

DFTA, Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC Honor Friendly Visiting Volunteers

Friendly Visiting Program has provided nearly 28,000 hours of service to homebound older adults in the past 12 months

NEW YORK (July 25, 2019) – The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA), Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC, nonprofit Services Now for Adult Persons, and nonprofit Citymeals held a recognition reception for Friendly Visiting Program volunteers who visit isolated older adults in Queens.

Homebound older adults are often at risk of profound social isolation and loneliness, which can lead to mental and physical health challenges. The Friendly Visiting Program, one of two initiatives that DFTA operates in partnership with ThriveNYC, matches well-trained volunteers with older adults for in-home visits that can lead to lasting friendships and offer intergenerational exchange. The program aims to improve the overall quality of life for older New Yorkers.



Leadership from the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC, Services Now for Adult Persons and DFTA celebrate volunteers (photo: Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC)

Volunteers provided nearly 28,000 hours of visits over the past 12 months, and there have been more than 43,000 visits since the program launched in January 2017.

"It brings me great satisfaction to know I am helping someone achieve their goals. I've been visiting Flora once a week for two years. Earlier in her life, she did beautiful bead work. Now, I help her make jewelry — she does the designs and I put on the clasps," said **Friendly Visiting Program volunteer Carol Hart**.

"Meeting Carol every week on Wednesday is fun, and it helps me think about new jewelry. It makes me feel very creative, and I did not have that before," said **Flora Sanilahijani, 66, who receives visits**.

Thirty-one percent of older adults participating in the Friendly Visiting Program suffer from depression and/or anxiety. Of those assessed six months after participating in the program, 56% indicated a reduction in social isolation, and 43% indicated a reduction in loneliness.

"Social isolation is a silent but dangerous epidemic that can be prevented," said **DFTA Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez**. "Through senior centers and initiatives like the Friendly Visiting Program, we are committed to helping older New Yorkers connect with their communities, neighbors, and friends in a city that has so much to offer."

"ThriveNYC is committed to innovative strategies that bring mental health support to those who have historically been underserved in new and creative ways," said **Susan Herman, Director of the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC**. "We thank our Friendly Visiting volunteers for partnering with us and for delivering tens of thousands of hours of support to aging New Yorkers in need."

"Services Now for Adult Persons is proud to be a provider in the Friendly Visiting service network. Over the years, SNAP has found that the program has not only improved seniors' quality of life, but has also enriched volunteers' lives as well," said **Paola Miceli, Chief Executive Officer and President of SNAP**.

The Friendly Visiting program is currently accepting volunteers, especially in the Bronx. Call 311 for more information about volunteering or receiving [Friendly Visiting Program](#) services.

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About the New York City Department for the Aging The New York City Department for the Aging works to eliminate ageism and ensure the dignity and quality of life of New York City's diverse 1.6 million older adults. DFTA also works to support caregivers through service, advocacy, and education. DFTA is the largest area agency on aging in the U.S.

Media contacts:
Zenovia Earle

212-602-4152

Suzanne Myklebust

212-602-4153

About the Mayor's Office of ThriveNYC The overarching aim of the new Mayoral Office of ThriveNYC is to ensure that every New Yorker who needs mental health support has access to it, where and when they need it. The Office addresses needs that have gone unmet by traditional services and pilots innovative strategies. This includes new services for historically underserved special populations, expanding the range of mental health support available to New Yorkers, and enhancing mental health equity across the city. The Office works with City agencies and strategic partners to implement Thrive's programs, maximize their effectiveness and ensure sustainability.

New Yorkers of all ages in need of mental health or substance misuse support can contact NYC Well by calling 1-888-NYC-WELL, texting "WELL" to 65173, or by visiting nyc.gov/nycwell. Free, confidential support is available any hour of the day in more than 200 languages.