

Virtual Senior Centers-Connecting the Isolated

The Rosenthal Senior Center in New York State is implementing a new concept to bring homebound seniors together. As Leo Asen stated, VP for senior communities, "We want to keep the homebound seniors engaged with life. Their social networks are shrinking. You often see depression or anxiousness. Our plan is to install cameras at the Rosenthal center, some stationary and some to be rolled around on carts. Through applications, those at home can sign in, participate in classes, and converse with the other students as if they were here."

To help with continuing education and socialization, a partnership between Queens College and the senior center was announced by Assemblyman Barry Grodenchik (D-Flushing), who acted as a liaison between the two organizations. As Grodenchik said "It is the first time in Queens that a senior center is offering college courses. This way, the seniors do not have to pay a bus fare. Or stand outside if it is raining waiting for a bus. Our idea was to bring it here."

Two courses are offered at Rosenthal center - "History of the Jewish People" and "Humor and Optimism as Tools for Good Health".

"We hope that this is the beginning of a long partnership that will allow us to meet the changing needs of older Queens residents," said Grace Nierenberg, vice president of housing and senior centers for Self-help Community Services. We sought Queens College for its willingness to embrace a new concept in lifelong learning by bringing its classes directly into the community," she added.

These courses are taught by our finest instructors at Queens College," said James Muyskens, the president of Queens College. "And it provides the opportunity for members of Queens College, the Self Help Benjamin Rosenthal Center, and the community at large to enroll in courses ranging from great literature to computers."

Remarkable idea!