



# A NORC Can Make it Easier to Age in Place

*Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities offer a wide range of workshops and activities that can help older adults stay in their homes*



May 28, 2022

By Michele C. Hollow

My mom turned 90 last year and my dad passed away about 10 years ago. Her circle of friends dwindled. My brother told me to contact a local [NORC \(Naturally Occurring Retirement Community\)](#). NORCs are residential areas where people stay in the community, raise families, and retire.

My mom lives in the northwest Bronx, New York which is prime NORC territory since it has a large active older adult population.

"The idea is to keep people in their homes for as long as possible," says Bayla Butler, director of the [Amalgamated Park Reservoir NORC](#) which serves my mom's area.

"We partner with housing, health care, social services, and other entities," Butler explains. "We bring programs to older residents so they can age in their own homes."

NORC put me in touch with a nurse at VNS Health, a NORC partner organization.

One partnership program sent a graduate student majoring in occupational therapy from Columbia University in New York City to my mom's apartment. She spent a couple of hours observing my mom move throughout

the apartment and recommended grab bars in the bathroom. The cost for the visit: \$0. The installation also cost nothing. My mom paid for the grab bar.

### **Helping Family Members**

The nurse also recommended a gerontologist because my mom was seeing a family practitioner who had no experience caring for older adults. She told me about the Center for the Aging Brain at Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, and also gave me information on several topics: a lecture on [fall prevention](#), art classes (my mom used to teach art), financial and legal advice programs, and other activities in the neighborhood.

When my mom needed to fill out tax forms for her condo, a NORC administrator told me to have her come to the office and someone would help her fill out and notarize those forms. Again, there was no fee.

Initially, the nurse contacted me once a week; I believe she did so to make sure I was okay. Now, she checks in every month. My mom doesn't talk much on the phone. She has trouble hearing even with [hearing aids](#). A good portion of her hearing is gone.

While I'm the main contact between NORC and my mom, NORC posts flyers about activities in the lobby of her building. The NORC workshops and talks are free. They also publish a newsletter, which lists upcoming events.

### **Keeping Care Cost Effective**

My mom's NORC was one of the first funded in New York. Prior to overseeing the Amalgamated Park Reservoir NORC in the Bronx, Butler worked at one of the first NORCs in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

"Here in the Bronx, we have twenty-two buildings, one thousand eight-hundred apartments, and forty percent of the units house people ages sixty and over," Butler says. "We have a small staff with two social workers and an administrative assistant. Keeping people healthy and living in their homes for as long and safely as possible is our goal. It saves money, too."

Funding for NORC programs comes from government agencies, such as the Department for the Aging, and private organizations.

"NORC is a good example of an innovative approach to aging in place," says Emily Greenfield, professor at the Rutgers School of Social Work.

***Next Avenue* provides news and information and discussion of issues relevant to Americans over 50, such as health and well-being, money and security, work and purpose, living and learning, and caregiving. The news website reaches an audience of 250,033.**