NEW YORK CITY

DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING

Promoting Positive Aging

Report on 2005–2007

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A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYOR

January 2008

Dear Friends:

For the first time since World War II, New Yorkers are living longer than the average American, and by 2030 the fastest-growing segment of our population will be over 80. We are dedicated to matching this increase in longevity with improvements in the quality of life for older New Yorkers.

The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) currently serves more than 300,000 men and women, and is strengthening its capacity to meet increased service demand. The agency is also spearheading our efforts to encourage healthier, more active lifestyles. As leaders, mentors, volunteers, and loved ones, New York's seniors make vital contributions to our great City, and we are committed to helping them continue to live fulfilling lives. Considering that about one-third of Florida retirees come back to the five boroughs within a few years, it's fair to say that we're on the right track!

I am very proud of the steps we've already taken on behalf of our senior citizens, and I know that even greater achievements are on the horizon this year. This report details the extensive efforts undertaken by DFTA and its community partners as we strive to help older New Yorkers achieve the "positive aging" they deserve.

Sincerely,

Michael R. Bloomberg
Mayor

Department Overview

The mission of the New York City Department for the Aging 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 delivery of services.

The New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) serves the 1.3 million seniors of New York City as an agency of City government. DFTA is also the largest Area Agency on Aging, providing federal and state programs to older New Yorkers directly and through a network of community partners.

Among the services DFTA provides through contracts with community partners are senior center meals and activities, information and assistance, transportation, home-delivered meals, case management, home care, caregiver services, NORC (naturally occurring retirement community) services, adult day services, legal assistance and elder abuse services. To strengthen community-based service provision, DFTA consults with interagency councils and community boards, and annually conducts public hearings in all five boroughs. These hearings provide an opportunity for older persons, service providers and advocates to comment on and help shape the City's aging services system.

DFTA Outreach Van

As new needs emerge among the City's diverse older population, the Department works with other City agencies and partners across the public and private spectrum to coordinate available services and develop or catalyze new ones. DFTA is also a major voice on aging issues at the local, state and national levels, advocating for seniors' welfare and evaluating the impact of proposed legislation affecting older persons.

The Department's community presentations, conferences and publications educate the public on aging issues and demographic trends in addition to City services and resources for seniors and their families. The Department's website is a key information resource and services link. In 2006 DFTA added a web-based Newsletter to its communication services.

A participant in the White House Conference on Aging (WHCOA) in 2005, DFTA is committed to advancing WHCOA recommendations. Envisioning a comprehensive system that crosses traditional service domains, the Department has begun a collaborative process to modernize the City's aging services to better meet the diverse needs of seniors today and tomorrow. Hallmarks of the new system will be service flexibility, ease and transparency of access, and a wealth of opportunities for optimizing health and well-being.

DFTA SENIOR ADVISORY COUNCIL

DFTA's Senior Advisory Council plays a vital role in the delivery of services to seniors in New York City. Mandated by the Older Americans Act, New York State and the City Charter, the Council advises the Department and the Commissioner on DFTA's budget, Annual Plan, and new programs and initiatives.

In addition to their advisory role, Council members are DFTA's ambassadors to their communities, communicating DFTA's goals and priorities to local programs and ensuring that local concerns are communicated to the Department.

The Advisory Council is comprised of members appointed by the Mayor who also designates a member of the Council to be Chairperson. At least 16 Council members must be consumers of DFTA's services and ten must be recommended by the City Council, two from each of the five boroughs. Under the leadership of Mayor Bloomberg, Commissioner Edwin Méndez-Santiago and Chairman Philip Brickner, the Senior Advisory Council has become an effective arm and advocate for the Department, helping to set direction for the future and ensuring program and service effectiveness.

"...the Senior Advisory Coucil has become an effective arm and advocate for the Department..."

AGING IN NEW YORK FUND

The Aging in New York Fund (ANYF), the not-for-profit charitable arm of DFTA, is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life for older New Yorkers and their families. Through public/private partnerships, the Fund seeks resources to develop innovative service models that address the unmet needs of New York City's elderly, their caregivers and the network of aging services providers.

ANYF is now concluding the testing phase and beginning rollout of *It's My Money!,* an interactive financial literacy program designed to help low- and middle-income seniors make wise money decisions and protect against financial scams. ANYF plans to present *It's My Money!* in an electronic game format for team play to over 5,000 NewYork City participants in senior center programs, and subsequently to the broader senior community. By the end of 2008, game units on *Senior Scams* and *Identity Theft* will be available to the aging network in English, Spanish, Chinese and Russian.

Previous demonstration programs administered by ANYF include *Healthy Encounters,* funded by The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, which provided on-site culturally appropriate mental health education and services to senior center members, and two collaborative projects with DFTA and VISIONS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired that addressed the needs of seniors with vision impairments. The Lavelle Fund for the Blind and the New York Community Trust provided the funding for these initiatives. ANYF is also a proud co-presenter of several signature events/publications with DFTA, including *Age in Action, the Annual Mayoral Conference on Alzheimer's Disease,* and the *DFTA/ANYF Resource Journal*.

"...the Fund seeks resources to develop innovative service models..."

Helping People Age Well

During the last century, advances in medical science, technology, nutrition and sanitation added years to the average human lifespan. Now our key challenge is to help people maintain their health, vitality and independence through those added years. DFTA has made significant progress toward meeting this challenge. The Department is helping people age well through achievements in six strategic areas: promoting healthy lifestyles; maximizing independence; helping seniors meet basic needs; connecting to isolated seniors; supporting active, productive and meaningful aging; and celebrating the spirit and vitality of the City's 1.3 million elders.

1. PROMOTING HEALTHY LIFESTYLES

A wide variety of DFTA programs and initiatives promote healthy lifestyles. Both directly and through community partners, DFTA is positioning New York City as a model for the nation in promoting healthy urban aging.

Developing Evidence-Based Prevention Programs

DFTA launched a three-year research and demonstration initiative to develop and test new models of health programming in aging services in 2007. The Brookdale Center on Healthy Aging and Longevity of Hunter College and the United Hospital Fund (UHF) are assisting DFTA with this strategic task.

Brookdale is assessing the health status of seniors at different senior centers, while the United Hospital Fund is working with Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC) programs to identify health issues at different NORCs. Health promotion/chronic disease interventions will then be developed for the specific populations at each site and outcomes will be evaluated. The goal of both projects is to develop evidence-based programs that can be delivered in non-traditional settings to help prevent the onset of many chronic conditions that cause pain, disability or loss of function and impair quality of life.

The Department is also one of three Area Agencies on Aging in New York State working with the State Office for the Aging and five NORC programs on a national initiative to translate the latest research on healthy aging into practice at the local level. Two evidence-based programs developed by researchers for implementation by the national aging network are now underway at the participating NORCs. The *Chronic Disease Self Management Program* helps participants with chronic illnesses maintain optimal well-being through diet, exercise and emotional support. *The Active Choices Program* uses a 'coach' approach to encourage physical activity. Both train senior leaders on protocols that researchers found to be successful in achieving desired health outcomes.

Collaborating on Cross-System Initiatives

DFTA is forging partnerships to promote healthy aging. The newest of its cross-system initiatives is a Senior Wellness Collaboration with the Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH).

This DFTA/HHC/DOH collaboration seeks to improve health outcomes for diabetic seniors. HHC hospitals, DFTA senior centers and DOHMH community health centers are joining forces to engage older people with diabetes in various health, socialization and exercise interventions offered at the senior centers. The impact of seniors' participation on various diabetes indicators will then be measured. Future projects will target other chronic diseases.

Another HHC/DFTA collaboration involves Generations +/Northern Manhattan Health Network and more than forty local senior centers in ongoing meetings to plan and implement joint projects that improve Bronx and Manhattan seniors' knowledge about, and access to, health care and social services.

DFTA has also teamed with DOHMH and the Mental Health Association of New York City (MHANYC) on a Geriatric Depression Screening and Referral Initiative targeted to senior center members and homebound clients of DFTA case management agencies. Now in its third year, the Initiative's five components are: (1) workshops for senior center members aimed at overcoming negative stereotypes and encouraging treatment-seeking behavior when needed; (2) education of senior center and case management staff about geriatric depression; (3) administration of the PHQ-9, a screening tool for depression, either at the center or in the homes of case management clients; (4) referral of seniors who screen positive to evaluation and treatment services; (5) detailing of primary care practitioners on depression diagnosis and treatment. **This model collaboration received a 2007 "Aging Innovations" Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Innovation awards are presented only to programs that are "most cutting-edge." It was also selected as one of six recipients of a 2008 award from the American Society on Aging for innovation and quality in Healthcare and Aging.**

DFTA and MHANYC are also partnering on a depression education, screening and referral project with the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) funded through an AETNA Foundation grant. This project, begun in late Fall 2006, targets Chinese, Spanish and English-speaking seniors living in three NYCHA NORCs.

In December 2007, the Department began working with other members of the newly formed New York City Task Force on Hispanic Elders' Health to design and implement a comprehensive, collaborative and integrated approach to reducing the prevalence of diabetes in the communities of the South Bronx and Harlem. New York City's Task Force is one of eight nationwide teams selected by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop evidence-based solutions to Hispanic health disparities through community partnerships. Teams will be sharing solutions with each other throughout 2008.

"DFTA is forging partnerships to promote healthy aging."

Depression Initiative Findings Year 1 + 2

- 1040 seniors screened
- Mean age: 77
- 14% screened positive for depression
  - 25% Korean
  - 23.6% Hispanic
  - 20.5% White
  - 10% Black
  - 5.7% Chinese
- 50% of seniors with depression live alone
- 73% of seniors with depression accepted a referral

Helping HIV/AIDS Prevention

DFTA organized an HIV/AIDS conference for service providers in early 2007 to heighten awareness that HIV/AIDS is a new problem in the senior community. The Department continues to urge older New Yorkers to take an HIV test as part of their routine health checkup. Working with the Department of Health, DFTA is supplying senior centers citywide with HIV/AIDS educational literature and NYC condoms. DFTA is also connecting senior centers with public educators on safe sex practices to prevent HIV/AIDS.

Making it to the finish line at Senior Stroll 2007

Promoting Walking

Initiated in 2004 in response to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's *Take Care New York* campaign, DFTA's *Big Apple Senior Strollers* now number 125 walking clubs at senior centers, senior housing, libraries, churches and other locales throughout the City. DFTA provides seniors with pedometers to measure their steps. Clubs clocking the most "steps" are recognized at DFTA's annual Senior Stroll.

Celebrating the walking clubs and introducing thousand of seniors to the benefits of walking, DFTA's annual **Senior Stroll** in a City park has been a resounding success since its introduction in 2004. **In 2005, the Senior Stroll and Big Apple Senior Strollers received an award from the Steps to Healthier Aging Campaign of the U.S. Administration on Aging.** In the Stroll's three-year history, more than 5,000 older New Yorkers from every borough have participated in the day-long, fun-filled event, which includes a one-mile walk, dancing, and an awards ceremony.

Expanding Wellness Programs

Today, more than 225 community-based programs offer one or more of DFTA's Health Promotion Programs. DFTA trains volunteers to lead these programs at community sites (see also page 16).

Oldest of the Health Promotion Programs, *StayWell* is a physical exercise program updated in 2006 with a new manual created by experts in senior fitness. It now provides close to 5,000 seniors monthly with the opportunity to make this healthy lifestyle choice.

Keep on Track, winner of a 2007 "Aging Achievements" award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging, helps over 800 seniors a month monitor their blood pressure. Contributing to *Keep on Track*'s effectiveness are state-of-the-art digital equipment and a new training manual for volunteers developed in collaboration with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, which is also working with DFTA to track outcomes.

Two mental wellness programs – *Alert and Alive*, a group discussion program, and *Partner to Partner,* which teaches "sympathetic listening" to senior volunteers – are also increasingly popular, the former reaching over 700 people a month, and the latter, 400.

In addition, DFTA has developed a new program, *Know Your Numbers,* which educates seniors about their blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol.

Responding to the increasing prevalence of vision loss among seniors, the Department is also now training volunteers to educate their peers on eye health and common eye diseases.

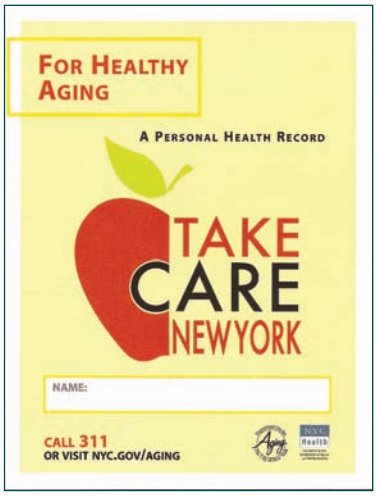
Creating a Senior-Friendly Health Record

The Department's well-received **Personal Health Record for Seniors,** a large print adaptation for older people of the Department of Health's "Passport to Your Health", contains space to record personal health information like blood pressure, weight and cholesterol, as well as health tips and information. Introduced as part of the Mayor's *Take Care, New York* initiative, the Record comes in a plastic sleeve with a magnet for easy attachment to the refrigerator or medicine cabinet.

Promoting Good Nutrition

DFTA has joined the City's efforts to phase out trans-fat for a healthier New York. With the goal of eliminating trans-fat from all meals provided to seniors, DFTA began sending meal preparation staff of contract agencies to trainings offered by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene during summer 2007.

DFTA also promotes healthy eating through participation in New York State's Senior Farmers Market Program, funded by the US Department of Agriculture. Every summer DFTA provides low-income seniors with coupons redeemable for produce at many of the City's farmer markets. More than 25,000 seniors participate in the program each year. Coupon booklets were distributed at 258 sites in all five boroughs during 2007.



2. MAXIMIZING INDEPENDENCE

DFTA is preparing its core service system for a central role in an age-friendly New York City that supports seniors' independence, quality of life and community connectedness. DFTA is strengthening senior center programs, case management service and home-delivered meals to better meet seniors' needs as they age while optimizing their choices and respecting their preferences. At the same time, the Department is focused on improving service access and addressing workforce issues for an aging population.

Piloting a New Service Delivery Model

To build efficiencies into home-delivered meals service, expand capacity to meet increased demand, and enhance consumer choice and control, the Department launched *Senior Options* in 2004. This Bronx pilot program consolidated home-delivered meals delivery areas to achieve

Walking for Health in 2006

> "More than 80% of all new Senior Options clients choose frozen meals."

economies of scale and gave recipients the choice between twice weekly delivery of frozen meals and daily delivery of hot meals. An evaluation of the pilot, conducted by audit and accounting firm KPMG and released in 2007, found that communication and start-up challenges were satisfactorily addressed and seniors are highly satisfied with the program. Currently more than 80 percent of all new *Senior Options* clients choose frozen meals. **Senior Options won a 2007 "Aging Achievements" Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.** The model will expand to all boroughs in 2008.

Modernizing Aging Services

DFTA's consultative process to modernize and transform the aging services network began in December 2006, with a series of community meetings to solicit input. A June 2007 Modernization Summit kicked the process into high gear. Organized by DFTA and New York City Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda Gibbs, the Summit offered 150 invited participants, representing the spectrum of stakeholders, a forum for their views on how to promote a positive vision for aging while expanding services for vulnerable elders. Four workgroups, each with a different programmatic and service focus, helped move the process along.

To elicit further comment, the Department issued a concept paper on the proposed redesign of case management. Concept papers on other services will be issued in 2008. A Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide each restructured service will complete the process. The case management RFP was issued in October 2007.

Improving Long-Term Care Access

In line with New York State efforts to establish a Point of Entry (POE) system for long-term care, the City created a POE Planning Team in 2006. The goal of POE is to provide accurate and comprehensive information about their service options to seniors and people with disabilities at their point of access to long-term care.

Under the leadership of the Human Resources Administration, the Team participated in planning for the City's enhanced 311, which connects callers to social service agencies, and surveyed over 900 service providers to identify current gaps and problems in care provision. DFTA is a member of the Planning Team.

Preparing the Workforce

With the Westchester County Department of Senior Services and Programs and other stakeholders across New York State, DFTA spearheaded development of the New York State Southern Area Aging Network (NY-SAAN) in 2006 to address "elderboom" issues. In May 2007, the Network held its first conference, bringing more than 200 aging network providers, volunteers and caregivers together to discuss workforce retention, retooling and training.

For many years DFTA has been contributing to the training of geriatric social workers by providing supervised field placements in aging services to the City's graduate programs in social work. The *Social Work Education Initiative* has introduced hundreds of students to the field of aging.

DFTA is also working to broaden the skills and knowledge of case managers

at community partner agencies through DFTA-mandated trainings and professional development options.

DFTA is helping to expand the home care workforce as well. The Department's **Work Experience Program (WEP),** a home aide training program originally intended only for public assistance recipients referred to DFTA by the Human Resources Administration, opened its doors to residents of Chinatown after 9/11. WEP continues to offer training in Chinese and Spanish as well as English. Since the Chinese program started, WEP has graduated 210 Chinese-speaking home care aides. The program has a 90% success rate placing graduates.

3. HELPING SENIORS MEET BASIC NEEDS

Aging well depends on being able to meet basic needs. Health and quality of life are at risk without financial and housing security, personal safety, and affordable health, social services and legal assistance when needed. DFTA programs help thousands of older New Yorkers meet these basic needs by providing benefits and entitlements assistance; help with rental, heating and weatherization costs; long-term care insurance counseling; legal assistance; and elder abuse and senior safety services.

Assisting Medicare Part D Enrollment

When the federal Medicare program introduced prescription drug coverage in 2005, the Department's **Health Insurance Information, Counseling and Assistance Program (HIICAP)** swung into action to help seniors better understand their coverage options and choose a plan before the June 15, 2006 enrollment deadline. **DFTA won a 2006 "Aging Achievement" Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging for establishing 45 linguistically competent Medicare Part D information and enrollment walk-in sites across the City, and for organizing a broad coalition of community and government agencies to support the outreach and educational effort.**

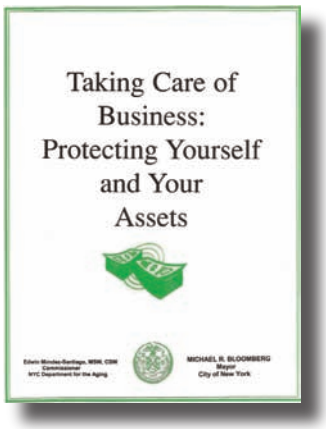
Through outreach events and individual counseling at the sites, HIICAP has helped more than 45,000 Medicare beneficiaries, caregivers and family members as well as EPIC enrollees since Part D began.

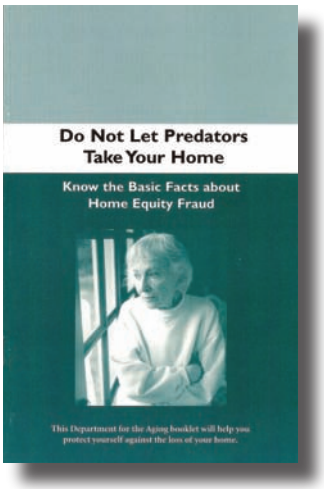
> **"HIICAP has helped more than 45,000 Medicare beneficiaries... since Part D began."**

Using Technology to Improve Access

To enhance the City's customer service to older New Yorkers, the Department incorporated its Information and Referral Unit into 311 operations in November of 2006. The integration of DFTA's information and referral staff with 311 staff marks the first stage of the City's initiative to create a centralized access point to information about City services as well as social services available in New York's communities.

DFTA is also participating in the development and promotion of ACCESS NYC, an online resource for New Yorkers launched by the City in November 2006. ACCESS NYC is an electronic screening





tool for more than 35 city, state and federal benefit programs including those available through DFTA.

Helping Seniors Fight Eviction

Recognizing that low-income seniors facing eviction need not only free legal representation but also social work services to help address underlying problems, DFTA joined forces with the New York City Civil Court to launch the **Assigned Counsel Project** in 2005. Court-appointed lawyers work with social work student interns supervised by DFTA to assist seniors at risk of homelessness through this initiative, which will expand to all five boroughs in early 2008. **This proactive response to an increasing problem garnered an "Aging Achievements" Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging in 2006.** Since it began in 2005, the program has helped well over 500 seniors avoid eviction and stabilize their living situations.

Tackling Elder Abuse and Consumer Fraud

Based on DFTA's leadership role in providing elder abuse prevention, education and services, the National Committee for the Prevention of Elder Abuse awarded DFTA a technical assistance grant in 2006 to develop the New York City Elder Abuse Network.

Comprising a broad coalition of stakeholders, the Network is now a focal point in New York City for systems coordination, team consultation on multi-problem cases, legislative advocacy, professional training, and elder abuse prevention education. **DFTA received a 2007 "Aging Achievements" Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging for this initiative.**

The Department also expanded its outreach to seniors at risk of financial scams by launching "Senior Savvy" with the Federal Trade Commission and the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs in late 2007. "Senior Savvy" offers senior centers the opportunity to arrange expert presentations for senior audiences on how to protect themselves against Internet-related fraud, identity theft, predatory lending, and bogus reverse mortgage offers.

Addressing Housing and Energy Assistance Needs

The Department works to ensure adequate and appropriate housing for New York City seniors through advocacy, community education about housing options, coordination with the City's public housing agencies and maintenance of a senior housing website.

In 2006, with the goal of facilitating aging in place, DFTA launched a Senior Housing Committee, drawing its membership from City agencies and a broad array of housing services providers and advocates. A multi-agency workshop on preserving and maintaining low-income housing for seniors through the City's refinancing program for Section 202 buildings highlighted the Committee's first year. The Committee continues to work for the creation of more low- and middle-income senior housing and the preservation of existing stock.

The Department also continues to administer City, State and Federal programs providing direct assistance to

A happy 94-year-old client of the Assigned Counsel Project gets a new apartment. **(Picture courtesy of *The Brooklyn Paper.*)**

low-income seniors with housing and energy costs. Largest of these is the City's **Senior Citizen Rent Increase Exemption Program (SCRIE),** which provides tax abatements to landlords of participating seniors whose income exempts them from future rent increases. In 2007, the SCRIE program provided benefits to more than 45,000 households.

DFTA's Energy programs include the federal **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP),** which provides subsidies toward home heating costs, and the federal **Weatherization, Referral and Packaging Program (WRAP),** which helps seniors who own one-to-four-unit dwellings make energy improvements.

4. CONNECTING TO ISOLATED SENIORS

Seniors who participate in DFTA's senior centers, intergenerational programs, social adult day programs and NORC Supportive Service programs enjoy meaningful relationships with others and with a broader community as they age. Concern is growing, however, about the at-risk status of isolated seniors who lack social supports and are not connected to needed services. To address this concern, DFTA is empowering community gatekeepers to help link isolated seniors to City resources.

Empowering Community Gatekeepers

New York City's apartment houses are home to thousands of isolated elders. To reach these seniors, in 2005 the Department started a training program for members of Local 32 B-J, the union for doormen, janitors, superintendents and others who work in apartment houses and are potential links between older residents who need help and DFTA services. In partnership with the Hebrew Home for the Aged and Local 32 B-J officials, DFTA is continuing to offer sessions where union members share their day-to-day experiences dealing with isolated seniors and learn how to help them access the Department's services.

Postal workers have also been empowered to be community gatekeepers through *the Carrier Alert Program*, announced by Mayor Bloomberg in April 2007. Carrier Alert, a voluntary program for seniors and people with disabilities, builds on the natural relationship many letter carriers develop with people on their route. When they observe accumulated mail or other indications that a participant enrolled in the program may be in distress, postal carriers notify 311 to mobilize a DFTA response.

Postal worker greets older apartment dweller.

By December 2007, the program had enrolled more than 1300 applicants. The Department developed New York City's Carrier Alert Program in collaboration with the City branches of the U.S. Postal Service, the National Association of Letter Carriers and the Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities.

In yet another initiative to empower community "eyes" and "ears" on behalf of vulnerable elders, the Department's **Alzheimer's and Caregivers Resource Center** has been reaching out to public

housing residents. This award-winning program (see page 20) seeks to forestall Alzheimer's disease-related crises at New York City Housing Authority sites by educating residents, tenant council leaders, resident association members and other community stakeholders about Alzheimer's disease and available community resources for caregivers and Alzheimer's patients.

Bringing Purpose and Puppies to Homebound Seniors

A* Paws and Reflect *senior volunteer and her "trainee."

Homebound seniors receive a very special kind of "friendly visiting" through Paws and Reflect, a joint initiative of the Department, Puppies Behind Bars, Inc., and the Jewish Association of Services for the Aging (JASA) begun in 2005. Seniors help train puppies being raised by prison inmates to aid police in explosive detection or to be guide dogs for the blind. Visited by "their" puppies for bi-weekly "socialization" sessions, these senior volunteers not only contribute to program success, they also get rewarded with tail wags and wet kisses. Between 14 and 20 puppy/senior pairs work together each year.

5. SUPPORTING PRODUCTIVE AND MEANINGFUL AGING

Increasing numbers of seniors are pursuing not only healthy, but also active, productive and socially engaged lifestyles. To address their diverse interests and abilities, DFTA and the aging services network are modernizing today's senior centers and enhancing their capability. The Department is also expanding employment opportunities for seniors through its Senior Employment Services Unit, and developing opportunities for retirees to be involved in community service.

Enhancing Center Capability

Center director leadership focused on customer service and community-building is key to successful senior center utilization, according to a two-year Utilization Study completed by DFTA in 2006. DFTA's **Training and Organizational Development Center,** which conducted the study, now offers workshops based on these findings and has designed a leadership development program for senior center directors.

To enhance capacity-building, DFTA is also making independent consulting services available to the senior center network. Programs that have worked with the consultant have improved their record-keeping, increased linkages to foundations and corporations for additional financial resources, developed better management systems and improved board operations.

A three-year DFTA/Americorps VISTA project is focusing on volunteer development in Manhattan centers in high poverty areas. Americorps VISTA members are helping the centers strengthen their volunteer recruitment, training and management programs.

Capitalizing on new findings about the correlation between creative expression and aging well, the Department has engaged Elders Share the Arts (ESTA) in another senior center capacity-building initiative. ESTA has now trained staff

and members of 28 centers on a group process to stimulate creation of memory-based artworks.

Over 150 additional centers will be promoting senior participation in the arts in 2008, thanks to a City Council initiative making $1.1 million available for joint senior center/arts or cultural organization projects. A variety of innovative programs were funded, from horticulture at the Botanical Gardens to Chinese Opera, jewelry design, blues cabaret, film and concert series, art workshops and museum visits. These and many other projects will enrich and expand senior center programming in every borough.

The Department also continues to direct technology resources to its senior center network. Fifty-four center sites now have computer rooms equipped with five or more computers for senior use, and an additional 100 sites have one to four computers. Donations to the centers through DFTA have come from the Department of Youth and Children's Services, the Department of Housing Preservation and from IBM, which, through the Aging in New York Fund, made a 2004 donation of computers to DFTA senior centers. The Department provided guidance on lab design to 20 centers that received City Council discretionary funding for computer labs in 2006.

Training Older Workers

As the City's largest recipient of federal Senior Community Service Employment Program (Title V) funding, the Department's **Senior Employment Services Unit (SESU)** offers Title V-eligible older persons training for positions in data processing, electronic offices, customer service, food service, security services, and the home health field.

The SESU is steadily expanding employment opportunities for trainees. SESU's Employer Bank now numbers nearly 600 organizations, almost half of which were added in the past three years. These hiring organizations include Macy's, Bloomingdale's, J&R Music and Computer World, CVS Pharmacies, Duane Reade Pharmacies and OTB. The Unit has also stepped up its recruitment efforts to ensure a large pool of qualified trainees, and enhanced supportive services for trainees with case management and career counseling. A Resource Center, opened in 2006, provides trainees with state-of-the-art computer software to aid their job search. As a result of these efforts, SESU placed 173 persons in unsubsidized employment during the fiscal year ending July 1, 2007, well exceeding its goals.

Elders Share the Arts Project at Fort Greene Senior Center (above); computer class at Castle Hill Senior Center (below).

Providing Service Opportunities

The Department is working to shape an aging services network that includes opportunities for seniors to "give back" to others and their communities through volunteer and stipend-paying service. DFTA's Foster Grandparent Program, Intergenerational Programs and Initiatives, training

programs for Health Promotion and HIICAP volunteers, and its linkage with ReServe Services for Elders represent this expanding direction.

For more than 30 years the Department's **Foster Grandparent Program (FGP)** has been offering stipend-eligible seniors the opportunity to serve as mentors, tutors and caregivers to at-risk children in hospitals, Head Start programs, nursery schools and elementary schools. In 2005, the federal Corporation for National and Community Services, which funds FGP, awarded DFTA a *Program of National Significance* grant to expand foster grandparent services to children in foster care and children of incarcerated parents. Almost 400 foster grandparents are now providing mentoring and other foster grandparent services. **The FGP received an "Award of Achievement in Older Volunteer Management" in a competition sponsored by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging and the Met Life Foundation in 2007.**

Foster grandparent encourages skills practice.

Also promoting intergenerational exchange, the Department's **Intergenerational Programs and Initiatives Unit** continues to bring together New York City elders and youth in a broad range of programs and activities that deepen understanding and cooperation across the generations. The school-based *IWSP (Intergenerational Work Study Program)* celebrated its 20th year in 2007. A partnership between DFTA and the Department of Education, IWSP provides service-learning opportunities to high school youth in senior center, nursing home and home care settings. Young and old benefit from the relationships that develop. Each age group learns to appreciate the concerns and viewpoints of the other and lasting friendships form as generational stereotypes are dispelled.

Enriching the intergenerational service learning experience for selected students, the *Young Gerontologist Program,* an after-school seminar series organized by the Department, introduces youth to career options in gerontology and helps them explore the rewards of working with older people. **DFTA's Young Gerontologist Program won a 2007 "Aging Achievement" Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.**

In addition to these school-based programs, the Department promotes community intergenerational initiatives. Fourteen community organizations are currently providing a variety of multigenerational programs, many representing collaborations among youth- and senior-serving agencies.

Elder-to-elder service is another senior service model promoted by the Department. Developed more than 20 years ago, the volunteer training and "empowerment" design of DFTA's **Health Promotion Services Unit** enables hundreds of community organizations to establish a DFTA health promotion program at their home sites. The organizations recruit older volunteers to lead the programs for their fellow seniors,

while DFTA provides the leadership training. Trained volunteers assume ownership of the program (see page 8).

Close to 900 Health Promotion volunteers are now helping their peers at 225 program sites take control of their own health. Programs include *Stay Well,* a physical exercise program; the *Big Apple Senior Strollers; Keep on Track,* a blood pressure monitoring program; *Know Your Numbers,* which helps seniors understand their cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar readings; and *Alert and Alive* and *Partner-to-Partner*, mental wellness programs that encourage seniors to share their concerns with others. A new 2007 initiative trains volunteers on "healthy vision" counseling.

DFTA's **HIICAP Unit (Health Insurance Information Counseling and Assistance Program)** also trains older persons to work with their peers (see also page 11). HIICAP is a federal and state initiative that trains seniors to inform and educate their peers about health and long-term care insurance coverage. Since 1993, hundreds of HIICAP volunteers have helped seniors navigate the health care maze. They have provided one-on-one assistance at community sites and by telephone on a range of issues from Medicare, Medigap, and prescription drug plans to private supplemental plans and other insurance coverage. Volunteers also assist in the Long-Term Care Insurance Resource Center operated by HIICAP since 2006. The Center is part of a statewide initiative.

The Department's newest initiative to promote service opportunities for seniors began in July 2007. The program, a partnership between DFTA and ReServe Elder Services, taps into the skills and experiences of older retirees to benefit the City. Retirees who sign up for the program provide important but short-term assistance to City agencies on projects that match their interests and expertise. They earn a small stipend for their contribution. They also get to bone up on their computer skills through free computer classes offered by DFTA's **Senior Employment Services Unit.**

More than 20 City agencies have expressed interest in using ReServists. Memoranda of understanding have already been signed with 12. ReServists are now assisting not only at DFTA, but also carrying out projects at the Departments of Administrative Services, Consumer Affairs, Corrections, Education, Environmental Protection, Health and Mental Hygiene, and Parks, as well as the Law Department, the Human Resources Administration, the Brooklyn District Attorneys Office, the Agency for Children Services, and the Office of Emergency Management. As the program gets underway, DFTA and ReServe anticipate placing more than 150 retirees in positions that challenge them to use their lifetime skills for the common good.

IWSP student (see p. 16) and her senior mentor (above); the Intergenerational Prejudice Reduction Program at a Queens Middle School (below).

CELEBRATING AGING

***Age in Action,** the Department's signature event, celebrates the vibrant spirit, creativity and diversity of New York City's older residents. Co-presented by DFTA and its charitable arm, the Aging in New York Fund, Age in Action is one of the largest municipally-sponsored healthy aging initiatives for people over age 60 in the country.*

Each May for the past six years, Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens has been transformed into an arena for activities, entertainment, exhibits, games and health screenings celebrating **Age in Action.** The event annually draws close to 10,000 seniors from senior centers across the five boroughs to this opportunity to join together in tribute to life and healthy aging in the greatest city in the world

Proudly carrying center banners, many participants attend to showcase their center's talents in dance contests, tournaments, performances and art exhibits. The festival celebrates diversity as well, with seniors in colorful costumes from all over the world proclaiming their ethnic pride. Greeting the seniors are City officials and a variety of organizations that join DFTA in saluting seniors and working for their health and well being.

Highlights over the years have included Big Apple Circus emcees and live entertainment, including most recently the Senior Dance Team of the New Jersey Nets, the NYPD Band, and the NYCHA Choir. The big attraction in 2006 was a Healthy Aging Center, where dozens of experts provided advice on everything from home safety to how to talk to physicians. Age in Action 2007 "hits" included a juried show of senior art and a Technology Tent where seniors learned how to log on to the Internet, search for senior health information, access email and use Microsoft Word.

Age in Action participants cheer main stage attraction.

Embracing Diversity

New York City's older population reflects the increasing ethnic, racial and cultural diversity of the City's population as a whole. Almost half the City's elders are minority, with the number of Asian seniors growing exponentially and Hispanic seniors constituting more than 17% of older persons. DFTA celebrates this diversity, and the diversity of background, religious persuasion, cultural and sexual identity and lifestyle choice represented by today's seniors. It is working to ensure that all the many faces of today's aging population are recognized, acknowledged and responded to by our service system.

DFTA is actively reaching out to minority populations through its publications in English, Spanish, Chinese and Russian, and its multi-lingual caregiver web site. Many other targeted DFTA initiatives are also bringing the Department's services to ethnic communities. These include 45 linguistically competent Medicare Part D walk-in sites (see page 11), DFTA's personal care aid training program for Chinese speaking enrollees (see page 11), its grandparent caregiver programs (see page 20), geriatric depression screening initiative (see page 7), and new Hispanic Elders' Health Task Force (see page 7), to name just a few.

DFTA has also ensured that its community partners are responsive to diversity issues. Criteria for selecting partners through a competitive Request for Proposals process include the ability of the proposing organization to address the needs of minorities in their community. Moreover, the Department encourages and supports coalitions and advocacy groups dedicated to the needs of specific minority populations.

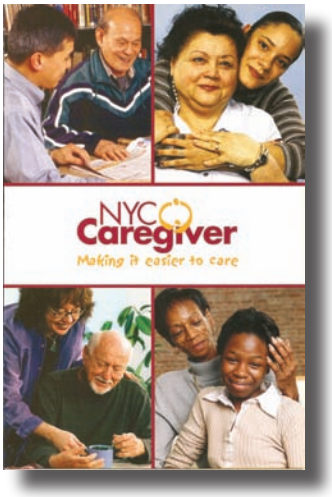
To further its commitment to the right of all persons to live full, engaged lives in their communities, DFTA has also entered into a broad range of partnerships with organizations serving seniors whose needs cannot be met through mainstream programs. The resulting programs include a vegetarian senior center sponsored by an organization that serves people of the Hindu faith and a program that provides counseling, referral, socialization and caregiver services to aging members of the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender community. At the same time, the Department is striving to make its existing programs more inclusive—for example, by working with partners in the vision rehabilitation services network to help blind and visually impaired seniors feel more at home in senior centers.

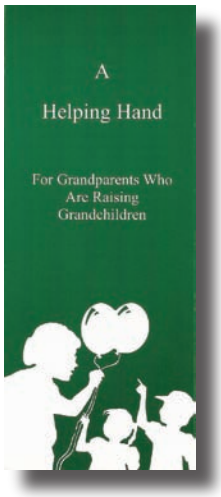
These efforts have a common aim: changing the paradigm for aging services by changing attitudes, practices, and policies to celebrate diversity and ensure barrier-free services for all.

Chinese personal care workers attend their WEP gradution (above); Intergenerational School Project (below).

Supporting Family Caregivers

Family caregivers often face overwhelming demands, whether they are providing care to elderly relatives or dealing with the myriad challenges of raising grandchildren or other young kin whose biological parents are unable to provide care.





The Department's **Alzheimer's and Caregiver Resource Center (ACRC)** continues to coordinate DFTA's community-based caregiver services programs and to provide services to professionals and caregivers and educational presentations to the community. ACRC's signature event for twenty-three years, the annual Mayoral Conference on Alzheimer's disease, attracts close to 1,000 professionals and caregivers each year.

ACRC played a key role in developing the Chinese American Alzheimer's Coalition of New York City, now four years old, and in the development of a training curriculum on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias for DFTA's WEP program (see page 11). **The enhanced training program and the Chinese American Coalition both won 2007 "Aging Achievement" awards from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.**

The ACRC also won a 2007 "Agency Innovations" Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging for its Alzheimer's disease Educational Outreach Initiative directed to public housing residents (see page 13). The award cited as "cutting edge" the collaborative nature of the initiative. Joining DFTA in the collaboration were the New York City Police Department (NYPD), the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and the Alzheimer's Association of New York City. DFTA and the NYPD are now also working together to help families of seniors reported missing. More than 225 families identified by the NYPD were contacted by ACRC staff and offered information and linkage to community services between mid-April and November 2007.

The Department's **Grandparent Resource Center (GRC)** was among the first programs in the nation to develop services and support groups for grandparent caregivers. The Center now helps over 300 caregiver families each year. In addition, GRC conducts dozens of workshops and presentations annually for community and professional groups to raise awareness of grandparent caregiver issues. GRC offers empowerment training to grandparent caregivers and helps to both develop and sustain community-based caregiver support groups.

In 2006, GRC received a grant from the Brookdale Foundation to train staff of City agencies serving families and children on issues facing grandparent caregivers, a project which is ongoing. The Brookdale Foundation is also currently supporting a GRC school-based initiative linking kin caregivers of school-age children in eight predominantly Latino, African and Caribbean immigrant communities to needed services and support groups.

Working for Livable Communities

Surveys show that the vast majority of seniors want to age in their own homes and communities. To accommodate this preference for aging in place, the Department is leading the City's efforts to transform communities into support hubs for older New Yorkers. By providing appropriate housing, adequate mobility options, supportive services and physical and social environments that facilitate both personal independence and community ties, these "livable communities" will ensure a seamless continuum of supports that foster quality of life and meet residents' changing needs as they age.

The Department's **Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities Supportive Services Programs (NORC-SSP)** showcase "livable communities" in 28 NORCs. **In 2005, New York City won an award for the excellence of its NORC programs in a "Livable Communities" competition sponsored by the federal Administration on Aging.**

NORCs are multi-age housing units or neighborhoods that have naturally become home to large concentrations of seniors. SSPs are coordinated health and social service programs that, operated out of the NORCs, offer many of the benefits of supportive senior housing. SSPs also have as their purpose strengthening social and civic bonds among residents. They seek to build vital communities that proactively engage residents and respond to their health and support needs as they age.

NORC-SSPs reflect a new public/private "partnership" approach to program design, development and financing. Funding from the City (DFTA) and State provides a stable basis for the programs and helps to leverage philanthropic funding, while other partners (housing corporations, social service agencies, health care providers, and senior residents of the NORCs) contribute in-kind resources. All partners participate in the development of programs and services that address assessed NORC needs and strengths, and contribute ongoing NORC-SPP management.

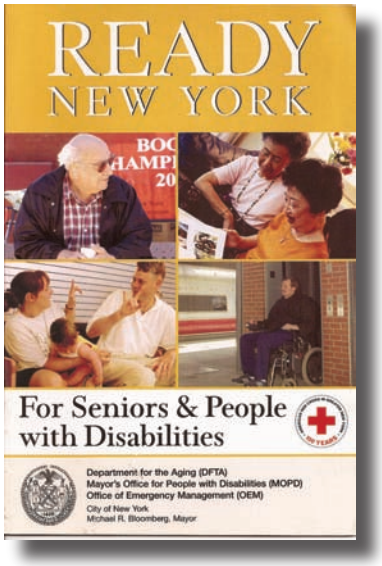
The Department's many partnerships with other City agencies also promote livable communities. DFTA is working on providing integrated health and aging services to New York City's communities with the Health and Hospitals Corporation and the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; on senior housing issues with the New York City Housing Authority and other housing agencies; on an arts initiative with the Department of Cultural Affairs; on cross-generational programs with the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of Education and community organizations; and on senior pedestrian safety with the Department of Transportation. These partnerships are helping the City move from a "service by service" framework for addressing elders' needs to an integrated approach supporting positive aging in the community.

Celebrating the 20th anniversary of New York City's oldest NORC program at Penn South (above and below).

Preparing To Meet Emergencies

The Department continues to promote emergency preparedness by working with other agencies and its network to ensure that, in the event of a disaster, services will continue to be delivered, vulnerable seniors will be assisted to safety, and all will be ready with "Go Bags" and plans of action.

DFTA contributed to the development and distribution of New York City's *Ready New York Guide for Seniors and People with Disabilities* and the Department continues to participate in Ready NY community presentations sponsored by the City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) and the American Red Cross. In coordination with OEM, DFTA has also developed a three-tiered Emergency Response Plan for providing critical services to seniors during emergencies.



***Seniors will find useful information in all of the Ready New York brochures, including (above)* Ready New York for Seniors & People with Disabilities.**

In a recent initiative, DFTA is also working with staff of the Human Resources Administration (HRA) to form an emergency response team comprised of DFTA staff. Team members will be on call 24/7 to support and augment HRA "first responder" efforts in emergencies involving seniors. Other emergency preparedness initiatives introduced by the Department include the distribution of emergency boxes containing water, juice, two shelf-stable meals, a flashlight or battery powered lantern, a radio and information on emergency preparation to homebound seniors and senior center members. Over 50,000 boxes are distributed each year.

During summer heat emergencies, DFTA's air-conditioned senior centers play a critical role as cooling centers. Preparation for heat emergencies begins each spring when DFTA provides maintenance and needed upgrades to all senior center air conditioners, and center directors begin to prepare for summer heat. In 2007, DFTA kicked off the annual preparation with a Cooling Center Seminar for Center directors.

During the summer of 2006, a total of 278 centers opened to the community as cooling centers, with an average of 141 extending open hours over the period of the heat wave. During July and August of 2007, 297 senior centers again provided a haven from the heat to community members of all ages when the City declared heat emergencies.

DFTA's homebound clients also receive special attention during heat waves. Case managers call their most vulnerable clients and arrange transportation if necessary to a cooling center.

While heat and winter storm preparedness remains the main focus of emergency planning by DFTA's senior center, home-delivered meals and case management programs, these programs have demonstrated not only their willingness but their competence and cooperation dealing with a wide variety of emergencies, from the aftermath of 9/11 to, more recently, power outages and floods.

A MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER

Dear Friends:

I am proud of the achievements highlighted in this Report. Proactively, and in collaboration with a wide array of partners, we are meeting the challenges that face the Department as the boomer generations turn 60 and life expectancy hits record highs. We are addressing the health and quality-of-life issues raised by increased longevity, developing new responses to an increasingly diverse population, and supporting community-based approaches to ensuring the maximum independence, safety and well being of older City residents.

Now our vision is focused on promoting an even better future for New York's 1.3 million seniors. Working with us to modernize aging services for the twenty-first century are our community partners, sister City agencies and the many stakeholders in academia, business and the arts with whom we have established strong collaborative relationships. Together we are working to make New York City the "gold" standard among urban communities for responsiveness to older people's needs and aspirations.

In this endeavor, we have a unique asset in our talented and committed DFTA staff. Their "can-do" attitude drives our achievements and ensures our readiness for future challenges. Many of the initiatives described in these pages are the result of their individual and collective enterprise and vision.

Moreover, we are inspired by the vitality and indomitable spirit of older New Yorkers who enrich every aspect of community life with their knowledge, skills and experience. Their empowerment to live the fullest lives possible is the goal of the consumer-centered, strengths-based and options-rich service system we are striving to develop.

Finally, as we move forward we are mindful of the innovators and pioneers in the field of aging to whom we are indebted. Janet Sainer, Commissioner of the Department for the Aging between 1976 and 1988, was one of these pioneers. Her work benefited millions of older New Yorkers. We regret her passing in 2007 and dedicate this Report to her.

Sincerely yours,

Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor, City of New York
Edwin Méndez-Santiago, LCSW, Commissioner, New York City Department for the Aging