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SENIOR SWIM SEASON KICKS OFF WITH POOL PARTY IN HARLEM

Age-friendly Program Expands to 14 Outdoor Pools Citywide, Offering Quiet, Relaxing Time For Older New Yorkers to Exercise and Socialize

First Deputy Commissioner for NYC Parks & Recreation Liam Kavanaugh today joined Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli, Council Member Melissa Mark-Viverito, Council Member Jessica Lappin and the Senior Vice President for Policy and Planning at The New York Academy of Medicine (NYAM) Ruth Finkelstein to announce the launch of designated Senior Swim hours at 14 public pools citywide – a citywide expansion from the original pilot program of seven pools. Senior Swim hours offer adults a stress-free, quieter time to socialize, swim, stretch, and enjoy the benefits of water in NYC Parks’ outdoor pools. The program runs from today through August 24, and is open to those over the age of 62. The Harlem Honey and Bears Swim Club, a synchronized swimming group for adults 50 and older, kicked off the Senior Swim with a synchronized performance.

“NYC Parks’ mission is to enable all New Yorkers to lead physically active lives through sports, fitness and outdoor adventure,” said Parks’ Assistant Commissioner for Public Programs, Annika Holder. “Expanding the Senior Swim program to 14 outdoor pools this summer allows us to further realize this mission. Older adults across the city can enjoy taking to the water to exercise, socialize, or simply cool off during a hot summer morning. Whether it’s swimming laps or just taking a dip, older adults now have dedicated hours and programming to enjoy NYC Parks’ outdoor pools.”

“Seniors have made New York the great city it is today, so it is only fitting that we make every effort to ensure that enjoyable public activities are available to them,” said Commissioner Barrios-Paoli. “Given the heat wave we’re experiencing, this expansion of Senior Swim to 14 pools has come at the right time. We hope that many seniors take advantage of the program and enjoy seeing friends and keeping cool!”

“Access to public swimming pools is an important part of keeping New Yorkers healthy and building a stronger sense of community. The expansion of Senior Swim to 14 pools throughout the five boroughs will allow more New York City seniors to shape up or cool down,” said Speaker Christine C. Quinn. “I want to thank Mayor Bloomberg, Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe, our Age-friendly NYC initiative partners at the New York Academy of Medicine, and my Council

colleagues for helping to ensure more New Yorkers over the age of 62 will have the chance to participate in this refreshing and fun aspect of summer in the City.”

“We are delighted that an idea coming from seniors in East Harlem as part of the Age-friendly NYC initiative is spreading city-wide, thanks to the leadership of Mayor Bloomberg and Parks Commissioner Adrian Benepe,” said Jo Ivey Boufford, MD, President of The New York Academy of Medicine. “Providing dedicated swim hours for older adults is one of several creative and low-cost efforts to make New York an age-friendly city by providing older adults with more opportunities to exercise and increase social engagement in their communities, both of which are critical to active and healthy living.”

“I am always proud when our community of El Barrio/East Harlem can serve as a laboratory for successful, innovative initiatives like this one,” said Council Member Mark-Viverito. “We were the first to launch an Age Improvement District with the New York Academy of Medicine and the first to offer dedicated hours at our public pool for seniors. It is truly wonderful to see these senior pool hours being offered across the five boroughs this year. I thank Commissioner Benepe and the Parks Department for expanding this program citywide, as well as all of our local partners who are helping to make our community a healthier and more livable place to grow old.”

The event is part of Age Friendly NYC, New York City’s plan to sustain and enhance its age-friendliness for its growing population of seniors, led by the Office of the Mayor, the New York City Council, and NYAM. Age Friendly NYC is a series of 59 initiatives aimed at making New York a more livable City for its growing senior population. Age Friendly NYC has several neighborhood-level projects aiming to make improvements for older adults called Aging Improvement Districts.

As part of Age-friendly New York City, NYC Parks has launched a “senior portal” on the Agency’s website, making it easier for older adults to find the activities, events and facilities that interest them. Membership to a Parks Recreation Center costs only \$25 a year for seniors 62+ to join. Many centers offer dedicated hours for senior activities. In addition, Walk NYC is a free fitness walking program that takes place in parks across the city. Although the program is open to all ages, the instructor will modify the pace and activity level for walkers, making it a great way for people of all abilities to get fit.

For more information on Senior Swim, please visit www.nyc.gov/parks.