

The Boundless Influence of Older Adults



Mayor Eric Adams speaks at Gracie Mansion celebrating Older Americans Month, and the work of the Cabinet for Older New Yorkers

As Older Americans Month (OAM) comes to a close, right now is a great opportunity to reflect on the many contributions of older adults on our communities, at various levels of government, and across sectors and industries. This year was appropriately themed “Aging Unbound,” which underscored the limitless potential and influence of older adults here in the city and across the country.

Locally, we kicked off the month’s festivities on May 1st with an Op-Ed that Mayor Adams and I co-authored about the many great works of the NYC Cabinet for Older New Yorkers, which is accelerating the ways the city is becoming more age inclusive. There is no doubt the Cabinet is influencing the areas where other agencies have their focus, but have an effect on older adults. It has already increased the number of intergenerational programs through the Department of Education and Department of Youth and Community Development; front line health workers at Health & Hospitals and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene are participating in trainings to learn about the resources for older adults at our agency and others so they can be connected to them; and we are making it safer for older pedestrians to navigate the City streets by teaming up with the Department of Transportation to conduct walkability audits in and around older adult centers.

Nationally, President Biden also honored older adults through a proclamation stating older adults “whose lifetimes of hard work, devotion to family, and commitment to community have laid the foundation for the country we are today.” The President also recommitted to defending and preserving Social Security and Medicare, recognizing them as vital lifelines for the millions of older adults who contributed to our economy.

Older adults are also influencing the marketplace. Hasbro, one of the nation’s leading toy and game manufacturers, for example, recently announced that some of their most iconic board games would be retooled to be more age-friendly. Classic and beloved board games like Scrabble, Trivial Pursuit, and The Game of Life are being reimagined to make “the play experience

more appealing and easier” for older adults. The updated versions of these games, which will be released this summer, are also meant “to encourage intergenerational play among families and friends.”

While we celebrate the ongoing contributions of older adults, we must also not lose sight of their needs. From accessing community-based care, to addressing food insecurity and digital literacy, our commitment to supporting the challenges faced by older adults must remain steadfast. The Forbes Health Advisory Board recently issued a report concerning the causes and effects of loneliness, which older adults experience more frequently as a result of living alone, medical or physical limitations, or declining community interaction. In turn, these can cause serious health implications, including cognitive decline, depression, or heart disease. Finding hobbies, volunteering, regularly exercising are only a few recommendations to cope with and prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation.

While Older Americans Month is our annual reminder to celebrate these individuals — who are as diverse and dynamic as their contributions to our society — our advocacy and support of their needs must continue all year long.



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