



## News from the Office of ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ



### NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: Peter Anderson  
Peter.Anderson@erie.gov

#### **ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE KICKS OFF 2026 SPRING SEMESTER OF *UNIVERSITY EXPRESS***

*Poloncarz Joins City of Buffalo Historian Visser to Present "Roosevelt Rumble: FDR vs. TR"  
at OP Senior Center*

**ERIE COUNTY, NY**— The Erie County Department for the Aging's University Express program officially launched its Spring 2026 semester today at the Orchard Park Senior Center as Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz led the special kickoff class with a special presentation, "Roosevelt Rumble: FDR vs. TR." The program featured County Executive Poloncarz and City of Buffalo Historian Lindsey Lauren Visser in a lively debate that drew an enthusiastic audience of older adults from across Erie County.

In this spirited "showdown," County Executive Poloncarz made the case for Franklin D. Roosevelt, highlighting his transformative leadership during the New Deal and World War II. Ms. Visser took the opposing corner, championing Theodore Roosevelt and emphasizing his bold reforms, dynamic presidency, and larger-than-life personality. The event offered insight, laughter, and plenty of audience engagement as attendees considered which Roosevelt left the greater legacy.

"It was a pleasure and an honor to join Lindsey in Orchard Park today and debate the merits of the two Roosevelts, a debate we often have between us, and the audience certainly appreciated the discussion. University Express provides many opportunities to learn about many interesting people and topics throughout the semester, so I encourage older adults to check out the program and get involved," **said Erie County Executive Mark C. Poloncarz.**

"Our goal with University Express is to help older adults stay active, engaged, and connected to their community," **said Randall Hoak, Commissioner of the Department for the Aging.** "The program's continued growth each semester shows just how much people value lifelong learning, and we're proud to offer opportunities that support both personal enrichment and social connection."

University Express offers free in-person and virtual classes for adults aged 50 and older at locations throughout Erie County. Led by volunteer instructors from across the community, classes cover a wide range of topics and provide opportunities for participants to stay mentally engaged, socially connected, and active. This spring, the program continues its growth with hundreds of classes on subjects such as current affairs, history, humanities, finance, and medicine. No homework or tests, just engaging discussion and shared learning.

Additional highlights include classes such as Facebook Safety and Security, Building Brain Healthy Habits, My City Smells Like Cheerios – The History of Cereal, Buffalo’s Green Book Sites, Backyard Wildlife, and Growing Foliage Plants, along with many new offerings for the spring semester.

Beyond the classroom, University Express continues to expand its popular programming with field trips to local destinations such as the Buffalo Naval Park, the Burchfield Penney Art Center, and the Erie County Longshed. Participants can also take part in monthly trivia events across senior centers, as well as favorites like Trivia in the Park, Puzzlepalooza, Fantasy Football, March Madness, and Book Club.

New participants can register online and view the full Spring 2026 class schedule at: <https://www4.erie.gov/universityexpress/>

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