

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL, NYC DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, AND NYC DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING ANNOUNCE “SU-CASA,” EXPANDED CREATIVE AGING PROGRAM FOR OLDER NEW YORKERS

Over \$1 Million in City Council Funding – Making it the Largest Community-Based Creative Aging Program in the U.S. - Will Support 102 Arts Partner Residencies at Senior Centers in All Five Boroughs

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New York – The New York City Council, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, and NYC Department for the Aging announced over \$1 million in new funding to expand creative aging programs to more than 100 senior centers in New York City. "SU-CASA" is a community arts engagement program that will place artists and arts organizations in residence at senior centers to provide participatory programming for older adults across the five boroughs.

“New York is the creative capital of the world, and with the Council’s generous funding, the Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of the Aging will expand the City’s creative aging programs so that New Yorkers from all walks of life can express themselves and learn about the arts,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“The Council is proud to support programs that support both seniors and the arts in New York City,” said **Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**. “SU-CASA will provide enriching programming for seniors as well as new opportunities for local artists. I’d like to thank Cultural Affairs Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, Aging Chair Margaret Chin, and all my colleagues in the Council for their commitment to this program.”

“The new SU-CASA Initiative that I introduced will bring many of our city’s finest cultural artists and groups into a number of our senior centers. By coordinating arts programs to service our senior adults, participants will benefit from a myriad of wonderful engaging activities which may include art, music, dance or crafts,” stated **Council Member Alan Maisel**.

“This increased funding means that we can expand our creative aging program model to provide access to meaningful arts programming for more older New Yorkers across the city, while supporting the artists and organizations that contribute so much to the vibrancy and creative energy of our communities,” said **DCLA Acting Commissioner Edwin Torres**. “We are grateful to the Council for their visionary commitment to this terrific program, and we look forward to working with our partners in the local arts councils, at DFTA, and in senior centers to engage an even greater number of artist and residents through SU-CASA.”

“The New York City Department for the Aging would like to thank the New York City Council for its generous funding of SU CASA,” said **DFTA Commissioner Donna Corrado**. “We’re hoping that SU CASA, an expansion of our very successful SPARC program, that places artists in six-month residencies at senior centers throughout the five boroughs, will be yet another opportunity for older New Yorkers to engage in creative endeavors that have been helpful in promoting good health, camaraderie, and general well-being.”

"Seniors represent the fastest growing population group in our city, and we must do all we can to meet the increasing demand for vital services. By expanding the funding for senior arts programs like SU-CASA, we are engendering and sustaining the creative energy of elder New Yorkers who have so much to contribute to the cultural vibrancy of our city," said **Council Member Margaret Chin**. "As chair of the Council's Committee on Aging, I am proud to join my colleagues in government and advocates in support of this important program for our seniors' mental, physical and spiritual well-being."

Participating senior centers will have an artist or arts organization in residence from January through June 2016 that will engage seniors with programming from a variety of creative fields. Projects may be in any artistic discipline – from theater, photography, and music to visual arts, storytelling, and more – and each residency will culminate with public programs or performances that will invite the community to visit the center and see the seniors' work.

This new funding represents a major expansion of the Seniors Partnering with Artists Citywide (SPARC) program model, which DCLA and DFTA developed and operated in partnership with the city's five local arts councils since 2012. For the 2016 SU-CASA program, the City will support two residencies in each of the city's 51 City Council districts, for a total of 102. With senior centers in every City Council district participating, SU-CASA is guaranteed a wide reach in the city's older population, and increased access to arts programming for residents across the city.

"I am deeply appreciative of the vision and commitment of the NY City Council to enriching the lives of our elder citizens with art," said **Queens Council on the Arts Director Hoong Yee Lee Krakauer**. "We have collaborated with DCLA and DFTA on creative aging programs for several years, so we have seen first-hand the amazing impact of this program and the creative opportunities that it provides our communities' elders."

Residencies will continue to be administered by DCLA and DFTA in partnership with local arts councils in each borough. Resident artists and nonprofit cultural organizations will be selected through a competitive application and panel review process. The call for applications from arts partners was launched on November 2 and submissions are due November 30. An application seminar for organizations will be held at DCLA; application seminars for individual artists will be held by the local arts council in each borough. Visit www.nyc.gov/culture for full eligibility requirements, application instructions, and seminar details.

SPARC originated as part of the City's Age-Friendly NYC initiative, a partnership between the Mayor's Office, City Council, and New York Academy of Medicine, which promotes programs and initiatives to improve New York's livability for older residents. Recent research suggests

“there are a variety of benefits for health and functioning from participatory creative and performing arts programs for older adults”. Benefits include “positive effects on general health, medication use, and the occurrence of falls” as well as positive effects “on age-related cognitive functioning, improvement in balance, decrease in anxiety and hostility, decrease in depression, increase in mastery, and increase in well-being,” according to the *Journal of Aging, Humanities, and the Arts*. SU-CASA is a crucial link between older New Yorkers and these benefits and opportunities for lifelong learning. There are over 1 million people aged 65 and older currently living in New York City, a number that is expected to grow as life expectancy continues to increase. SU-CASA will expand on the City’s commitment to improving quality of life and expanding access to cultural programming for all New Yorkers.

“SU-CASA is a huge win-win not only for the older population and the arts community of New York City but for the entire nation,” said **Executive Director of the National Center for Creative Aging Gay Hanna, PhD MFA**. “The National Center for Creative Aging has been pointing to the SPARC program and Age Friendly NYC for almost a decade as a model creative aging program and we have watched other Age Friendly communities work towards establishing similar models. Now, we can all celebrate another visionary leap forward in leveraging community resources through innovative partnerships to give more ways for more generations to flourish together through the arts!”

Past artist residencies supported by the City in SPARC have engaged senior participants with a great variety of diverse projects and experiences, from salsa dancing in the Bronx; mosaic work in Manhattan; a ukulele orchestra in Brooklyn; stop motion animation in Queens; and drawing in Staten Island. In addition to benefitting the artists and participants, the artist residencies also revitalize the spaces where they take place, in some case cases beautifying the senior centers with temporary or permanent art installations, and always welcoming the community to the vibrant neighborhood assets that senior centers represent.

“This commitment to the creative life of seniors is an example of how the city is utilizing the arts to enrich quality of life as science continues to find ways to extend life,” said **Naomi Goldberg Hass, Artistic Director of Dances for a Variable Population and former SPARC artist**.

“Like the SPARC program, which myself and my company Dances for A Variable Population were so proud to be a part of, the new SU-CASA initiative will reach a large population of underserved older adults and connect them with artists. It's thrilling to share this mission which is at the core of our company's work!”

"Following 4 years of SPARC residencies, we learned that creating art in a group setting transcends so many differences among people, especially language," said **Fay Chew Matsuda, director of the Hamilton Madison House City Hall Senior Center**. "Seniors at City Hall Senior Center made new friends, creating art together with other seniors outside of their usual social group. Coming together around a group photo collage or helping each other finish their found-object wearable art made them laugh and appreciate each other's artistic sensibilities. We applaud the City for continuing to bring this wonderful program connecting local artists to our older residents."

Each SU-CASA residency will be supported by \$10,000, which will go to supplies, compensation for the artists, administrative costs for the senior centers, and more. SU-CASA artists and arts organizations will also have access to free supplies provided by Materials for the Arts, the city's premiere creative reuse facility managed by the Department of Cultural Affairs and located in Long Island City, Queens.

For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/culture.