

OLDER ADULTS AND TECHNOLOGY IN BROOKLYN



Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams recognizes that the population in Brooklyn continues to grow in both size and in age, at a time when technology is rapidly changing. There are an estimated 400,000 people over the age of 60 living in Brooklyn, or about 16 percent of the borough's population.ⁱ About 277,000 of those people are over the age of 65. It is estimated that Brooklynites over 65 will exceed 350,000 by 2020.ⁱⁱ As our adult population ages, we need to recognize the unique and individual technological needs of this age group. While our younger generations are introduced to technology in the educational system, our older adult population can lag behind in their "tech-savviness."

There is a need to assist seniors with learning and embracing technology, both existing and new, as Brooklyn's population continues to age. Being web-savvy, understanding email, social media, smart phones, and the latest available applications allows people of all ages to connect with one other, and gives older adults an opportunity to interact with their peers and the rest of society. There are many benefits to being tech-savvy for older adults. Computer and Internet use is shown to be associated with lower levels of loneliness and higher levels of social connectivity, decreased depression, improved self-esteem, and cognitive functioning.ⁱⁱⁱ Computer literacy in older adults can improve quality of life, provide a sense of empowerment, increase social interaction, and allow for employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.

While the benefits to technological access are tangible, so are the threats to older adults who are often less tech-savvy than their younger peers. According to the National Council on Aging, "The slower speed of adoption among some older people makes them easier targets for automated Internet scams that are ubiquitous on the web and email programs."^{iv} According to the Digital Citizens Alliance – citing Federal Trade Commission (FTC) data – of all fraud complaints tracked by the FTC in 2012, "people 60 years and older made up 26 percent" of complainants, surpassing all other age groups.^v Despite these threats to our seniors, education and training has not kept pace. In Brooklyn, older adults do have access to some free entry points to this education at the Brooklyn Public Library, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), and Internet communities such as Senior Planet.



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Yet, more needs to be done to meet the needs of our older adult population. To better protect our seniors from online fraud and scams, Borough President Adams urges:

- Increased funding from New York City for the expansion of computer and technology classes administered by the Brooklyn Public Library, Parks Department, and Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)
- Increased funding for technology programming at senior centers, services to homebound seniors, and nursing home programs
- That Department For the Aging (DFTA) expand its “Seniors and the Web” programming to all DFTA-funded senior centers, so that they can provide computer classes and technology training
- Senior center directors to engage in creating and tailoring computer curriculums to address the unique cultural needs of their members
- Support for programming that connects young people with seniors to conduct technology trainings across the borough

Resources available

Older adults who are looking for more information on computer and technology services can visit:

New York City Department for the Aging at nyc.gov/aging or call 311
Brooklyn Public Library – Services For Older Adults
bklynlibrary.org/seniors

Older Adults Technology Services (OATS)
168 Seventh Street, Suite 3A
Brooklyn, NY 11215
(718) 360-1707
oats.org

New York City Parks Department
Computer Resource Centers
nycgovparks.org/crc or call 311

ⁱNew York City Department for the Aging. (November 4, 2013). *Profile of Older New Yorkers*. Retrieved from nyc.gov/html/dfta/downloads/pdf/demographic/profile_olderNYRS_0911_newsummaries_update.pdf

ⁱⁱNew York City Department of City Planning. (December 2013). *New York City Population Projections by Age/Sex & Borough, 2010 – 2040*. Retrieved from http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/pdf/census/projections_report_2010_2040.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱPaula J Gardner, PhD. (April 2010). *Older Adults and OATS Computer Training Programs A Social Impact Analysis Findings Report*, New York Academy of Medicine Division of Health Policy. Retrieved from oats.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/New-York-Academy-of-Medicine-study.pdf

^{iv}National Council on Aging. *Top 10 Financial Scams Targeting Seniors*. Retrieved from ncoa.org/economic-security/money-management/scams-security/top-10-scams-targeting-seniors/

^vDigital Citizens Alliance. (July 17, 2014). *Keeping Seniors Safe: Online Scams*. Retrieved from digitalcitizensalliance.org/cac/comm/b/weblog/archive/2014/07/17/keeping-seniors-safe-online-scams.aspx