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OPINION

Aiding NYC's seniors this month and every month: Highlighting the Adams administration's Cabinet for Older New Yorkers

By Eric Adams and Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
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New York City has been recognized across the globe for giving residents the supports and programs they need to age in place. By 2040, however, there will be more older adults living in the five boroughs than school-aged children. With May marking [Older Americans Month](#), we recognize the countless contributions older New Yorkers make to our communities. As we continue to visit staff and participants at our 300-plus older adult centers, we are looking to build on our work and know there is much more to be done to ensure we remain an age-inclusive city.

[The Cabinet for Older New Yorkers](#) was created to help prepare us for the future and promote efficiency across agencies, leveraging their resources and expertise. Comprised of more than 20 agencies, this Cabinet focuses on a variety of critical

matters including public safety, transportation, housing, health, and more.

Together, this Cabinet is working to improve and expand the opportunities older adults already have, while also taking steps to reduce ageism.



Aida Banks, 73, celebrating her husband's 100th birthday during the Carter Burden Network's annual Christmas Party at the Carter Burden/Leonard Covello Senior Center at 312 East 109th Street in East Harlem, Manhattan, New York, Friday, December 21, 2018. (Shawn Inglima/for New York Daily News)

For decades, the older adult workforce programs at the Department for the Aging have created more intergenerational teams in offices, allowing them to benefit from each other's knowledge and experience. These programs also allow for older workers to continue contributing to their communities, while providing them an opportunity to earn extra income.

The recently launched Silver Stars program allows retired city employees to work part-time while continuing to collect their pension. Once working, these individuals can help train the next generation of the city's workforce. Since we began this program, the number of agencies hiring Silver Stars has grown from five to 17 and we expect it to continue to grow.

And we're building on the success of Silver Stars with Silver Corps. Funded by AmeriCorps Seniors, New York is just one of two municipalities in the country currently piloting this workforce program. After completing workshops, participants serve in a volunteer community assignment with either a nonprofit or government organization and have the opportunity to receive subsidized training and credentialing in digital and financial literacy, job readiness and career exploration, with the goal of gaining long-term employment.

Through the work of the Cabinet, we are also taking steps to educate the next generation of New Yorkers about ageism. The Department for the Aging and Department of Education have introduced a pilot program in 13 Brooklyn high schools to teach students about ageism. If our students can understand ageism, they won't subscribe to stereotypes others have about older adults and can help to stop it when they see it as they mature and participate in our society.

To further the progress we've made, the Department of Youth and Community Development recently launched "My NY Story." This intergenerational initiative, currently available at 10 New York City Housing Authority developments, brings together youth and older adults to share their stories and experiences, strengthening community connections. And to promote better health practices, community health workers and frontline professionals from NYC Health + Hospitals, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit, are attending trainings to ensure older residents know about the resources available to help them age in place and maintain their wellness. They include tai chi and chair exercises, and screenings for high blood pressure that are available at older adult centers.



Left to right; Maria Ayala, 80, Carmen Alaeo, 62, Marisa Revera, 61, and Anna Adorno, 62, singing and dancing to Christmas music in celebration Carlos Banks' 100th birthday during the Carter Burden Network's annual Christmas Party at the Carter Burden/Leonard Covello Senior Center at 312 East 109th Street in East Harlem, Manhattan, New York, Friday, December 21, 2018. (Shawn Inghima/for New York Daily News)

To make our streets safer, the Department of Transportation is working with 10 older adult centers in communities where older residents have been injured, or worse, crossing the street. Walking tours have been conducted in these areas to see what traffic calming measures can be used to reduce these incidences. This will not just help older residents though, it is also for the parent pushing their child's stroller, or any New Yorker needing support while walking, so they feel safe going to their destinations.

So older New Yorkers afford to stay in their communities, earlier this year the Mayor's Public Engagement Unit and Department of Finance visited older adult centers to help members apply for the Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption (SCRIE) and Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE). Once enrolled, these residents' housing costs will not increase. The visits were conducted in communities where we knew residents would likely qualify for these exemptions,

and would be able to fill out the necessary forms and have their questions answered right on the spot.

When age-inclusive policies and programs are the norm, all New Yorkers benefit — no matter their age, race or background. As the Cabinet continues its work and we expand the opportunities that are available, we are getting things done for those living here today and in the future.

Adams is mayor of New York. Cortés-Vázquez is commissioner of the Department for the Aging.

