

# The Benefits of Art for Older New Yorkers

This month not only marks the start of a new decade but also International Creativity Month. For older adults, the benefits of engaging in art are essential to healthy aging. Through free and stimulating programming, the New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) strives to make art accessible to older New Yorkers.

Art programs offered at hundreds of senior centers throughout the five boroughs include classes on painting, pottery, poetry and writing workshops, and more. Many older New Yorkers find that art becomes a celebrated passion in their silver years.

Researchers from the National Institute on Aging believe that flexing the creative muscles as we age can lead to overall improved health and well-being. Through participating in group art classes, senior center



members can avoid social isolation and increase their quality-of-life.

SU-CASA is a community arts engagement program that pairs artists with senior centers and naturally occurring retirement communities, often called NORCS. Last year, through a partnership with the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, over 7,000 older adults participated in SU-CASA programs at 229 different locations. SU-CASA artists are selected each year and bring unique and individual artistic expression to their programs.

Art can also be essential to older adults with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias. Through Social Adult Day Services (SADS) that serve functionally impaired older adults, group art classes are often built into programming, which engages participants to help maintain and enhance their socialization skills.

As we continue to explore the connection between healthy aging and art, we encourage older New Yorkers to let their creative juices flow, especially during International Creativity Month. There is no better place to celebrate creativity than in New York City, a mecca of art and culture.

To find free art classes offered at your local senior center, visit our website at [www.nyc.gov/aging](http://www.nyc.gov/aging) or call 311 and ask for "senior centers."



**Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez** is Commissioner of the New York City Department for the Aging. Prior to joining the de Blasio administration, she served in executive leadership roles with AARP, EmblemHealth and other organizations. She also served as New York's first Latina Secretary of State.