

Older New Yorkers Keep the City Running



The month of May is great for many reasons. The weather gets warmer, baseball season is in full swing, and outdoor establishments are open for opportunities to enjoy time with our family and friends. But it is also Older Americans Month and Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, giving us the opportunity to remember where we came from and honor those who helped create the communities we enjoy living in today.

For AAPI Heritage Month, the Department was proud to host a Diversity and Workforce panel discussion at the National Museum of the American Indian, with keynote speaker, Vice President, Diversity Equity & Inclusion, Asian American & Pacific Islander Audience Strategy at AARP, Daphne Kwok.

To celebrate Older Americans Month, older adult centers are hosting events to show appreciation for these individuals, and this year's Older Adult Month theme is "Age My Way," which highlights residents who continue to be involved in their communities while aging with dignity. It goes hand in hand with the Department for the Aging's efforts promoting the many contributions older New Yorkers provide and to remind younger generations about ageism, and the stereotypes they may not even realize they have. The Ageless New York campaign used LinkNYC booths, digital advertisements, bus shelter posters and subway advertisements - reaching millions of residents - telling stories of older New Yorkers who are as active as they ever were, and challenging their thoughts on who they are.

Ageless New York is in stark contrast to how older adults are usually portrayed in the media, where studies have shown they are placed in a negative light. Ageism is also still prevalent in the workforce as well. In 2020, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported that there were over 14,000 claims of age discrimination, showing how important this campaign was needed.

Those of us in the aging services of course already know about the work older men and women do to support businesses and communities. For 50 years at the Department, our Older Adult Employment Program has placed individuals in nonprofit organizations across the city to support them in their missions. This year there are around 250 residents working in these offices, having a direct impact on their work.

On top of that, about 300 older adults are currently participating in our Foster Grandparent Program. Also active for five decades, this intergenerational program has given an opportunity for older adults to serve as mentors, tutors, or give emotional support to youth with special needs. They work in libraries, schools or other public places, all environments that help set up these youth for success.

By 2040, one out of every five New Yorkers is projected to be over the age of 60, and opportunities such as employment and intergenerational programs help create the inclusive city, allowing residents to age the way they wish.

So as you participate in Older Americans Month and AAPI Heritage Month events, remember that it is important to allow residents to age the way they want, active and with dignity, and these residents continue to do their part to keep our city running.



By Commissioner
Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez