

# DEARBORN

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*

fall2010

## PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS: CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

When Partnerships for Parks launched 15 years ago, we attempted something no one had done before: involve the public in the ongoing maintenance, advocacy, and stewardship of neighborhood parks citywide. It was a novel idea and a necessary one, given the state of parks following the 1970s recession. On the program's 15th anniversary, we've asked long-time staff and community partners to share what they've learned about what it takes to build successful groups. Together their stories remind us that, because of people courageous enough to try something new, the City's parks, playgrounds, and recreation centers are today vibrant centers of community life.

### START WITH A STRONG CORE

**Committee to Improve Carroll Park (CICP)** was one of the first groups to work with Partnerships. Former CICP President Glenn Kelly was a parks advocate already, having helped reinstate funds for Carroll Park's renovation back in 1991. But he says Partnerships taught him how to move from ad-hoc efforts to running a full-fledged nonprofit. "You need a handful of people who are determined to follow through on a project, nothing too large or you burn out. It's taken us 20 years to learn that, but Partnerships' training really helped." From a small group of neighbors, CICP has grown into a dynamic organization that serves as a model for other park groups just starting out.

### TRANSFORM PASSION INTO ADVOCACY

Mary Price has been with Partnerships since its inception and has served as Director of Outreach for four of the five boroughs. Her favorite example of Partnerships' early influence was when **Concerned Citizens of Courtney Callender Playground** used a creative strategy to raise funds for a capital project:

## DEAR FRIENDS,

Partnerships for Parks celebrates its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, and the program's longevity would not be possible without you, our dedicated volunteers. Every event you program, each time you participate in *It's My Park Day*, and every call you make to elected officials on behalf of your park demonstrates why Partnerships was created and why it continues serving a need today. Parks have come a long way in 15 years, but that doesn't mean our work is done. In 2010, and in years to come, parks will still need your support. The seeds you plant today to help your parks thrive will determine how well they grow in the future. And when parks are strong, so are the neighborhoods in which they exist. We extend our thanks to each one of you and to the many partners who have made the past 15 years a success. We look forward to supporting your efforts in the next 15 years to come.

Sincerely,  
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner,  
Parks & Recreation  
David Rivel, Executive Director,  
City Parks Foundation



“They put on a Maypole Festival, the park’s first-ever event. Former Commissioner Henry Stern came, Manhattan Borough Commissioner,

her Bronx Outreach Coordinator, who suggested she organize the park’s first *It’s My Park Day*. After leading more clean-ups and events, Brandy was

“You need a handful of people who are determined to follow through...”

the Park Manager, myself, and former Director Tim Tompkins. The group also invited an editor from *The New York Times* and Councilman Bill Perkins. When they arrived, the group began pointing out concerns, like lack of lighting that made the park dangerous. And right there, Councilman Perkins committed to funding improvements. Seeing how passionate groups are about their parks and then the change they bring about through advocacy is one reason I’m still here after 15 years.”



#### BUILD GROUP CAPACITY

*It’s My Park Day* quickly became one of Partnerships’ most recognizable initiatives. Brandy Cochrane was working for a real estate firm when she came across a park near her home she’d never noticed. She contacted

encouraged to apply to Partnerships Academy. There she learned not only how to motivate community members, but also how to speak effectively to outsiders about her group, **Friends of the Woods**. “You have grand ideas about what you want to do, but it can be hard communicating that. Partnerships Academy helped me learn how to deliver the same message to community members, elected officials, and funders without losing integrity or the essence of my idea.”

#### IDENTIFY LOCAL PARTNERS

Partnerships always understood that the City’s fiscal health directly affected its parks. In 2001, due to long-term budget cuts, the Parks Department received 40% less funding than it had since 1986 and employed 70% fewer workers than in 1970. Volunteer Events Manager Eileen Remor, who started with Partnerships in 1999, says that’s why *she* thinks Partnerships is so important, especially during tough economic times. “Partnerships empowers volunteers. To me it’s a success when we help a group connect to elected officials, the Parks Department, the community, and then they no longer need us. The current recession proves what we’re doing is effective, because now groups won’t let parks fall into the same state.”



#### CONNECT WITH PARKS STAFF

Pairing staff who understand the Parks Department and city government with community members wanting to make a difference is central to the Partnerships model. When the nonprofit **East River C.R.E.W.**, which uses educational and recreational activities to promote stewardship along the East River waterways, wanted to improve relations with their Park Manager, they contacted their Outreach Coordinator. President and founder Victoria Gilbert says, “Our Coordinator’s strength was in envisioning partnerships we couldn’t. Thanks to her, we’re now part of the dialogue between our Manager and the Parks Commissioner about plans for the East River Esplanade and C.R.E.W.’s role in offering programming there. Working with our Outreach Coordinator helped us connect with other groups.”

#### MAXIMIZE RESOURCES

In neighborhoods with scarce resources, Partnerships embarked on an ambitious project called Catalyst for Neighborhood Parks. Lourdes Hernández-Cordero and Mindy Fullilove of Columbia University’s Center for Youth Violence Prevention wanted to raise awareness about community and

park issues in Northern Manhattan, but quickly realized conditions in places like Highbridge Park mirrored the neighborhood’s broader disintegration. With Catalyst’s support, the two formed **City Life is Moving Bodies (CLIMB)** and developed its signature event, Hike the Heights, a challenging urban walk connecting and celebrating Northern Manhattan’s parks and neighborhoods. “Partnerships helped us make friends along the CLIMB trail, and from those friendships we were able to show others the wonderful places to play and relax in these parks,” says Mindy. Now in its sixth year, Hike the Heights boasts seven starting locations and over 20 partnering organizations.

#### CONSTANTLY EVOLVING

Few could predict 15 years ago where Partnerships would be today. Current Director Jason Schwartz knows that, even with its success, Partnerships’ future remains a work in progress. He sees engaging communities in the capital process as the next step in the program’s evolution. “Increasingly,

#### ENGAGING CORPORATE PARTNERS IN PARKS

Throughout the city, flower beds have been planted and playgrounds sport fresh coats of paint thanks to the Partnerships for Parks Corporate Volunteer Program. Started in 2004, the program allows corporate groups to bond in a unique setting while making a noticeable difference in a community park. This past spring and summer, Partnerships brought nearly 2,500 volunteers from 40 companies — including American Express — to 65 parks throughout the five boroughs. Through this year’s American Express Philanthropy Community Service Program, employees gave 530 hours of volunteer service at six projects, including a new garden in Brooklyn’s Fort Greene Park. According to Park Manager Carol Anastasio, “Corporate volunteer groups allow us to complete projects we may not otherwise have the resources to accomplish. With the generous support and hands-on help of American Express, we were able to purchase shrubs and mulch and get the plants in the ground in a single afternoon.” For more information about Partnerships for Parks’ Corporate Volunteer program, please contact Leah Worrell at (212) 360-8156 or email [leah.worrell@parks.nyc.gov](mailto:leah.worrell@parks.nyc.gov).



people want to play a more active role in government and the decision-making process affecting parks,” he explains. “That’s an enormous opportunity and a challenge. Drawing on the respective approaches of our parent organizations, the private City Parks Foundation, which emphasizes programming, and the public Parks

Department, which focuses on keeping parks safe, clean, and green, we’re actively creating new opportunities for people to get involved in the process.” He notes, “That’s thanks to the resourcefulness of our staff, who find creative partners and unexpected solutions in the face of new challenges.”

#### Oktoberfest in Tappen Park

Saturday, October 2, 12:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tappen Park, Staten Island

Experience a traditional Oktoberfest featuring German food, music by local bands, a performance of “Hansel and Gretel” by City Parks Foundation’s PuppetMobile, and a pumpkin festival with giveaways.

#### CityParks Seniors Fitness

September 20 – October 29

City Parks Foundation welcomes all New Yorkers, ages 60 and over, to participate in CityParks Seniors Fitness, with free tennis lessons, yoga instruction, and fitness walking in parks across the city. For more information, call (718) 760-6999 or visit [www.CityParksFoundation.org](http://www.CityParksFoundation.org).

#### Fall *It’s My Park Day*

Saturday, October 23

Join thousands of New Yorkers in caring for and celebrating New York City parks. Participate in clean up and painting projects, enjoy free events, or just get outside to enjoy your park. For updates, please check [www.PartnershipsForParks.org](http://www.PartnershipsForParks.org).



# How to reach us

[www.PartnershipsForParks.org](http://www.PartnershipsForParks.org)  
[www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks)  
[www.CityParksFoundation.org](http://www.CityParksFoundation.org)

To contact Partnerships for Parks or for information on volunteering in parks, call (212) 360-1357 or call the City's non-emergency hotline, 311.



PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS helps New Yorkers work together to make neighborhood parks thrive. We strengthen our diverse, growing network of dedicated park volunteers and groups by creating opportunities for them to celebrate their parks and accomplishments, access resources, become more effective leaders in their communities, and work with government to affect decisions about their parks.

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
City of New York

Adrian Benepe, Commissioner  
Parks & Recreation

David Rivel, Executive Director  
City Parks Foundation

Jason Schwartz, Director  
Partnerships for Parks

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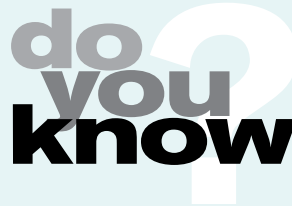
# LEAFLET

THE NEWSLETTER OF Partnerships for Parks, A JOINT PROGRAM OF CITY PARKS FOUNDATION AND THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

fall2010

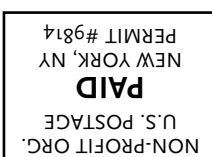
## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Partnerships for Parks Capacity Fund makes grants (\$250-\$5,000) to community groups working in parks across the five boroughs of New York City. For an application and guidelines, visit [www.PartnershipsForParks.org](http://www.PartnershipsForParks.org). Upcoming Deadlines: October 1 and February 1, 2010.



The Bronx River Alliance started as a Partnerships for Parks initiative. Begun as a Catalyst project in 1997 as the Bronx River Working Group, the group brought local community organizations together for the first time to advocate on behalf of the then-neglected river. The Catalyst project was a four-year effort to leverage resources for restoration and encourage residents to see the waterway as an asset. The Bronx River Working Group has since become the nonprofit Bronx River Alliance, which 13 years later counts hundreds of partners and allies among its supporters.

Attention: For address corrections call (212) 360-1357



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