



# EDUCATIONAL ALLIANCE

## MLK DAY OF SERVICE VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

### VOLUNTEER PROJECT: MAKING CARDS FOR OLDER ADULTS

This volunteer project, Making Cards for Older Adults, will create notes that will be distributed to isolated older adult community members. These cards will allow members to feel connected and engaged with the larger NY community. We ask that you make five or more cards to ensure we have enough to spread cheer. Make sure you have fun creating and crafting! Our members will love receiving these notes.

#### Guidelines to Card Making

- Materials Needed:
  - Blank card or paper
  - Envelope
  - Stamps
  - Writing Instrument (pencil, pen, markers, etc.)
- Please use one of the following greetings in your card: Fellow New Yorker OR Educational Alliance Community Member
- Some ideas to inspire:
  - What are you grateful for this year?
  - What do you love about New York City?
  - What are your favorite things to do (any hobbies you've picked up this year)?
- Topics/Things to Avoid: Politics, religious sentiments, or dwelling on the negatives of 2020
- Sign your cards with ONLY your first name or with a generic moniker like "fellow New Yorker"
- Your card is entirely up to you – you can write a long letter or create a piece of art. The more creative the better!
- EA staff might make additional edits to your content to make sure it is appropriate and fits within EA's needs.
- Send letters to:  
Educational Alliance  
Attn: Liz McKie - MLK  
197 East Broadway  
New York, NY 10002
- **DEADLINE:** letters must be sent in by **January 25<sup>th</sup>**
  - Letters can be mailed individually or in a large envelope all together.
  - To drop off letters in-person at the Manny Cantor Center (197 East Broadway), please coordinate with Liz McKie, Manager of Volunteer Engagement, at [lmckie@edalliance.org](mailto:lmckie@edalliance.org).



## VOLUNTEER PROJECT: CALL TO ACTION – TALK TO YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

New York City's Older Adults need investments to live healthier and more fulfilling lives as they age in place. The Department for the Aging receives less than ½ of one percent of the annual city budget. Using what you learned today, and the information below, we encourage you to reach out to your local representatives to let them know the importance of investing in our seniors, and making our community age-friendly, which benefits all of us.

### How do I find information for my representatives?

- <https://www.mygovnyc.org/>
- Outside of NYC? You can look up your reps here: [https://ballotpedia.org/Who\\_represents\\_me](https://ballotpedia.org/Who_represents_me).

### Ways to reach out to officials:

- Write a letter or postcard
- Call their office
- Use social media (tweet at them or comment on a Facebook or Instagram post)

### Sample Message:

Hello I am [Your Name] one of your constituents. I am calling to urge [official's name] to support getting more resources into our communities to support older adults experiencing social isolation, which has been especially exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. I care about this issue because [give fact or personal reason] and believe that we need to ensure our older adults have the services they need. Thank you for your time.

### Questions You Can Ask:

- What is your office doing to support social isolation among older adults currently?
- Does your office have any resources or initiatives to support older adults in the community?
- Do you partner with Senior Centers to ensure that older adults are connected to services?

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON OLDER ADULT ISOLATION AND EA

### NYC And Community District 3 Stats:

- As of 2018, New York City is home to approximately 1.64 million older adults. By 2040, adults 60 or older will be 20.6% of the NYC population.
- Educational Alliance's catchment area has the fourth highest population of adults aged 60+ (as of the last community wide census) in NYC.
- Of the 27,183 residents over 65 in CD3:
  - 32.5% live below the poverty line.
  - 45% of these older adults speak Asian or Pacific Island languages and 24% speak Spanish at home.
  - 46% live with a disability
  - 36% live alone
- Addressing issues faced by older adults and providing supports to negate the risks of these challenges are difficult given the Department for the Aging represents less than 1% of the NYC budget.
- Appropriate mental health supports are associated with an \$824 reduction in annual healthcare costs per person.

- To see more information, you can review the CD 3 District Needs Statement: <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/mancb3/downloads/cb3docs/CD3-DistrictNeedsStatement-FY2021.pdf>.
- Learn more about your own district by starting here: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/cau/community-boards/community-boards.page>.

### Facts About Social Isolation:

- Almost a quarter of Americans, 65 or older, live in socially isolated community settings. Social isolation amongst older adults typically results in a reduction of one's social network and engagement with that network, availability of transportation, and the ability to access resources and information.
- Social isolation is a growing public health concern, as it leads to high healthcare costs, adding an additional \$6.7 billion in health-related spending (AARP, 2018). Costs are related to cognitive decline, high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, and death.
- Programs most effective for reducing social isolation are group-based, evidence supported, education oriented, and target specific groups.

### Research on Social Isolation:

- Risk factors associated with social isolation include living alone, mobility impairment, low income or other financial resources, cognitive challenges, and language barriers (2012, AARP).
- Research has shown social isolation is associated with higher rates of chronic health conditions, depression and anxiety, dementia, and admission to nursing homes or use of emergency services, and prolonged isolation can increase smoking and other negative health outcomes (2009).
- Recent research has shown that 82% of individuals surveyed in NYC senior centers felt their physical health had remained stable or improved since participating in the senior center ([Senior Center Evaluation](#), 2016).

### About EA Older Adult Services:

Educational Alliance (EA) has served Lower Manhattan since 1889. Originally a settlement house for East European Jews immigrating to New York City, the history of the Lower East Side and the history of Educational Alliance are deeply intertwined. EA believes in the power of communities to lift-up people of all ages and turn strangers into neighbors. Our community centers offer multi-generational programs that push boundaries and break barriers, sharing critical tools to foster relationships and advance the well-being of people in New York City. We offer high-quality, affordable education programs, health services, and diverse cultural enrichment. We make the city a brighter, friendlier, and more supportive place.

- Educational Alliance was one of the first public organizations to operate a naturally occurring retirement community in New York City (1994). Since then, we have advocated for older adults to age in place, and ensure older adults have access to quality meals, evidence-based activities, and educational opportunities.
- Educational Alliance's OAS programming has provided over half a million meals and take-home packages in the last five years, of which 250,000 have been Kosher.

Questions? Reach out to Deb Scher, Director of Strategic Service and Civic Engagement, at [dscher@mannycantor.org](mailto:dscher@mannycantor.org) or Liz McKie, Manager of Volunteer Engagement, at [lmckie@edalliance.org](mailto:lmckie@edalliance.org).

