

## For Immediate Release

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### Free Classes, Big Impact: University Express Empowers Erie County's 50+ Community to Connect and Thrive

Learning, laughter, and lifelong friendships—*University Express* is where Erie County's older adults come to grow, connect, and have a whole lot of fun! One of the most impactful and beloved programs offered by the Erie County Department of Senior Services, University Express, features over 400 free classes across 30 locations countywide, with both in-person and virtual options to fit every schedule and interest.

University Express thrives on the energy of community participation. Volunteer instructors generously share their expertise in everything from history and health to technology and the arts. This upcoming Spring semester begins the first week of May, featuring exciting guest appearances from Erie County Comptroller Kevin Hardwick, retired radio icon and local author John Zach, renowned medium and author Tim Shaw, and many more outstanding instructors.

Each semester, the University Express team works tirelessly to create a vibrant lineup of classes designed to help older adults connect, learn, and thrive. From fun and lighthearted offerings like watercolor painting, emoji use, tech how-tos, sports classes, Pickleball 101, laughter yoga, exploring the power of CBD, and Harry Potter for Grandparents, there's something for every interest and energy level.

But what truly sets University Express apart is its commitment to meaningful, real-world learning. The program also tackles important and timely topics that matter deeply to the aging population. Classes this semester include You're Gone, Now What, Stop the Bleed, emergency preparedness, transforming anxiety, transgender and non-binary experiences, understanding Alzheimer's and dementia, sleep ergonomics, hands-only CPR, scam awareness, cancer education, navigating online hate, estate planning, and smart, affordable housing options.

And for the history buffs? University Express offers a fascinating look at the past—with classes diving into Erie County Parks, Native American schools, the Lake Erie Ice Boom, the Cleveland Hill School Fire, Buffalo's Movers and Shakers, Mark Twain's haunts around Western New York, Buffum Street Secrets, Buffalo Women in World War II, and much more.

"University Express is more than a series of classes—it's a lifeline for thousands of older adults across Erie County," said **Commissioner Randy Hoak**. "It sparks curiosity, builds friendships, and empowers our community to live better, longer, and more connected lives. Whether you're passionate about history, curious about technology, or just looking to try something new, there's a place for you in University Express."

This semester, there are more ways than ever to get involved and have fun. University Express is hosting four free field trips to the Burchfield Penney Art Center, the Williamsville Space Lab Planetarium, Chestnut Ridge for a stroll, and the Aurora Theatre for a screening of *Grease*! And for the first time ever, introducing Puzzle-palooza—a friendly competition where teams of four will

race to complete the same puzzle. Local winners from Cheektowaga, West Seneca, and Amherst will face off in a Championship round in July at the Amherst Senior Center.

Whether you're 50 or 95, it's never too late to try something new, meet great people, and have a little fun while you're at it! University Express isn't just about learning—it's about living. So, grab a friend, pick a class (or five!), and join the thousands of older adults across Erie County who are discovering just how exciting lifelong learning can be. All classes are free, there's no homework, and laughter is strongly encouraged. Your next favorite class is just around the corner—don't miss out!

### **For More Information**

Printed catalogs are available at local senior centers, public libraries, and some town halls. Visit [erie.gov/universityexpress](http://erie.gov/universityexpress) or call 716-858-6897.