

Fun and Enrichment for Older Adults

Life doesn't end at 60, 70, or even 80 these days. More and more, seniors in New York City are staying active and filling their lives with fun, rewarding activities. According to the city Department for the Aging, the senior population is expected to rise 45 percent by 2030, to 1.3 million. All those people are going to need something to do. Queens Library has always been a place for seniors, but now more than ever, the library offers great ways for older adults to socialize, have fun and explore, whether or not they can physically go to the library.

"Anyone at home who can't get to a library should be able to get everything that a person gets when they walk into a library—programming, materials, information, socialization—everything," said Madlyn Schneider, who runs Queens Library's award-winning Mail-A-Book program.

Those who can get to a Queens Library location can take part in events like AARP-affiliated tax help and defensive driving courses, as well as introductory courses on computer skills like the internet and email usage geared especially for older adults.

Queens Library's Senior Theater Acting Repertory, which meets weekly, gathers older adults together to put on dramatic works and re-experience the thrill of the stage.

Seniors also need to keep tabs on their health. For that, Queens Library offers the Staywell Program for adults 55 and over. It meets for an hour each week for exercise and to discuss health-related news and concerns that benefits everyone. For people of all ages, Queens Library offers several knitting and crocheting clubs where people can come, socialize and swap techniques.

But if you can't leave your home, Queens Library can come to you. Mail-A-Book offers remote access for homebound seniors and adults of all ages. Last year over 50,000 items were circulated this way, including books in large and regular print; audio books and e-books; movies, music and games. E-readers are also

Mail A Book Services, 94-11 217 Street, Queens Village, NY 11428, 718-464-0084

“Just having a package show up at their home, and knowing that somebody on the other end is listening to what their needs and their wants are—that’s hugely important,” said Madlyn Schneider, who runs the program. “We sit and chitchat with them on the phone for 20 minutes. We respond to what their needs are, get to know how they are, and pick out materials that add to their lives.”

The service also offers homebound customers other ways to use services and interact with people, including crossword puzzles solved collaboratively over the Skype web video chat service, and bingo, health discussions and even plain old conversations via teleconference.

“We have had many seminars on different aspects of Queens and have had elected politicians speak to us on Queens including our Borough President. We have health seminars over the phone by health care providers ... which are informative and educational,” said Mail-A-Book customer Bonnie Sue Pokorny. “The community has become more aware of us and we are no longer the ‘invisible’ population.”