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COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ INSTRUCTS FIRST CLASS OF THE 2024 FALL SEMESTER OF UNIVERSITY EXPRESS LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAM

ERIE COUNTY, NY – The Erie County Department of Senior Services' University Express program launched its Spring 2024 semester last night at the Cheektowaga Senior Center with a special class taught by County Executive Mark Poloncarz. His presentation, titled *"How FDR's 'Four Freedoms' Principles Still Apply in Our Country and World Today"*, drew an engaged audience.

"One of our department's primary focuses is the holistic well-being of older adults. Each semester, our program continues to grow, attracting new participants who are eager to learn. This allows older adults to enjoy mental stimulation and expand their social connections. We are incredibly proud of this program and grateful to our participants, volunteers, and partner locations for their continued support," said ***Commissioner of Senior Services, Angela Marinucci***.

The **University Express** program offers free in-person and virtual classes for adults aged 55 and older, covering a wide range of topics at locations throughout Erie County. Participants register for each class, which is led by volunteer instructors who are carefully recruited from across the county. The program has become one of the department's most popular, providing social interaction, mental engagement, and routine that enhance participants' overall well-being.

County Executive Poloncarz captivated attendees with an in-depth look at the historical context of FDR's famous "Four Freedoms" speech, explaining how the United States, facing challenges like the Great Depression and rising global tensions in the early 1940s, needed strong leadership. He delved into the four freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear—emphasizing how FDR's vision remains relevant in today's world.

Following the presentation, a lively Q&A session allowed the audience to further engage with the topic and its application to modern-day issues.

"FDR's Four Freedoms speech resonates as much today as it did the day he delivered it, speaking to the hopes and dreams of all Americans and underscoring the resiliency of our country, overcoming challenges today as it did decades ago. The audience at the Cheektowaga Senior Center is always lively, thoughtful, and engaged and it was a pleasure to speak to them" ***said County Executive, Mark Poloncarz***.

The University Express Program accepts new participants online at <https://www4.erie.gov/universityexpress/> where you can also find the complete class schedule for the Fall 2024 semester.