



**Department for  
the Aging**

Lilliam Barrios-Paoli Commissioner

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

**Jon Minners**

**(212) 442-1092**

**[jminners@aging.nyc.gov](mailto:jminners@aging.nyc.gov)**

## **Exergamers NYC: Senior Centers connect online for first-ever Xbox Bowling Competition**

*Seniors score a strike with NYC's first-ever virtual bowling match!*

**NEW YORK, NY (October 24, 2013)**—In a public/private partnership that builds upon the past success of New York City's first Virtual Senior Center, created in 2010, the Department for the Aging (DFTA) and the Department of Information Technology & Telecommunications (DoITT) teamed up again today with Microsoft to launch the very first Kinect for Xbox virtual bowling match. The interactive competition will take place between two of DFTA's Innovative Senior Centers (ISC) – The SAGE Center, the first LGBT senior center in the city, and Selfhelp, the city's first virtual senior center. A third ISC – VISIONS, the City's first Innovative Senior Center for blind and visually-impaired seniors, will also host an exhibition of its Kinect program.

“Technology is rapidly changing the way we perform even the most routine activities and it is important that we promote digital inclusion,” said NYC Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli. “We must make sure our seniors are actively engaged with technology, whether it is social media, a discussion with family over Skype, or through an email with a loved one. When we can have our seniors not only embrace technology, but also have it benefit their physical wellbeing, it's a win-win for everyone involved.”

“‘Exergamers NYC’ is a shining example of how the City can use its public-private technology partnerships to help New Yorkers – in this case our seniors – connect with innovative solutions to improve their quality of life,” said DoITT Citywide Chief Information and Innovation Officer Rahul N. Merchant. “The Bloomberg Administration is committed to using technology to better serve New Yorkers. Through this program we are collectively providing more opportunities for seniors to engage with readily available technology to boost activity, social interaction, and overall wellbeing.”

“At Microsoft, we believe that technology has the power to transform the lives of people of all ages and abilities,” says Bonnie Kearney, director of Trustworthy Computing Communications for Accessibility and Aging at Microsoft. “With each of our public-private partnerships, such as Exergamers NYC, we use technology in unexpected and non-traditional ways to help promote and facilitate wellness, social interaction, and active lifestyles. The positive response we’ve received from both participants and partners inspires us to continue to uncover additional ways to improve the lives of older adults.”

To promote a more active and social lifestyle for NYC seniors, the City worked with Microsoft to create “Exergamers NYC,” a program that utilizes Kinect for Xbox to allow its participants, including blind and low vision seniors, to join in on the fun. Exergaming creates an immersive experience for seniors, right down to the cheering crowds, as participants bowl on virtual lanes, compete in boxing matches, swing for the fences on the baseball diamond and even enjoy a Zumba dance competition, among other interactive experiences. Online capabilities provide opportunities for senior centers from all five boroughs to compete against one another on the Xbox and then discuss and celebrate their achievements together over Skype.

As part of this initiative, seniors have been practicing with one another online over the previous few weeks in preparation for the launch event at both The SAGE Center (305 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor) and the Selfhelp Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Senior Center (45-25 Kissena Blvd.). In addition, seniors at the VISIONS Selis Manor Senior Center (135 West 23<sup>rd</sup> Street) have been preparing their own demonstration of the various Kinect for Xbox games they have been playing over the last month. Representatives from all three senior centers have witnessed firsthand the impact the technology has had on those involved.

“At Selfhelp we've seen high spirited Xbox virtual bowling transcend age, cultural and ethnic differences,” explains Leo Asen, Chief Innovation Officer, Selfhelp Community Services. “And while the players love to win, there's no denying that they greatly respect and admire their competitors. There's a true sense of camaraderie and self esteem that complements the fitness benefits of these tournaments.”

"The Xbox has created new friendships among our members," said Sarah Savino, program manager at The SAGE Center. "People that may not normally sit with each other at dinner now do, because they come to play and support each other on the Xbox every week. It has certainly been a crucial addition to the Center's resources.”

The latest technological breakthrough between Microsoft, New York City and its senior centers follows up on previous success in 2010 with the launch of the first Virtual Senior Center. The Virtual Senior Center demonstration project links homebound seniors to Selfhelp’s Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Senior Center. Each participating seniors’ home is equipped with a

desktop computer running Windows software, as well as a touch-screen monitor, a small video camera, a microphone and broadband Internet service. For more information on the City's commitment to connecting seniors with technology, go to [www.nyc.gov/aging](http://www.nyc.gov/aging).

–30–

### **About the NYC Department for the Aging (DFTA)**

DFTA is a local government agency and the largest Area Agency on Aging in the United States. DFTA administers and promotes the development and provision of accessible services for older persons and serves as an advocate on legislation and policy issues. The Department's mission is to work for the empowerment, independence, dignity and quality-of-life of New York City's diverse older adults and for the support of their families through advocacy, education, and the coordination and development of services.

### **About the NYC Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT)**

DoITT is the City's technology leader and information technology utility, providing innovative and efficient infrastructure and services to New York City. DoITT is responsible for modernizing, unlocking, and innovating IT infrastructure and service delivery in New York City government: implementing state-of-the-art information technology to improve services; making government more transparent and accountable; and employing cutting-edge tools, methods, and partnerships to empower New Yorkers.

### **About Microsoft**

Founded in 1975, Microsoft (Nasdaq "MSFT") is the worldwide leader in software, services and solutions that help people and businesses realize their full potential.

### **About The SAGE Center**

The SAGE Center is a full-time center for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) older people in New York City, providing a comprehensive array of unique services and programs related to arts and culture, fitness, food and nutrition, health and wellness, and lifelong education. It is led by Services & Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE), the country's largest and oldest organization dedicated to improving the lives of LGBT older adults.

### **About The Selfhelp Benjamin Rosenthal Prince Street Senior Center**

SelfHelp Community Services Inc.: For the past 77 years, Selfhelp Community Services, Inc., a non-profit organization, has been dedicated to enabling seniors and at-risk individuals to live in their own homes, independently and with dignity. Selfhelp provides affordable housing, home care, social services, senior centers and a range of technological advances to enhance the lives of more than 20,000 individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in the New York City area.

