CREATIVE REFLECTIONS

Finding Community Through Art

A New Yorker since childhood and former elementary school special education teacher, Erika first came to Search and Care as a client. Referred while receiving speech therapy, she used Medical Escorting, which provides paid, professional escorts to help older adults get to and from healthcare appointments. After building relationships with the team, Erika offered to lead a group of her own. Following personal losses, she had struggled to find grief support. An online faith-based group helped, but she recognized that its approach might not suit everyone.

"Being in community helps us process loss."

ERIKA ON FOUNDING CREATIVE REFLECTIONS

In October 2025, Erika launched Creative Reflections, a community for processing grief through art. She spent a year studying grief support and end-of-life doula practices, developing an approach incorporating expressive arts.

"Being in community helps us process loss," Erika wrote. "I always use my creativity to process life, and thought that approach might assist others."

Participants share stories, talk about life's changes and find relief in knowing they are not alone. Silver Circles and Groups Coordinator Jacob recalled one participant saying she had felt down, but remembering she could attend the group helped her feel alright again.

"The Search and Care Team and staff are wonderful," Erika wrote, expressing hope for continued recognition and support of the organization's compassionate services.

Her contribution reflects Search and Care's commitment to older neighbors' emotional as well as physical needs. "That phrase, 'I'm not alone in this,' is critical to all of our groups," Jacob said. "It's central to the community we're working to create."

SILVER CIRCLES BRINGS NEIGHBORS TOGETHER AT UPPER EAST SIDE SUMMER EVENT





SEARCH AND CARE'S UPPER EAST SIDE GARDEN WAS A GATHERING PLACE FOR MUSIC, ART AND CONVERSATION THIS SUMMER. ORGANIZED BY THE SILVER CIRCLES TEAM, THE 'COMMUNITY GATHERING' GAVE OLDER NEIGHBORS AN AFTERNOON TO SHOWCASE TALENTS, AND RECONNECT.





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HELPING OUR NEIGHBORS AGE SAFELY AT HOME SINCE 1972

Search and Care

Building PET Partnerships to Expand Impact

Connecting UES and UWS with critical resources for companion pets

This September, Search and Care joined the ASPCA, West 142nd St. Dog Run and Assembly Member Jordan Wright for a free pet vaccination event. More than 100 dog and cat owners made appointments, helping protect pets and other animals.

Search and Care distributed Emergency Wallet Cards, and promoted something everyone should consider making: Advance Pet Plans, which ensures they have care in emergencies and stay out of shelters.

The event reflects our growing relationship with the ASPCA and other partners to support vulnerable older pet guardians and their companion animals. The ASPCA already provided clients' animals with free vet care in coordination with our Pets + Elders Together (PET) team. Through the partnership, Search and Care accepts referrals for older pet owners facing challenges such as hoarding and financial insecurity, providing support to make life safer for them and their pets.

As shelters face significant demand, our Advance Pet Planning Initiative helps older adults prepare for situations in which they can no longer care for their animals. PET Coordinator Robin Strashun continues to share wallet cards and organize workshops to raise awareness. An October presentation with Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright drew so many RSVPs it required a venue change. These efforts help keep pets in caring homes and out of shelters.

PET Coordinator Robin Strashun said the ASPCA partnership helps clients plan for their pets' care while managing their own needs.

"If we can prevent more companion animals from entering the shelter system, and encourage other service providers to do the same for the owners they reach, Search and Care is proud to contribute to New York City's animal welfare agenda."



TOP: ASSEMBLY MEMBER JORDAN WRIGHT, L, WITH A WEST 142ND ST. DOG RUN DUO AT THE EVENT. **BOTTOM**: ROBIN STRASHUN SHARED P.E.T. RESOURCES, INCLUDING HOW EVERY PET OWNER SHOULD PREPARE FOR AN EMERGENCY. SEE STORY FOR DETAILS.

PETS & ELDERS TOGETHER (PET)

4 Ways Search and Care Helps

VETERINARY CARE
Coordinating with veterinary providers, including the ASPCA, to help clients access care for their pets

EMERGENCY PET FUND
Providing emergency stipends to help older guardians meet their pets' needs

SUPPORT AT HOME
Connecting clients with in-home volunteer assistance through PAWS NY

ADVANCE PET PLANNING
Helping guardians plan for pet care in case of an emergency, with the goal of keeping animals out of shelters





Working Together to Tackle Food Insecurity

Upper West Side partnerships combine meal delivery and personalized care

This summer, Search and Care's Upper West Side Care Management Team volunteered with Meals on Wheels through Encore Community Services, delivering food to older adults experiencing food insecurity. Search and Care provides care management to hundreds of Encore's meal recipients, helping secure benefits and offering mental health support, housing advocacy, care coordination and crisis intervention. Pushing a heavy meal cart through crowded Times Square on a hot day gave the team a firsthand look at the demands of delivery, especially when recipients have disabilities that make answering the door difficult. "We learned how challenging it can be to be the personnel on the ground," said Upper West Side Program Director Christopher Ramos. "It made us really appreciative of the work Meals on Wheels does." The experience comes as Search and Care expands its Healthy Food, Healthy Life initiative and partnership with West Side Campaign Against Hunger, arranging food deliveries for vulnerable, homebound clients. "The price of everything, including food, is going up drastically," Chris said. "As a result, they have an increased need for assistance."

The team also connects clients with Meals on Wheels, SNAP, community resources and Search and Care's Money Matters Financial Guidance, helping them afford groceries and other necessities. "We saw how appreciative clients are when they receive their meals," Chris said.

From dispatchers and delivery workers to care managers securing support and checking that meals arrive, the effort depends on teamwork and an individualized approach to each older adult's needs.



SEARCH & CARE'S ROBIN STRASHUN FOUNDED ICHOOSE TO CONNECT CENTRAL PARK EAST HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH OLDER ADULT MENTORS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS. NOW IN ITS 18TH YEAR, THE PROGRAM FOSTERS CONVERSATION, CONFIDENCE AND CONNECTION.

A Space to Grow

Robin Strashun pairs students and older mentors + community leaders through iChoose

AS ICHOOSE HEADS INTO ITS 18TH YEAR, WE CAUGHT UP WITH THE PROGRAM'S FOUNDER/DIRECTOR

Robin launched iChoose in 2008 with Washington Square Fund support to address East Harlem's high teen pregnancy rate.

Since then, she has tailored it to Central Park East High School students' needs, creating a safe, welcoming space for conversation, mentorship and growth.

Throughout the school year, students explore life lessons and prepare for the future through conversations that encourage them to reflect, ask questions and share their perspectives.

Watching students grow and build bonds makes the program especially meaningful for Robin, who also leads Search and Care's Outreach, Pets + Elders Together and Medical Escorting programs.

She recalls their response when she announced the Peer Coordinator last September: "All her friends were cheering her. The recognition was so powerful. She's remarkable," said Robin.

Students share their struggles, family experiences and ambitions, building a supportive community where they can discuss what matters to them and become invested in each other's lives.

From an intergenerational lens, Robin emphasizes how important the program is for both students and the several older adult participants. "It shows the kids that good people come in all shapes and sizes," says Robin. "It makes the mentors feel valued. And they are."

iCHOOSE MENTOR SPOTLIGHTS



BERTHA HOPE
Jazz pianist / educator who performed for students and shared her experiences overcoming racism and sexism as a traveling musician



JANET SLOKNIK
Fine arts instructor at Lehman College, now nearly blind, whose story is featured in the documentary *20/20 Hands*



HERBERT DURAN
Former Search and Care employee, now Archivist at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies



ISAAC SCOTT
Artist, pastor and advocate who was formerly incarcerated and now leads Columbia University's Justice in Education Initiative

JOSE'S JOURNEY

Silver Circles inspires a future in healthcare

Jose first joined Search and Care as a volunteer Computer Coach with Silver Circles, quickly impressing the team with his care and dedication to older participants. As we expanded our partnership with Mount Sinai's Martha Stewart Center for Living, providing telehealth coaching in the clinic, Jose became a paid Computer Coach.

Inspired by his mother's career in social work, Jose wanted to follow her example. "My mom, she's been in the career her whole life. It can be very demanding, but it's really rewarding. I just wanted to follow in her footsteps," Jose said.

His relationship with his grandmother also deepened his awareness of older adults' needs. "I'm very close to my grandmother," he told us. "She's been fortunate enough to have me close, and I've been fortunate enough to have her close, but I've recognized that other older adults are often alone and struggle to live independently."

These experiences shaped Jose's compassionate, personal approach. Beyond technology coaching, he helped translate training materials into Spanish, set up tablets for our tablet loan program and hosted Game Club, giving older adults opportunities to connect.

Just as important, he built relationships with participants experiencing isolation, offering a friendly face and a reminder that their community cares.

"The bonds I created went way past technology coaching," Jose said. "I was there for them and they were there for me. It was a mutual relationship. I was very glad to make bonds with them."

Now studying neuroscience at Duke, Jose credits Silver Circles with helping shape his path toward healthcare.

"Search and Care provided a different look into healthcare," he says. "It showed me that the social services side is often just as important as the medical."

We are grateful for Jose's contributions and wish him success in this next chapter.





SILVER CIRCLES VOLUNTEERS WORK ONE-ON-ONE WITH SEARCH AND CARE CLIENTS AT OUR 94TH STREET OFFICE AND GARDEN, SHARING PRACTICAL TECHNOLOGY SKILLS TO STAY CONNECTED WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS, ACCESS HEALTHCARE AND NAVIGATE EVERYDAY NEEDS.

Technology Brings Generations Together

Silver Circles connects older adults with digital skills, healthcare and community

As Search and Care continues its agency-wide expansion, the Silver Circles team is strengthening its efforts to educate older adults, bridge the digital divide, improve healthcare access and integrate services.

The team is expanding and enhancing its collaborative Tech and Telehealth Education project with Mount Sinai's Martha Stewart Center for Living, exploring new ways to meet older adults' needs and improve access to care. "People are really enjoying presentations, and Mount Sinai has been so collaborative," said Jacob, our Silver Circles Program Director.

"They've referred patients for other Search and Care services, especially for nutritional support; the fact that we're able to see patients within the clinic itself has really opened them up to our support."

This integrated care is essential for older adults with complex needs and reflects Search and Care's broader efforts to address the social determinants of health that shape wellbeing.

Artificial intelligence has become another area of focus. Its growing presence in daily life has raised questions among older participants, prompting presentations and individual discussions about the technology's uses and risks.

"Clients have lots of good questions," said Jacob, "because there's a lot of folks with concerns about AI. But overall their experience has been positive."

The team also played a large role in organizing this summer's 'Community Gathering,' a warm event in Search and Care's outdoor garden where clients shared their talents, socialized and had fun. "Clients loved it," said Jacob. "They really enjoyed the folks who showed off their talents.

One client even brought her paintings, which people loved. So many people came up and just said thank you for even having this event."

As the program adapts to community needs, Silver Circles remains dedicated to bridging the digital divide, improving access to care and building a connected, loving community where older neighbors can thrive together.

SILVER CIRCLES BY THE NUMBERS

200 OLDER ADULTS RECEIVED ONE-ON-ONE, INTERGENERATIONAL TECHNOLOGY COACHING OVER PAST YEAR

250 APPROX OLDER ADULTS PARTICIPATED IN PRESENTATIONS ON TECH TOPICS OVER PAST YEAR

PARTICIPANTS MAY HAVE TAKEN PART IN BOTH COACHING AND PRESENTATIONS

CONNECTIONS EXTEND BEYOND THE SCREEN AS SILVER CIRCLES VOLUNTEERS AND CLIENTS BUILD BONDS ACROSS GENERATIONS IN SEARCH AND CARE'S OFFICE GARDEN.

