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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

**GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES CREATIVE AGING INITIATIVE TO  
SUPPORT PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF OLDER NEW YORKERS  
AND COMBAT SOCIAL ISOLATION**

***Council on the Arts, Office for the Aging Launch Partnership Across Long  
Island, the Capital Region and the North Country***

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced the launch of a three-region Creative Aging Initiative to provide hands-on art-making programs that support comprehensive physical and mental health benefits for older New Yorkers and combat social isolation. Created by a new partnership of the New York State Council on the Arts and the New York State Office for the Aging, the Creative Aging Initiative takes an innovative, evidence-based approach to healthy aging, underscoring New York's leadership as the first age-friendly state in the nation.

"New York is first in the nation in implementing age-friendly policies and programs to help ensure New Yorkers of all ages have access to the services they need to lead fuller lives," **Governor Cuomo said.** "This initiative doubles down on this commitment to the health and prosperity of older adults."

Beginning as a pilot in spring 2020, the new initiative will serve up to 500 older adults at up to 12 senior centers and libraries throughout Long Island, the Capital Region and the North Country. The initiative will also create jobs for professional teaching artists, who will lead hands-on skill-building workshops in a variety of creative disciplines, building on extensive research demonstrating the role of the arts in improving health outcomes for older adults.

Among its many documented benefits, arts participation has been proven to improve cognition, coordination and mental health, reduce social isolation and lead to reduced doctors' visits and medication usage. According to the recent English Longitudinal Study of Aging, an evaluation of more than 2,100 participants, monthly engagement in cultural experiences reduces older adults' risk of developing depression by a staggering 48 percent.

### **New York State Council on the Arts Executive Director Mara**

**Manus said,** "The arts are a critical driver of the health of people and places across New York State. The Creative Aging Initiative underscores the power of the arts to create solutions that strengthen our communities by promoting a wealth of physical and mental health benefits for older adults and creating jobs that support New York's strong cultural workforce of more than 460,000. We look forward to working with NYSOFA on this vital new Initiative."

**New York State Office for the Aging Director Greg Olsen said,** "NYSOFA is excited to partner with NYSCA on this important Initiative. Access to the arts has been proven to help combat social isolation and improve both physical and mental health. Isolation often leads to serious health issues such as cognitive decline, depression and heart disease, among others - and participation in the arts provides meaningful ways for older adults to stay engaged socially, civically and psychologically in their communities. This creative aging pilot is another way that New York State, as the [first age-friendly state](#) in the nation, is continuously working to improve the health and well-being of New York State's 4.3 million older adults."

The Creative Aging Initiative's diverse programming will leverage the benefits of individual art forms, such as dance which has been proven to reduce fall risks, strengthen muscles and improve mobility, and literature programs improve vocabulary and language usage among adults with dementia.

The program will be administered by Lifetime Arts and will build on a successful 2017 New York State Council on the Arts-Monroe County Office of the Aging arts programming pilot in Rochester that delivered services in four senior centers citywide.

Founded in New York State in 2008, Lifetime Arts has designed and led several Creative Aging capacity-building initiatives in New York State along with multiple others across the U.S. serving over well over 10,000 older adults and training over 1,500 teaching artists and hundreds of librarians, aging service professionals and community arts organizations.

**Lifetime Arts Executive Director Maura O'Malley said,** "Lifetime Arts is pleased to work with this cross-sector alliance to advance Creative Aging in our home state. By implementing a proven program model that embraces older adults as learners, expands the impact of teaching artists and provides community organizations with a positive and creative approach to programming, this work will enrich the lives of older adults in New York. Importantly, it will provide a replicable model for other states as the population continues to age at a rapid rate."

### **About the New York State Council on the Arts**

The New York State Council on the Arts champions community and creativity by preserving and advancing numerous aspects of the arts and culture that make New York State an exceptional place to live, work and visit.

NYSCA upholds the right of all New Yorkers to experience the vital contributions the arts make to our communities, education, economic development and quality of life. Through its core grantmaking activity, NYSCA awarded \$51M in FY2019 to 2,400 organizations statewide through direct grants and regrants in our 15 programs, the Regional Economic Development Council initiative and the Mid-Size Capital Project Fund. NYSCA funding supports the visual, literary, media and performing arts and includes dedicated support for arts education and underserved communities. NYSCA further advances New York's creative culture by convening leaders in the field and providing organizational and professional development opportunities and informational resources.

Created by Governor Nelson Rockefeller in 1960, and continued and expanded to the present day with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, NYSCA is an agency of the Executive Branch of the New York State Government. For more information on NYSCA, please visit [www.arts.ny.gov](http://www.arts.ny.gov), and follow NYSCA's [Facebook](#) page, Twitter [@NYSCArts](#) and Instagram [@NYSCouncilontheArts](#).

### **About the New York State Office for the Aging**

The mission of the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) is to help older New Yorkers be as independent as possible for as long as possible through advocacy, development and delivery of person-centered, consumer-oriented and cost-effective policies, programs and services that support and empower older adults and their families, in partnership with the network of public and private organizations that serve them. Stay connected to the New York State Office for the Aging - download the NYSOFA mobile app for [iOS](#) or [Android](#); visit the NYSOFA [Facebook](#) page; follow [@NYSAGING](#) on Twitter; or visit [www.aging.ny.gov](http://www.aging.ny.gov).

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