

## New Age-Friendly Community Center Opening in Teaneck

The goal of age-friendly community work is to achieve lasting impact.

The leaders of [Age-Friendly Teaneck](#) are celebrating a concrete sign of community progress with the opening this month of a new community center that will serve as a hub of new age-friendly programming in this town of 40,000 residents in Bergen County.

The community center is located on the ground floor of a new 40-unit affordable senior apartment building, a project that itself is a symbol of age-friendly change in Teaneck.



The building at 1425 Teaneck Road had been the site of a long vacant municipal public works building. Township leaders decided to make the property available and contribute \$900,000 from Teaneck's affordable housing trust fund to support the effort.

"While many towns in New Jersey are still actively opposing the construction of affordable housing, Teaneck embraced the idea of dedicating municipal land for a building that is not only affordable, but will also offer on-site programming to support its tenants and older adults throughout the community," said Elizabeth Davis, executive director of [The Bright Side Family](#), the nonprofit that leads the Age-Friendly Teaneck community initiative.

"This new building is not just a symbol of Teaneck's progress on age-friendly goals," Davis added. "It's also a launching pad for what we hope will be new collaborations among the many residents and community leaders committed to making Teaneck a great place to live at any age."

Davis points out that when her nonprofit first set about building another affordable senior housing building in Teaneck more than a decade ago, the proposal was met with substantial resistance in the community. In contrast, several years after the launch of the Age-Friendly Teaneck community initiative, leaders in municipal government approached The Bright Side Family with the idea to use this municipal land for affordable senior housing.

"This building is a result of the many fruitful partnerships that our Age-Friendly Teaneck community initiative helped foster," Davis said. "As we move forward to develop programs and events at this new center, we are confident that this effort will continue to benefit from substantial community support and collaboration."

Many government agencies and non-profit providers – including the Township Social Services department, Holy Name Medical Center, Jewish Family and Children's Services of Northern New Jersey and Bergen County Division of Senior Services – have already committed to providing educational programs and other services at the site.

With support from its partners, Age-Friendly Teaneck will be hosting three educational programs at the community center this month, with plans to increase the frequency of events in future months.

"We intend for this community center to be shaped by input from residents of the building and from older residents throughout Teaneck," said EJ Vizzi, director of senior programs for The Bright Side Family. "We will be distributing surveys to gauge interest and rely on the input of our Age-Friendly Teaneck Advisory Board, which is made up of a cross-section of older residents, civic leaders and community providers."

The hope is that new community center will be the site of new intergenerational programs. Age-Friendly Teaneck's leaders are working with administrators of Teaneck Public Schools to develop new community service opportunities for students to volunteer with and for older adults and to establish an Age-Friendly Teaneck Club at Teaneck High School.

The center will also be the new lead site for AFT's [Exploring Careers in Aging](#) internship program, with the hope of also expanding that program to include internship for opportunities for local college students.

"We want this new center to be a place for older adults to make connections with one another and with young people in the community," Vizzi said. "It is gratifying to know we now have a permanent gathering space from which to anchor our future age-friendly endeavors."