



June
1998

LEAFLET

Volume III
Number 6

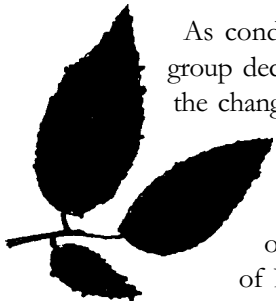


The bulletin of Partnerships for Parks, an initiative of the City Parks Foundation and the City of New York/Parks & Recreation

BUILDING SEAN'S PLACE

Five years ago, Broadway Playground in Astoria, Queens was little more than a drug-infested concrete square, home to vagrants and prostitutes. The surrounding community was so concerned about the negative effects the park was having on the neighborhood that some residents started a petition to the Community Board to have it turned into a parking lot. Today, however, Parks & Recreation has just completed a \$770,000 renovation of the park, which is now a centerpiece of the community. This remarkable turnaround was accomplished primarily through the efforts of a local community group, Police And Community Together, known by its acronym: PACT.

PACT was formed in 1993 as a neighborhood anti-crime group by half a dozen local residents. During its first few community meetings, local residents named Broadway Playground a top priority for neighborhood safety. In response to this overwhelming community concern, PACT decided to adopt the park. Systematically, they began to bring positive activities into the park. They began to hold weekly clean ups, built planting beds and started a small flower garden, planted the tree pits around the beautiful old trees that shaded the park. To combat the constant graffiti problems PACT painted over the park benches each weekend until the teenagers responsible left them alone. PACT also got permission to cover over a graffiti-strewn wall with a pastoral mural painted by local teenagers. To combat the crime problem, they developed an "Incident Report" which local residents were asked to fill out if they witnessed a crime. They also formed a neighborhood watch to patrol the vicinity and assist the police, whom they convinced to patrol more frequently.



As conditions in the park began to improve, the group decided that it needed a new name to reflect the changing attitudes toward it. Sean MacDonald, a police officer who had grown up in Astoria and played in the park as a child, had recently been fatally shot while on duty in the Bronx. With the approval of Parks Commissioner Stern and the local

Community Board, the playground was renamed in his honor. The local police precinct appreciated that the park had been named after an officer and enthusiastically stepped up their anti-crime efforts.



The next step in the park's rehabilitation was a major renovation. Says Sandra Galanakis of PACT, "It looked like Beirut -- bombed out." PACT started lobbying their local elected officials to fund a capital project. In 1997 they were successful: their Councilmember, Peter Vallone, allocated three-quarters of a million dollars to re-do the park. In October of last year the park closed its doors for a complete overhaul.

Sean's Place reopened on May 16 of this year as a completely new park. Formerly barren concrete, the park is now at least twenty-five percent green space, and boasts a frog-shaped spray shower, new playground equipment and swings, renovated handball courts, and basketball courts decorated with ten-foot tall figures of athletes in action. To minimize vandalism, a fence was installed and PACT was provided with keys so that they can lock and unlock the park each day.

The opening day festivities were planned as part of Parks & Recreation's annual day of celebration, "You gotta have Park!" With hundreds of community members in attendance, PACT gave away "Sean's Place" balloons, sold t-shirts, and handed out flyers urging users to take care of their beautiful new park and listing hotline numbers for people to call if they noticed any problems.

It has taken years to get to this beginning, but PACT has made an enormous difference to its neighborhood. Its efforts have paid off in more ways than one: people are travelling from all around Astoria to visit the park and, far from wanting the park paved over, the community has now become protective of its new resource. When PACT volunteers come to clean up, many children and their parents stop playing and offer to help. Says Sandra, "The kids are loving every second of the new park."

IT'S MY PARK! 1998

Partnerships is proud to relate that this spring's "It's My Park!" Month was a success. Nearly 7,000 volunteers participated at over 200 sites across the city. Despite the heavy rains that kept many people inside on May 9, thousands of flowers were planted, benches were painted, hedges were trimmed, and trails were cleared, beautifying parks across the city over four weekends. Thank you to the thousands of community groups and volunteers who participated. Thanks as well to New York Cares and its volunteers for their massive cleanup and planting efforts on Saturday, May 2.

Crowning the month on May 16 was the celebration "You gotta have Park!" in nine parks in the five boroughs. Thousands of people came to hear music, see performers, eat picnic lunches and enjoy their parks on a beautiful afternoon. Celebrations like You gotta have Park! are a great chance to bring the community into your park in a way that is different from clean-ups and green-ups. Nothing energizes a neighborhood park like a festival. We invite your group to participate in You gotta have Park! by planning a festival in your park. For help with planning, contact your Outreach Coordinator.

DOG RUN NEWS

Over twenty of New York City's parks have dog runs. **Washington Square Park's** dog run in Manhattan's Greenwich Village has its own magazine. This winter, the Washington Square Dog Run Association put out the premier issue of "Dog Run" a twelve-page glossy publication, 2,000 of which were distributed to dog run users and placed in local cafes and bookstores. Donations from local businesses, mostly pet stores, paid for the magazine and improvements to the dog run. The magazine featured articles on dog run socialization skills, adopting strays and photos of happy pooches by local professional photographers. There was even a column by a local veterinarian on "Dog Runs and Your Dog's Health." Says Michael Brandow, Association president, "The purpose of the magazine is to educate the neighborhood about the dog run and to educate dog owners about this urban phenomenon."

The Washington Square Park dog run is not the only one with a newsletter. The Dog Run Committee of the Carl Schurz Park Association has published two issues of a newsletter, "The Scoop," to let people know about the dog run and dog issues in the park. For more information on newsletters, for dog runs or other parks issues, call Bodi Luse at 212-360-8186.

FOREVER TANGO (AT A DISCOUNT)

Partnerships is pleased to offer another discount opportunity for park supporters: *Forever Tango*, at the Marquis Theater (Broadway and 46th Street). ParksCard holders and readers of the *Leaflet* should bring this newsletter to the Marquis box office or call Ticketmaster at 212-307-4100 and mention code PARK to receive the special ticket price of \$30. This offer is good for all performances from June 29 - August 1. Restrictions may apply. Performance times are Monday through Saturday at 8 pm, Wednesday and Sunday at 2pm.

RAFFLE WINNERS

Congratulations to the winners of the "It's My Park!" raffle grand prizes -- tickets to Broadway shows. Norma Elwitt of Fort Tryon Park won four tickets to see *The Sound of Music*. Winners of a pair of tickets to *Forever Tango* are: Steve Lai of Luther Gulick Playground, Diane Henderson of Carroll Park, Shawn Payton of Prospect Park, Rosa Moon of Marcus Garvey Park, Sue Denison of Sara D. Roosevelt Park, and Raven Toney of Hell's Kitchen Park. Congratulations as well to the 95 winners of other prizes, including tickets to Mets and Yankees games, movie tickets, t-shirts and mugs.

IT'S MY PARK! THANKS

Partnerships would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their generous donations of goods and services for It's My Park! Month: AT&T Wireless Services, Hot97, Mystic Rainforest Nectars, TMG Marketing, the Glendale Kiwanis Club, Shea Stadium, Heitner Weiss, and Marilyn Appleberg.

HELPFUL NUMBERS

<i>Partnerships for Parks</i>	212-360-1310
To volunteer or to join your local parks group:	212-360-1357
For recorded information about special events:	888-NY-PARKS
To report graffiti, vandalism, or crime:	800-201-PARK

Parks on the Web: www.nycparks.org

Partnerships for Parks works to increase community support for parks throughout New York City. Founded in 1995 as a joint initiative of the City Parks Foundation and Parks & Recreation, *Partnerships* strengthens groups that support their local parks, links these groups so they are stronger collectively, and promotes citywide appreciation of our parks.

Tim Tompkins, Director

This issue of the Leaflet was written by Bodi (Sunlight) Luse.



CITY PARKS FOUNDATION



City of New York
Parks & Recreation

Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mayor
Henry J. Stern, Commissioner

NEWS FROM THE BOROUGHES:

MAY PARTNERS OF THE MONTH

On May 29, *Partnerships* announced and celebrated May's Park Partners of the Month at a luncheon with Commissioner Stern. These community leaders exemplify the best of local activism on behalf of parks:

Bronx: In 1994 **Bashkim "Star Pet" Dibra**, a widely known dog trainer, decided to devote his energies to his own backyard, **Van Cortlandt Park**, by organizing the benefit, "Pets, People, & Parks." Since then he has helped to raise thousands of dollars for the park and, more importantly, has raised the consciousness of pet owners to get more involved in the park.

Brooklyn: **John Hyland** of VFW Post 397 is dedicated to **Father Kehoe Square**. He spends hours beautifying his garden and putting up flags, and is an inspiration to the rest of Post 397, who are always ready to lend a hand. This year on a rain-drenched Saturday during "It's My Park!" Month, Mr. Hyland spent the morning planting flowers.

Manhattan: **Leverne "Savior" Taylor** founded the "Save a Park to Save a Child" committee to combat drug dealing and provide positive alternatives for local children in and around **Fred Samuel Playground** in West Harlem. In the last year, the group has organized several special events in the park including planting days and a children's basketball league for neighborhood kids during the summer.

Queens: **Gloria Perlak** was a member of the **Kissena Park Civic Association** and a Parks volunteer for fifteen years. During those years she donated countless hours to designing, planting and maintaining beautiful beds of shrubs and flowers at the Rose Avenue & Parsons Boulevard entrance to the park. Gloria, who passed away this month, will be sorely missed.

Staten Island: **Michael "Island Bear" McMahon of the Randall Manor Resident's Association** began to be involved in parks in 1992. Since then he has helped coordinate the rebuilding of the walls of the walls and the planting of new trees in **Allison Pond Park** and has organized numerous clean-ups throughout Staten Island.

Gardens: **Antonia Diaz** has been beautifying the Highbridge section of the Bronx for more than 17 years, founding six separate GreenThumb gardens and organizing hundreds of her neighbors to help her in her efforts. All six gardens are devoted primarily to food production, and all food is shared with local residents. Produce from the garden is also converted into salsas, preserves, and condiments, and the skills to prepare these delicacies are passed from old to young.

"It is one great purpose of the Park to supply to the hundreds of thousands of tired workers, who have no opportunity to spend their summers in the country, a specimen of God's handiwork."
--Frederick Law Olmstead, 1858

ATTENTION: FOR ADDRESS CORRECTIONS CALL 212-360-1357.

Address Service Requested

New York, NY 10021
830 Fifth Avenue

CITY PARKS FOUNDATION



Partnerships for Parks



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK, NY
PERMIT #9814