



# New York Nonprofit Press

October 16, 2014 E-Newsletter

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## ***Virtual Senior Center Expands to Nassau County***

The Selfhelp/Kimmel nonprofit partnership is expanding the nationally acclaimed Virtual Senior Center (VSC) initiative to a select number of homebound seniors in Nassau County. The VSC, already available in Queens (NY), Chicago, San Diego and Baltimore, is an innovative program using technology to easily connect homebound elderly through live interactive classes and online activities to help thwart the deleterious effects of social isolation. Planning for the expansion to Nassau was made possible by a grant from the Long Island Community Foundation. Implementation was supported by a \$100,000 grant from the Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock (UUCSR) in Manhasset and supporting grants from the Manhasset Community Fund and Hofstra University's National Center for Suburban Studies.

The Long Island VSC launched officially October 7, with a special preview for community groups and a media event, featuring a live class demonstration and offering the opportunity to speak with participating seniors as well as the program sponsors.

The initial curriculum of local live classes will be hosted by the Glen Cove Senior Center, the Sid Jacobson Jewish Community Center in East Hills and the Magnolia Senior Center of Long Beach. Classes will include current events, painting, the history of Long Island and more. Recruitment of the 24 Long Island senior participants began in August and is ongoing.

The seniors' residences will be outfitted with a touchscreen, VSC-enabled computer and assistive technology. The hardware will be installed, training provided and technical support made available so that the seniors can easily take part in live classes and connect with the Internet for a range of other options. Classes will be streamed live from the participating senior centers. The Long Island-based seniors will also have access to all VSC classes initiated by the NYC/Queens, Chicago, San Diego and Baltimore VSC partners, including special live events and

discussions from the Guggenheim, the Museum of Modern Art, the New York Historical Society, the New York Hall of Science, weekly wellness classes, current events discussions, technology that can connect the seniors with friends and relatives, as well as courses on self-esteem, managing your finances, computer skills, support groups, book and movie review classes, and celebrations for holidays.

"When Selfhelp and Kimmel formed our partnership last year," said Stuart C. Kaplan, CEO of Selfhelp Community Services, "we had hopes of bringing the VSC to Long Island's homebound seniors. But we had no idea a pilot project would take shape so soon. We are delighted and most grateful to the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Shelter Rock, the Long Island Community Foundation, the Manhasset Community Fund and Hofstra University's National Center for Suburban Studies for making this dream a reality."

"Long Island is the perfect area to expand access to the Virtual Senior Center," said Ronald Roel, a member of the Board of Directors of the Kimmel Housing Development Foundation, and part of the Selfhelp/Kimmel partnership. "Nassau and Suffolk are among the fastest growing aging populations in the state, and with so many seniors aging in place, we need to find creative and cost-effective ways to keep seniors healthy and connected in their homes."

A separate grant from The Manhasset Community Fund's Good Neighbor Grant program will help identify and prepare an additional four seniors, bringing the total pilot participation to 24 homebound seniors who will have access to a broad-based curriculum of interactive and discussion-oriented programming from across the country. Long Island-generated classes will be offered four times a week. Additionally, seniors will be able to enjoy the classes live at participating centers in Long Island over the course of the year.