

Transcript: Mayor Eric Adams Delivers Remarks and Distributes Tablets to Senior Citizens to Close out AAPI Heritage Month and Older Americans Month

May 27, 2022

Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez: Thank you. Thank you, Stewart. First of all, good morning to everyone. And I know that you want to hear the mayor, but before you hear the mayor, I need to let you know how proud we are of this program and the importance of this program. And I also want to emphasize something that the mayor talks about, no one does this alone, we have to do it in collaboration. And it's about partnerships and relationships that have been built and sustained over the years. It took one phone call about two and a half weeks ago between Stuart and I to make this happen. Once the mayor gave us the date and the go ahead, it's about partnership.

Mayor Eric Adams: That's right.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: And it is... exactly. And Stuart said, "We'll get this done." And here we are today. So thank you for that, Selfhelp. I also wanted to say that it was great and for the rest of the day there's going to be a lot of celebration and cultural expression for the AAPI community, stay and enjoy it. It is something when we get to know about each other, we get to bridge bridges and we eliminate all of the misinformation and the disconnect that are in our city. That is just as important to all of us.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: I also want to, in addition to Stewart, I want to thank Jane. We put a team of DFTA [inaudible] all over her, as she came through and has been very helpful. Thank you so much, Jane. But also Jane, thank you for everything that you do every day in this older adult club. Selfhelp established virtual programming in 2010, well before the pandemic, Stuart you know that, you were a leader, you were a pioneer. So much so that it was your work that helped form DFTA, roll out a virtual

program during the pandemic, because we knew that was important to not only break social isolation, but more importantly, it was important to make sure that people get connected for the rest of their lives.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: A computer in a center is great. Computer in my hands gives me independence and choices. That makes a difference. So tens of thousands of New Yorkers have now used virtual programming in the last two years. Older adult clubs were closed, but they had a connection. You led the way, thank you for that. And he's always telling me, "We have to do more. And your library is the best library." We're getting there. All right. For years, this has been a dream to get people more and more independence, so that they can make the choices in their life. And that is why we have a community care plan. We distributed 10,000 tablets in NYCHA residences, and now we've done 20,000 with the mayor. Thank you so much for this kind of help. We plan to build on the success and I also want to really, part of this is partnerships like the one we have with T-Mobile, that gives us free internet until the duration of this program.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: So I want to thank T-Mobile. But I also... Yeah, give them a hand. But I also want to thank our congressional leadership and our state leadership for constantly fighting so that we could have accessible and affordable internet access. That is the lifeline for these programs. We need to make sure that happens. And we're very pleased that the city CTO has a plan for NYCHA facilities, we are talking to him about having it for senior affordable housing too. So I want to really thank you for that, mayor. This is all part of the Five Year Strategic Community Care plan. A plan that the mayor has already begun investing in and we can't thank you enough. Now, the mayor always at every major and momentous occasion so far, I am proud to be part of his team, not only because of his leadership and his collaboration and not because as he said, "We go further back than these chairs."

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: I don't even remember the expression, but he's just showing me how old I am. But more because he always pays tribute to his mother, who he calls mommy. So Mr. Mayor, you have 1.6 million mommies in New York that count on you every day to make sure that they have nutritious meals, home care services, tablets, internet access, safety in the streets. That is why we're working with the Police Department and every one of these agencies to make sure that this is the best and the model age inclusive city in the world. So here you are, Mr. Mayor, it's yours, for you and all the mommies. Thank you.

Mayor Adams: And leadership starts with the right leader or movement starts with the right leader. And just an amazing friend and public service and Lorraine is correct. We go so far back, I say, we go as far back as car seats. And she just throughout her years of government and this very important role of taking care of our seniors mean so much to me. And we tend to believe that once a person retires or once a person decides to go to another form of living that they don't still enjoy all the fullness of life and that is just untrue. Our seniors, they want the same things that children want and what we want as we move towards our senior hood. And so I just thank you. And I thank DFTA and all the partners and I thank Selfhelp.

Mayor Adams: This is some good stuff. We're going to chat after because there's some good stuff what they're doing of empowerment. People don't realize one of the top concerns that health professionals are examining is loneliness, social isolation. It feeds into some of the pre-determinants of health. Being able to interact either online or inside a center means so much. It's more than just talking to people. It is really part of the overall health and that is what we understand. And I remember the first time I bought my mother an iPad, she was afraid to use it, she was overwhelmed, but I showed her how to look up her Bible scriptures and she started using it more. Then all of a sudden I showed her how to use an email and she started emailing me every day of what my chores were.

Mayor Adams: So it was all about that introduction, but we could do none of this without partnerships. Partnerships are so important and we have a few electives here that are just fighting on behalf of their constituents, Grace Meng, our congresswoman, what Grace has done for us and the New York delegation during COVID, bring the resources in, I'm just blown away how you were able to pull, pull it off, get all this stuff for us here in New York. And so we just need to really thank Grace and the entire congressional delegation from New York. And who works harder than Ron? Ron, you better not be on his wrong side. Ron fights on behalf of his constituents and we just thank him for that. Sandra Ung who's now the Council member of district 20, just excited and getting things done. And our good Assembly women up in Albany fighting on our behalf from the 25th Assembly district, Nily Rozic. Nily, thank you so much.

Mayor Adams: So we want to get to giving out the tablets. As you know, this month is older Americans month and Asian American and Pacific Islanders month. We were proud yesterday when we rolled out the first AAPI curriculum that we are going to be putting in our schools to teach history and the input of the AAPI community. And so it's great to be here, and we are on moral grounds, solid grounds, of doing what's right for

our older adults. All the years of wisdom, you do not lose your wisdom because you hit 80, 90, 100. That wisdom is still there. We're going to tap into that wisdom with our intergenerational experiences, having our old adults mentor some of our young people as they go through some challenging times in their lives. COVID has brought so much of our mental health illnesses, trauma, stress.

Mayor Adams: And if we know that if anyone knows how to overcome trauma and stress, it's our older adults, because they've gone through so many difficult moments and we could help with that intergenerational communication, particularly as our children are coming out of school over the summer months. And so we want to be clear, we value and respect our older New Yorkers and the AAPI community. We want to thank our partners with AARP, I'm a member, I'm a member and we want to ensure that we continue to build these partnerships. And we saw throughout the pandemic, how government digital services matter, everything from staying updated on what is happening. As we move into hurricane season, being able to communicate through digital platforms, telemedicine, being able to check in with your healthcare professionals. This is the way of the future.

Mayor Adams: So by giving out these 1,000 iPads a day, we're going to start to put 1,000 more seniors in contact with communicating, even if they're home, or if they're in a social setting. And the commissioner, giving out 10,000, amazing number, just an amazing number of 10,000 iPads, giving out. And age should not stand in the way of being in contact with the people you love, or you want to communicate with. Or as was indicated by the commissioner, attending online, social and educational programs. Having these programs online, how to sign up for these benefits is crucial and that's why this is so empowering, what we're doing. And you mentioned, commissioner, I too want to take my hat off to T-Mobile who's providing free internet service through December 31st, so important to do so. Thank them for that. And these tablets are already preloaded with programs like Zoom, Gmail, and the New York City COVID Safe App.

Mayor Adams: They're already on these devices and it's just a real win for all of us. So you can learn how to use your tablet at your local senior center and we want to empower seniors to teach seniors. It's a great way of getting everyone engaged. I campaigned on this, transforming our technology, not only to reach certain parts of the city, but to reach the entire city and we're leaving no one behind, particularly our senior population. And so I cannot thank all of you enough for coming together and understanding that our age should never get in the way of ensuring we continue to live

very vibrant, healthy, communicative, and interaction with each other on every level of our lives. Thank you so much for doing this today.

Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: I wanted to say that we are going to also upload the virtual senior center onto today's tablets after today. Selfhelp is going to give that to each one of the tablet holders. So thank you so much. Mr. Mayor.

[Crosstalk]

Mayor Adams: Yeah. So we're going to start with you Sandra, Ron and just go down the line. Just say a few words. Our colleagues in government. Okay. Well actually let's start with our congresswoman, because we got to keep getting resources from D.C.

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Commissioner Cortés-Vázquez: Thank you.

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Mayor Adams: Thank you.

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