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New Yorker is on a Mission to Increase Civic Engagement among Big Apple Residents

Public Affairs Professional and former Cuomo, Gillibrand Team Member Expands NYC Civic Engagement Platform with Launch of Podcast and Action-Minded Group - Issues Civic Engagement Challenge for New York City Residents

New York, NY – Former government staffer and current public affairs professional, **Samantha Diliberti**, believes multiple maladies facing New Yorkers can be improved through civic engagement – from mental health issues such as loneliness and depression, to crime and food insecurity. **Diliberti** announced the launch of [Progress through Purpose](#), a podcast to educate New Yorkers on issues affecting their city, and a simultaneous launch of [The OUG Squad](#), a free membership-based group that inspires New Yorkers to take in-person action together.

The podcast and membership-based group expands on the civic engagement platform [OrangeU Going? \(“OUG”\)](#) launched by **Diliberti** in 2017 to make it easier for New York residents, organizations, and elected officials to connect and affect change. The site quickly caught the attention of politicians, elected officials and nonprofit leaders.

The OUG Squad builds on the **Hour New York Challenge** **Diliberti** unveiled in an [appearance](#) on FOX 5 New York’s morning show, *Good Day New York*, with then-Bronx Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr. The **Hour New York Challenge** encourages New Yorkers to get civically engaged for at least one hour each month. The effort is also meant to help move New York State from its nearly dead-last ranking of 49th among the 50 states and Washington, D.C. as determined by the Corporation for National & Community Service, an independent federal agency that ranks states based on volunteering and civic engagement.

While the issue of civic engagement is serious to **Diliberti**, she didn’t think the name of the platform that helps New Yorkers engage needed to be. She named **OrangeU Going, Inc.** inspired by the classic knock-knock joke, creating a name that is meant to be memorable and easy to market.

“I found myself asking friends and colleagues, ‘Aren’t you going to this event?’, ‘Aren’t you going to get involved in this?’ and it just stuck,” said **Diliberti** of the platform name.

Diliberti believes civic engagement offers a remedy to the many issues plaguing New Yorkers. [Three in five](#) Americans report [feelings of loneliness](#), as well as rising rates of depression and anxiety - a twenty-five percent increase world-wide since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the

[World Health Organization](#). These increased rates of isolation and mental health issues directly correlate with the decline of U.S. civic and community groups and Americans' falling participation in them according to the groundbreaking research of Robert Putnam, chronicled in his book *Bowling Alone*.

"It's no surprise that the pandemic, coupled with the increasingly prevalent work-from-home model, and our increased reliance on technology have exacerbated mental health issues," says **Diliberti**. "We need to move away from using technology as a replacement for social connection and instead use it as a tool to foster in-person engagement. That's what **OrangeU Going** is doing through **The OUG Squad** – connecting people through civic engagement to improve our city and strengthen our personal connections and communities."

Also on the rise is the reliance by New Yorkers on the services of area nonprofit organizations, which can be helped tremendously by support from volunteers. Other issues, such as climate change, crime, diversity, or development, are greatly improved through citizen participation in civic and community organizations.

In its simplest form, the **OrangeU Going** platform can be described as the EventBrite for civic events, featuring change-making events throughout New York City all on one site, with customizable tools for platform users. The launch of the **Progress through Purpose** podcast and **The OUG Squad** seeks to make the platform more interactive and a resource for civic-minded New Yorkers who want to connect in person.

To help New Yorkers discover issues they are passionate about and help them identify ways they can engage, the podcast **Progress through Purpose** will feature organization leaders discussing issues they are working on, how they are affecting systemic change, and how New Yorkers can get involved. Inspired New Yorkers can then visit **OrangeUGoing.com** to find change-making events throughout the city and get involved either individually or with like-minded New Yorkers through **The OUG Squad**.

Diliberti discusses in an episode of **Progress through Purpose** how civic engagement goes beyond giving back to communities and also benefits New Yorkers individually.

"So, what can civic engagement do for you?" **Diliberti** asks listeners. "Civic engagement can help you feel more fulfilled, purposeful, confident, and happy. It can expand your friendships and support your professional development. It can uplift your neighborhood, your city, and the world."

Progress through Purpose launches with discussions about issues that are often top of mind for many - homelessness and prejudice. Inaugural guests include **Jacquelyn Simone, Policy Director for Coalition for the Homeless** and **Rev. Mark Fowler, Executive Director of Tanenbaum**, an organization that promotes justice and builds respect for religious difference.

"In the age of information overload, making civic engagement more accessible is helpful for both busy New Yorkers and resource-stretched nonprofits," **Simone** states. "We hope that OrangeU Going and the new podcast will help more New Yorkers learn about the systemic issues that lead to homelessness and inspire them to take action through volunteerism and advocacy."

The podcast, **Diliberti** says, will have something for everyone.

“What makes civic engagement exciting is the self-discovery that you experience along the way,” said **Diliberti**. “***Progress through Purpose*** helps listeners discover what inspires them to take action. There are thousands of organizations doing incredible work across New York City and this is an easy way to learn about them.”

Tanenbaum transforms individuals and institutions to reduce prejudice, violence, and hatred for religious difference.

“Religion impacts all of our daily lives - regardless of whether someone is personally religious or not,” said **Fowler**. “Our histories, institutions, and societies are founded in religion. It’s vital that both individuals and the institutions in power recognize and respect religious diversity in our city and globally in order to build equity.”

Podcast listeners can visit OrangeUGoing.com to find events and resources related to the organizations and beyond.

“The podcast is just the first step,” **Diliberti** explained. “The next step is getting involved. For example, **Tanenbaum** has launched their [3,000 Conversations for Building Respect Series](#), which is an opportunity for people to explore how to build respect for religious difference through authentic and intentional conversations. We encourage listeners to get involved. This is an opportunity for authentic, purposeful conversation centered around promoting justice and building respect throughout our communities.”

Progress through Purpose can be found at OrangeUGoing.com/podcast and on listeners' favorite streaming platforms, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Google Podcasts, and Amazon Music. To learn more about The OUG Squad and the Hour New York Challenge, visit <https://orangeugoing.com/the-oug-squad>.

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[OrangeU Going, Inc.](#) is on a mission to increase civic engagement among New Yorkers through the Hour New York Challenge, which challenges New Yorkers to get civically engaged for at least one hour each month. OrangeU Going offers tools and resources to make it easy for New Yorkers to get involved, including the [OrangeU Going Social Impact Calendar](#) which features exclusively New York City civic events, the podcast [Progress through Purpose](#) which educates listeners on the social and policy issues impacting New York, and [The OUG Squad](#) - a free membership group that takes on the Hour New York Challenge together. OrangeU Going is a non-partisan organization.