



**Dear Colleagues:**

With the support and cooperation of our stakeholders, we are happy to say we are moving Ralston's Age-Friendly West Philadelphia Initiative forward.

Design sessions for Walk Age-Friendly Mantua are scheduled for August and you can see details below. If you haven't reached out yet but would like to join us, please contact Jennifer Russell.

We are happy to share that we welcomed two new team members to Ralston Center: Greta McKnight as Volunteer Services Coordinator and Social Worker and Jeffrin Joseph as a social work intern. You can read more about them below.

Look for a "save the date" shortly for our fall meeting of collaborators. It will be a great opportunity for us to catch up and share our accomplishments and future plans.

Please stay in touch and involved. All this work is possible because we are doing it together.

Best regards,



Joseph A. Lukach MSW, MBA, M. Div  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ralston Center

## Age-Friendly Places: Design Sessions Scheduled for Walk Age-Friendly Mantua August 6th, 13th and 20th

Walk Age-Friendly Mantua, a partnership with the Mantua Civic Association, Tiny WPA / Public Workshop and the Traction Company, launched in May to improve walkability and accessibility for older Mantua residents.

Locations for benches to benefit older residents were identified by the community through an intergenerational walkability audit. These benches will be specially

designed to meet the needs of older adults.

**Join us at our first design session led by Tiny WPA/Public Workshop on Saturday, August 6, at 10am to give your input and be a part of the design process!** All ages and abilities are welcome! We will also discuss and finalize decisions for the wayfinding signs to benefit all Mantua residents.



Two additional design sessions will be held on Saturday, August 13, and Saturday, August 20, at 10am.

**We will meet in front of the Mantua Presbyterian Apartments at the corner of 34th and Haverford Streets in Mantua for all sessions. Please be there at 10am.**

**Please contact [jrussell@ralstoncenter.org](mailto:jrussell@ralstoncenter.org) to sign up for a session, for more information or if you would like to share your ideas, learn some new skills and have fun!**

## New Faces at Ralston Center

Our Age-Friendly team is growing. In July, we welcomed **Greta McKnight to Ralston Center as our Volunteer Services Coordinator and Social Worker** and **Jeffrin Joseph as a social work intern.**



Greta grew up in Maryland and came to Philadelphia to pursue her MSW at the University of Pennsylvania. She spent the past year addressing the food access and social engagement needs of older West Philadelphians and has a deep commitment to the community. In her new role, Greta will focus on Ralston Center's Age-Friendly Resource Network and Food & Company initiatives. "I am happy to be

able to bring my recent experience to Ralston and am looking forward to bringing programming and resources to our community including access to good food, education, information on resources, social engagement opportunities and much more," shared Greta.

Jeffrin "Jeff" Joseph is from Chicago, Illinois and earned his BSW from Northeast Illinois University. He came to Philadelphia to pursue his MSW at the University of Pennsylvania and joined Ralston Center as an intern in July. "Ralston is a good fit for my career goals," said Jeff, "I want to continue to work with older adults in Philadelphia after graduation in May of next year."



## Spotlight: REACT!



Ralston House is hosting REACT!, the Rhythm Experience and Africana Culture Trial enabling older West Philadelphians to participate in African Dance and education and discussion groups.

REACT! is part of a research study led by the University of Pennsylvania's Institute on Aging in collaboration with the University of Pittsburgh's Brain Aging and Cognitive Health Lab.

The goal of the REACT! Study is to examine whether brain health, fitness levels or quality of life improve as a result of participating in dance or education activities three times per week for six months.

The study provides an opportunity to enhance socialization and perhaps even physical and cognitive health, and it also allows participants to help others in the aging African American community by providing evidence about ways to improve and maintain quality of life as we age.



Participants reported noticing benefits after only the first week of classes and members of both the education and dance groups reported how much they learned. Both groups look forward to seeing what is to come.

For more information, contact Kathryn Jedrzewski, Deputy Director, Institute on Aging, University of Pennsylvania, at 215-898-2445 or [jedzmk@mail.med.upenn.edu](mailto:jedzmk@mail.med.upenn.edu)

## **Celebrating 25 Years of Ralston Wellness**

This is our 25th year of offering Wellness classes to older adults at Ralston Center and in the community. You are all invited to join us to celebrate.

***SAVE THE DATE!***

**25th Anniversary Celebration of Ralston Wellness**

**Tuesday, October 11, 2016**

**9:00 am to 12:00 noon**

**Ralston Center**

Meet our participants and instructors while enjoying demonstration classes and good food. Watch for more details coming soon.

## **Want to share your events, news or updates?**

We are happy to include your news, events or updates focused on older adults in West Philadelphia in this newsletter. The deadlines for submitting information to be included for 2016 are:

September 30th (October Issue)  
November 23rd (December Issue)

Please send your information, photos and questions to Jean Papaj, Director of Communications and Marketing, at [jpapaj@ralstoncenter.org](mailto:jpapaj@ralstoncenter.org).

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