

# Innovating & Thriving

Annual Highlights Report 2021







## Innovating & Thriving

**As Churchill once said: "Never let a good crisis go to waste." In the second year of the global pandemic, PSS expanded on its many innovations of 2020.**

Staff focused on perfecting new techniques for delivering information and services, ensuring that clients and communities continued to thrive in these trying times.

**Together...** we learned to live in our new digital world, alleviated the isolation of the homebound, and helped our clients access life-saving vaccines. As Fiscal Year 2021 came to a close, PSS staff dedicated their energy towards reopening centers safely for in-person activities, while virtual and hybrid programming continued to enrich the lives of older adults and caregivers. Every time the pandemic presented new challenges, PSS continued to break new ground as it found innovative ways to overcome every one of them.



## Innovating to Serve Our Communities

This past year, **PSS Centers** deployed innovative solutions to meet our members' need for information, technology training, health advice, exercise and creative outlets.

We combatted the isolation that many older adults face by reaching out through daily wellness calls and WhatsApp video conferences. Centers continued to serve hundreds of members through virtual presentations and hybrid activities, the latter combining on-line presentations with innovative in-home projects.

The pandemic lockdown heightened our awareness that older adults need training to boost their digital skills. PSS partnered with GetSetUp and Candoo, tech companies with a focus on training older adults in technology, to deliver virtual tech classes to close to 600 older adults. Our technical trainer led live trainings across all ten PSS centers for over 200 older adults who needed personalized digital assistance. Members learned how to better use smartphones and tablets, email, Zoom to access classes, and Telehealth.

Exciting partnerships with the **NYC Department for the Aging** brought our members *Age-tastic*, which joins game

play with thought-provoking discussion, and the **Chat with the Expert Series** covering a wide range of topics important to older adults. Evidence-based classes continued with the Spanish *Chronic Disease Self-Management Program*, a virtual *Matter of Balance* series, and *Tai Chi for Arthritis* and *Falls Prevention* classes.

Reaching out to help our communities thrive, all 10 centers distributed pantry items, supplies and food. Several centers also served as COVID-19 testing sites and vaccination distribution hubs, while staff helped make vaccine appointments on behalf of older adults.

As FY 2021 came to an end and New York saw a lower COVID positivity rate, NYC older adult centers began to come back. PSS centers began reopening offering indoor activities with limited capacity, social distancing and mask-wearing, even if fully vaccinated, and outdoor activities like games, gardening and a walking club.



To learn more visit our website:  
<https://pssusa.org/centers/>

553 CLASSES,  
ACTIVITIES, & EVENTS

to

**4,055**

OLDER NEW  
YORKERS

524 DIGITAL - TECH  
TRAINING SESSIONS

to

**570**

SENIOR CENTER  
MEMBERS

(of which **176** were Spanish-speaking)

AND ANOTHER

**205**

OLDER ADULTS

who needed personalized help were  
provided one-on-one computer  
training at one of PSS's 10 Centers.

PSS IS PROUD OF KEEPING

**5,000**

OLDER NEW YORKERS

engaged and connected in the midst of a  
global pandemic (and we plan to DOUBLE  
the number of activities and people served  
by next year).



## PSS Life! University Fills Critical Needs

**PSS is committed to lifelong learning  
for all New Yorkers—no matter what  
their age or stage of life.**

PSS Life U provides a wide range of skill-  
building, critical information and personal  
enjoyment classes, activities and events  
delivered by highly qualified presenters, helping  
to enhance every aspect of our adults' lives.

PSS is particularly focused on increasing the  
"digital capacity" of older New Yorkers, to help  
them successfully navigate the challenges of  
life in an ever-more digital world. We surveyed  
our various audiences and it is clear that this  
is an area of critical need. Over 500 digital/  
tech training sessions were provided to 570  
senior center members (of which 176 were  
Spanish-speaking). Another 205 benefitted from  
personalized, one-on-one computer training  
offered at PSS Centers in the Bronx  
and Manhattan.

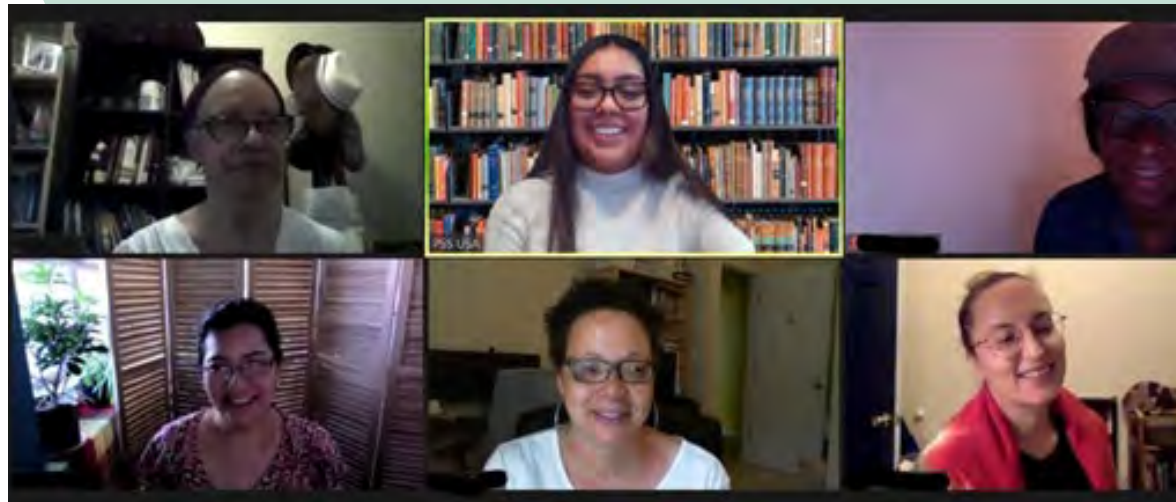
This past year PSS provided nearly 600 different  
classes, activities and events to over 5,000 older  
New Yorkers! Visit our web site to see what PSS  
Life U has to offer you!



**To learn more visit our website:**

<https://pssusa.org/psslifeu/>





## Busier Than Ever

FY 2021 found [PSS Circle of Care](#) busier than ever supporting caregivers to meet the new challenges of caregiving during the pandemic.

PSS Circle of Care offered 96 virtual support group sessions to over 100 unduplicated individuals. PSS made sure that older adults were able to remain informed, engaged and connected. In fact, throughout the turbulent past year, PSS Circle of Care stayed on course and provided over 330 online classes, activities and events to close to 2,500 New Yorkers through our PSS Life University portal.

**Our staff was also busy with additional training, presenting at conferences and making new connections.**

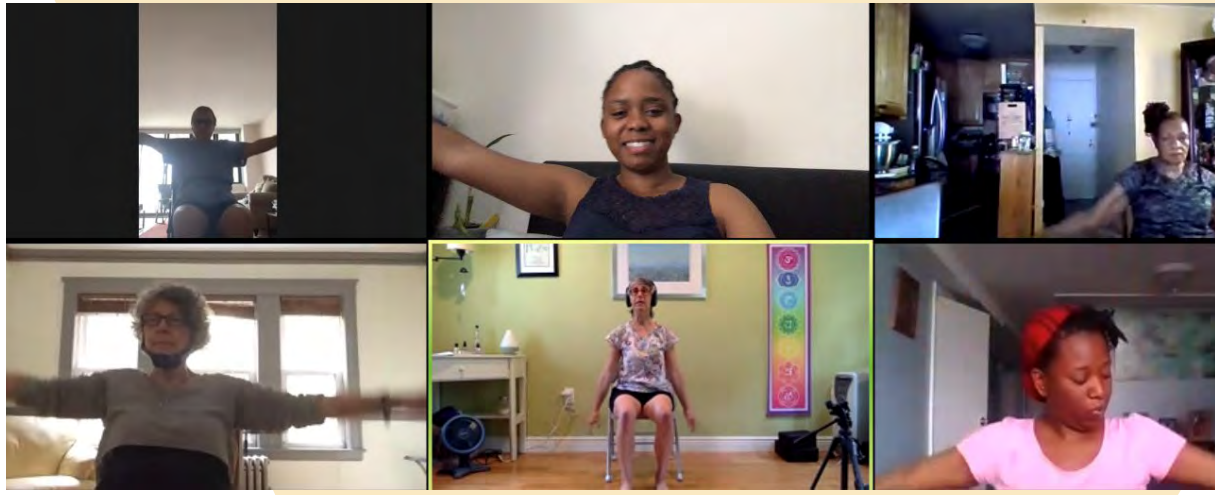
**Certified Dementia Communication Specialists:** The PSS Circle of Care team recently completed training as Certified Dementia Communication Specialists so they can now lead “Dementia Raw” classes. We shared our expertise as part of the New York State Office for the Aging Virtual

**Caregiving Conference** in June, facilitating a workshop entitled *Improv and Empathy: Dementia Communication Essentials for Family Caregivers*. The same workshop was presented as part of the June **Brain Injury Association of New York State** annual conference.

**PSS Circle of Care launched Caregiver Photography Workshop:** A new partnership with professional photographer and caregiver Cheney Orr, founder of *Picturing Care*, made it possible for us to host an innovative photography workshop entitled *Photography Workshop: Caregiving Stories*. Cheney kicked off the four-part photography series in March that taught participants the basics of photographic storytelling.



To learn more visit our website:  
<https://pssusa.org/caregivers>



## Thriving Through Virtual Programming

Like many of PSS's programs, Coming of Age managed to thrive during the pandemic as it successfully switched its in-person programs to virtual ones.

In fact, during this past year, Coming of Age hosted a total of 64 virtual events for 1,086 different people. Many of these were extremely popular—with attendance often exceeding 100 participants.

One series, the *Creative Writer' Series* proved to be so popular that the attendees launched their own virtual user group—meeting regularly online even today. Providing opportunities for participants to connect with one another, share ideas and discuss their work is what Coming of Age is all about: creating community.

Manager Pamela Ramsden was invited to be a panelist on the topic of inclusivity and older workers during the NYC Society of Human Resources (SHRM) annual conference.

At the end of this fiscal year, after five years of building Coming of Age up to the powerful program that it is today, Pamela formally retired to start her next exciting new chapter in life.



To learn more visit our website: <https://comingofagenyc.org>

# Special thanks to Rutgers Presbyterian Church for its generous support and donating valuable space for the PSS administrative offices.

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