you donate, protect your personal information and be wary of suspicious calls and emails.

- **Shop local and don't buy counterfeit or "pirated" goods.** Support New York City's local economy by shopping at local retail stores and not buying counterfeit and pirated goods, which are illegal and jeopardize local jobs.
- **Get a delivery date.** Secure a delivery date in writing before you leave a store. If retailers don't specify a "ship by" date for your online purchase, they must ship within 30 days.
- **Check for recalls.** To check if a gift or toy has been recalled, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission at [cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov) (link to: <http://www.cpsc.gov/>) and click on the recall section.
- **File a complaint if you've had a problem the business won't resolve.** File a complaint with DCA at [nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers) (link to: <http://www.nyc.gov/consumers>) or by contacting 311. DCA mediators will help. You can file your complaint in multiple languages.

About the Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership

The Flatiron/23rd Street Partnership Business Improvement District, formed in 2006, is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enhance the area's reputation as one of New York's most vital and exciting neighborhoods. This is accomplished by maintaining a clean and safe environment for the district's businesses, residents and visitors; by spearheading area improvement projects; and by marketing the diverse business and retail options in this vibrant and historic neighborhood.

Learn more at:

Web: www.FlatironDistrict.nyc (link to: <http://www.flatirondistrict.nyc/>)

Email: info@flatironbid.org

Facebook: [FlatironDistrict.nyc/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/FlatironDistrict.nyc/)

Twitter & Instagram: @FlatironNY

About DCA

The Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) licenses, inspects, and educates businesses, mediates complaints, educates consumers, and offers free financial counseling and safe banking products. DCA enforces the Consumer Protection Law, the Paid Sick Leave Law and other related business laws throughout New York City and licenses nearly 80,000 businesses in 55 different industries. Through targeted outreach, partnerships with community and trade organizations, and informational materials, DCA educates consumers and businesses alike about their rights and responsibilities. DCA's Office of Financial Empowerment assists low-income New Yorkers with innovative programs and services to increase access to high-quality, low-cost financial education and counseling, safe and affordable mainstream banking, and access to income-boosting tax credits and savings. For more information, call 311 or visit DCA online at [nyc.gov/consumers](http://www.nyc.gov/consumers) (link to: <http://www.nyc.gov/consumers>) or on its social media sites, [Twitter](http://www.twitter.com/nycdca) (link to: <http://www.twitter.com/nycdca>), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/nycdca) (link to: <http://www.facebook.com/nycdca>), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/nycdca) (link to:

<http://www.instagram.com/nycdca>), and [YouTube](http://www.youtube.com/nycdca) (link to: <http://www.youtube.com/nycdca>).