



**Office for
the Aging**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEBORAH GILLIARD AND DONNA MADNICK HONORED FOR EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE IN MANHATTAN ON OLDER NEW YORKERS' DAY

New York State Office for the Aging celebrates Older New Yorkers' Day with video presentation recognizing 90 honorees statewide for their service

Deborah Gilliard and **Donna Madnick** were among nine New York City residents recently honored by the New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) for their exceptional service to older adults and others in Manhattan. All were nominated by the New York City Department for the Aging.

The virtual celebration premiered November 5 on social media, with a video presentation featuring approximately 90 honorees from around the state, along with remarks from state officials.

Deborah Gilliard became interested in gardening after watching her mom nurse a sick plant back to good health. Today, there are many houseplants flourishing in her apartment, and she now shares this talent with her community as President of the 146th Street Green Thumb Garden. Through that role, Gilliard has gotten children better involved in the city's community garden program and coordinated with the Parks Department to build raised garden beds for older adults.

As chair of the Community Board 10 Transportation Committee, Gilliard has met with various agencies to make public transportation more accessible and accountable to people in her neighborhood. She also established the board's Senior Task Force Committee, which convenes once a month to ensure that issues of concern to older adults are addressed by elected officials, agency representatives, and managers of senior centers.

Having struggled with vision loss, Donna Madnick was grateful when she discovered VISIONS Services for the Blind and Visual Impaired. There, she now plays an active role serving participants and coordinating special events to assist people of all ages lead independent and active lives in their homes and communities.

Madnick also runs a diabetes support group, creating a safe space for individuals to talk about the struggles of managing a serious chronic condition. She puts people at ease with her gentle demeanor. Madnick and her family are active members of their church,

where she enjoys the feeling of community. As a longtime civil and human rights activist, she has joined picket lines, driven by a belief in fair treatment of all people.

For a more detailed profile of each exceptional honoree, please see the award program book and get a link to NYSOFA's video presentation [on our Older New Yorkers' Day landing page](https://aging.ny.gov/older-new-yorkers-day-2021-epk) at <https://aging.ny.gov/older-new-yorkers-day-2021-epk>.

New York City Department for the Aging (DFTA) Commissioner Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez said: “Older adults are highly engaged, civic-minded individuals who have high voter participation and high community volunteering rates. They make a difference and help cities thrive. This year, we honor nine older New Yorkers for their outstanding volunteerism across the City’s five boroughs. Providing free tax preparation services, collecting clothing for the homeless, and beautifying community gardens with local children are just some of the things they do daily. It is notable that not even the worst pandemic in history could deter them from serving their communities. We are proud to celebrate and honor all of them for their selfless contributions and for upholding New York as a leading age-friendly city in the nation.”

New York State Office for the Aging Director Greg Olsen said: “Older adults contribute mightily to their communities. Individuals like Deborah Gilliard are a great reason why New York lives up to its designation as an age-friendly state – the first in the nation to receive this distinction. Older New Yorkers not only help their peers in the same age group, but also families and youths as well, with a level of voluntary contribution that is unmatched by any other demographic group. We are so proud to celebrate their incredible contributions. We thank them for their wisdom, their talents, their mentorship, and their service.”

Throughout New York State, over 935,000 individuals age 55 or older contribute approximately 495 million hours of service to their communities annually. This translates into an annual economic output of \$13.8 billion.

People over the age of 50 also account for the majority of volunteering, philanthropy, and donation activities in the U.S. Older New Yorkers and Baby Boomers make up 63 percent – \$379 billion – of all the household income generated in New York State, supporting local businesses and schools while contributing significantly to the local and state economy.

About the New York State Office for the Aging and Health Across All Policies/Age-Friendly New York

The New York State Office for the Aging (NYSOFA) continuously works to help the state’s 4.3 million older adults be as independent as possible for as long as possible through advocacy, development and delivery of person-centered, consumer-oriented, and cost-effective policies, programs, and services that support and empower older adults and their families, in partnership with the network of public and private organizations that serve them.

New York is nationally recognized for being the first age-friendly state in the nation. Using the state's Prevention Agenda as the overarching framework, in 2017, New York launched a Health Across All Policies approach, where public and private partners work together to positively impact population health by marrying health care, preventive health, and community design, in concert with addressing social determinants of health, to improve the lives of all New Yorkers, young and old.

Stay connected—visit the NYSOFA Facebook page; follow @NYSAGING on Twitter and NYSAGING on Instagram; or visit aging.ny.gov.

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