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NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT FOR THE AGING COMMISSIONER BARRIOS PAOLI AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMISSIONER LEVIN ANNOUNCE NEW FUNDING FOR SPARC: SENIORS PARTNERING WITH ARTISTS CITYWIDE

Call for Artists Open Now through October 31st for 50 Artist Residencies in Senior Centers Citywide

Artists Will Receive a Stipend and Access to Workspace in Exchange
For the Creation and Delivery of Arts Programming

New York City Department for the Aging Commissioner Lilliam Barrios-Paoli and Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin today announced that the Department for the Aging (DFTA) will provide $200,000 in funding to support a second year of SPARC: Seniors Partnering with Artists Citywide,a community arts engagement program that places artists in residence at senior centers across the five boroughs. The new funding will allow the City to build on the success of the 2012 SPARC program, which was supported, in part, by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts. During the 2012 program, 50 artists delivered more than 2,000 contact hours of arts programming to hundreds of senior participants at 44 senior centers. Artist residencies for the 2013 SPARC program will take place in select senior centers from January through June 2013.

SPARC is a collaboration among the Department of Cultural Affairs, the Department for the Aging and five of the City's local arts councils—Brooklyn Arts Council, Bronx Council on the Arts, Council on the Arts and Humanities of Staten Island, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and Queens Council on the Arts. It was developed as part of Age-friendly NYC, a citywide initiative started by Mayor Bloomberg, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and the New York Academy of Medicine to make New York more livable for the City's growing population of older adults.

"We launched Age-friendly NYC to help our growing senior population stay healthy, active, and engaged," said Mayor Bloomberg. "New York is home to one of the most extraordinary communities of artists anywhere in the world. Connecting our seniors to this creative energy is a terrific way of fulfilling our commitment to enhancing the quality of life of all New Yorkers."

Today the City is also announcing a Call for Artists inviting New York City artists to apply for one of 50 residencies in the 2013 SPARC program. Artists selected through the program's competitive application process will receive a stipend and access to workspace in senior centers in exchange for the creation and delivery of arts programming for seniors. Application materials and guidelines are available on the websites of the five borough arts councils starting today. The deadline for submissions is October 31, 2012.
"We are very pleased to continue the SPARC program and give hundreds of seniors access to an immense array of talented artists," said Commissioner Barrios-Paoli. "The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive. SPARC programs—ranging from painting, writing and sculpture to dance and theater—allow them to use their imaginations, think creatively and enjoy physical activity. They represent the best of what the City's network of senior centers can offer."

"New Yorkers of all ages benefit from engaging in dynamic arts activities, and artists in all disciplines need space to create new work," said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Levin. "I'm thrilled that this extraordinary program will continue to address these critical needs by turning our senior centers into vital cultural hubs throughout the five boroughs."

"By providing older New Yorkers a wide range of art programs and services through the SPARC artist-in-residence program, which was developed as part of Age-friendly NYC, we're positively impacting the quality of life for our senior citizens," said Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "The program is also beneficial to artists because we're providing them with hard to find affordable workspaces. I look forward to seeing all the great work that comes out of this initiative and making New York a great place to live for all age groups."

Through SPARC, participating seniors will be engaged in an art project or series of cultural programs over the course of an artist residency. Each residency will also include a public program component—exhibits, readings, performances, open houses and other cultural interactions open to the surrounding community—to showcase the work of the artist and seniors. This initiative seeks to connect artists with seniors in senior centers and positively impact the well-being of participants through arts-based activities.

In 2012, SPARC artists created 50 arts-based programs in senior centers ranging from a ukulele orchestra in Brooklyn to Bomba dance in the Bronx; from calligraphy classes in Staten Island to photography in Queens; from Shakespeare performances in Manhattan to dozens of other programs in visual arts, mixed media, dance and more across the City. Additionally, hundreds of senior center members, neighborhood residents, local officials and community leaders visited participating senior centers to experience SPARC project public program events, reinvigorating senior centers as vital community spaces.

Research demonstrating the positive impact of arts engagement activities on senior populations provided major motivation in the development of the SPARC program model for Age-friendly NYC. Studies have shown that seniors who participate in arts programming run by professional artists experience improvements in a wide range of quality of life indicators including increases in social engagement and physical activity and enhanced creative thinking and problem solving skills.

"The creative SPARC program is exactly the kind of win-win innovation that exemplifies Age-Friendly New York City," said Jo Ivey Boufford, President, The New York Academy of Medicine. "Older adults all over the City told us how much they want to be more engaged with the arts and the City helped meet their need with this wonderful program."

To access the SPARC application and more information visit www.nyc.gov/culture.

Contact:

Danai Pointer / Ryan Max (Cultural Affairs) (212) 513-9322
Jeannette Reed (DFTA) (212) 442-1111