

LEAFLET

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*

THE KIDS ARE ALRIGHT: SCHOOLS AND GROUPS HELPING EACH OTHER

fall**2011**

WANT SOME INTERESTING TRIVIA FOR YOUR NEXT FRIENDS GROUP MEETING? How about this: There are 1,700 parks in New York City and nearly the same number of public schools. And with over 1.1 million students – plus those attending private and parochial schools – there’s an incredible opportunity for groups to involve young people in park stewardship.

But for groups whose members have grown children or consist of working adults without children, the idea of including youth in projects may seem challenging, especially when compared to simply stepping outside for some Saturday morning weeding.

Yet partnering with a school may be one of the best things a group can do to energize itself and ensure that caretaking continues into the next generation. Which is why this issue of the *Leaflet* showcases people who have successfully fostered relationships with schools. Each example shows how students and Friends groups benefit one another, providing the park with extra support, and kids and teens with nature education they couldn’t get elsewhere.

For years, Roberto Martocci’s three children volunteered at Washington Square Park, along with fellow students from **Village Community School**. Then, in 2008, large sections of the park were closed for renovation, and the school turned to Roberto, a dedicated gardener, for help finding a new project. That’s when he discovered **Clement Clarke Moore Park**, a small, shady playground, a five-minute walk from his home that he thought could also use volunteer support.



DEAR FRIENDS,

October is an exciting month at Partnerships for Parks as we welcome City Parks Foundation’s new President, Alison Tocci.

Alison replaces CPF Executive Director David Rivel, who recently joined The Jewish Board of Family & Children’s Services as Chief Strategy Officer, following 10 years of inspiring leadership at CPF.

While David will be greatly missed, we look forward to working with Alison, the former President of Time Out America, who brings extensive not-for-profit experience from her 12 years as Chair of Red Hook’s Waterfront Museum and as board member for The Municipal Art Society of New York.

Once settled, Alison looks forward to meeting with the many Friends groups that help make parks thrive, and sharing with them her vision for CPF and PpP.

Meanwhile, fall offers many activities, from It’s My Park Day to Halloween events. If you’ve been waiting for the right time to become an even more committed volunteer, October may be your month.

Sincerely,
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner,
Parks & Recreation
Alison Tocci, President,
City Parks Foundation

A call to Parks led him to his Partnerships for Parks' Outreach Coordinator, who explained what was involved in organizing a park project and encouraged him to contact the block association, which was already engaged in park maintenance.

For Roberto, speaking with his Outreach Coordinator was an eye opener. "I had no idea it was that easy to create a volunteer project. I thought other people took care of the park, and that it was hard for individuals to do it. At first the block association was unsure how the school's aims fit with theirs, but after careful discussion, they embraced the It's My Park Day (IMPD) project, and even helped purchase shade-tolerant plants."

That IMPD, 100 volunteers, including many children, came out to help plant, leading the school to turn a once-yearly community service project into a semester-long community service class for every grade.

Four years later, Village Community School remains active in the park,

and Roberto tells other parents, "If you can plan a birthday party for your kids, you can organize park projects," while urging them to "start with a section of your park. Get a few people together. Four or five is enough."

He also notes that while kids enjoy getting their hands dirty, it's important to reward them



Roberto Martocci and his children volunteer in Clement Clarke Moore Park.

Next on his to-do list? A learning garden explaining where the park's plants can be found around the world. That way, students understand how a small patch of earth in New York City can connect them to places thousands of miles away.

too, so they know they've made a difference. "We organize games. We get an entertainer. Each time we do something different."

Over in the East Village, **Stuyvesant Square Park** gardener Gosha Mosiej has spent the last three seasons working with **Public School (P.S.) 40**, **Friends Seminary**, and the **New**

School, working with youth from kindergartners to college students. Gosha acknowledges what many Friends groups may feel when first considering school partnerships, that "it's almost a separate job," while adding, it's also one of her most fulfilling. "I've heard students say, 'that was the best class we ever had,' and parents say, 'I never thought my child was capable of such a thing.'"

Activities vary according to age. She's had five year-olds spread grass seeds and hay; planted a woodland shade garden with third graders; asked fourth graders to count bees and butterflies; and built compost bins with high school and college students.

One of her biggest recommendations for groups is to start with 30-minute activities to hold kids' attention: five minutes for introduction, five minutes for preparation, and 20 minutes for work, rest, and clean up.

Patricia Lockhart, an elementary-school science teacher at **P.S. 57** on Staten Island, couldn't agree more



Students from P.S. 57 help clean up Eibs Pond Park on Staten Island.

about the benefits of involving kids. As the leader of **Friends of Eibs Pond Park** since 1997, Patricia has seen firsthand how kids are often her best volunteers: "By partnering with a school, children and parents involved in that park every day take ownership and become protective of it. Now, if kids see someone pollute, they tell me, so I can take care of it."

As a teacher, Patricia instinctively knows how to engage kids in volunteer projects, but she reassures adults who lack that experience that it's easier than they may think: "Kids are excited and willing to help. You just have to guide them. If you have a large group,

split them up. A ratio of 10 kids to one adult is ideal. Modeling and doing it with them is also the best way to lead. And do it in small steps; too many commands confuse some children. Finally, praise kids as they're working so that they feel valued."

Patricia also uses snacks and giveaways as an incentive - distributed *after* an activity is complete. It's a trick that works equally well with adults during weekend clean-ups, where free pumpkins, T-shirts, and games for kids serve as popular parental draws.

Friends groups should also be sure to build relationships with a school's principal and teachers when planning youth activities. This helps foster long-term partnership and creates opportunities to connect park activities with a school's curriculum.

So the next time your group considers working with young people, think again before ruling it out. Kids may be just what your group needs to keep vital and active for years to come. ☆

Isham Park History and Art It's My Park Day Event Saturday, October 22, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Isham Park, Manhattan

Join Volunteers for Isham Park at the Isham Memorial for bulb and greenery planting. In honor of the park's centennial, which takes place September 28, 2012, kids and parents will be making a special art project using images related to Isham Park's history that also includes plant-based and other media.

GreenThumb Seed Swap

Saturday, November 19, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meet with GreenThumb gardeners across the city for this annual ritual. Bring seeds from the past season to share with others and leave with new seeds to diversify next year's plantings. Swapping of other farm/garden-related items is encouraged, too. For information on how to save seeds and prepare for the swap, please contact Bilen at bilen.berhanu@parks.nyc.gov.

Fall It's My Park Day

Saturday, October 15, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Citywide

Before it gets too chilly, help care for and celebrate New York City parks by working with a local Friends group on leaf raking, bulb planting, bench painting, and much more. Connect with the great outdoors across the city as you work with your neighbors to spruce up parks, just in time for winter. For information and to find a project near you, check out PartnershipsForParks.org.

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Ask Mary,

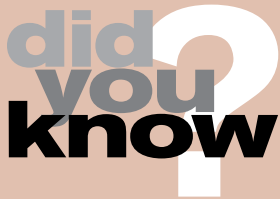
I just learned about the People Make Parks website launch that took place September 16th. What's People Make Parks again, and how can it help me?

We're so glad you heard about the new website, PeopleMakeParks.org. People Make Parks is a joint project of Hester Street Collaborative and Partnerships for Parks that aims to help New Yorkers participate in the design of their parks. When the community contributes to a park's design, better parks are built and community commitment to long-term park stewardship grows.

Mary Price is Partnerships for Parks' Senior Director of Outreach for Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Staten Island. She joined NYC Parks in 1985 and has been with Partnerships since its inception in 1995.



People Make Parks extends Partnerships' mission to engage communities in the well-being of their parks by providing groups with tools and resources to help them participate in Parks' building and design process, also known as "capital projects." To see if People Make Parks is right for your group, visit the new site, and talk to your Outreach Coordinator to learn how to get involved.



RESOURCES FOR IMMIGRANT OUTREACH IN PARKS

NYC's diversity is well known: 40 percent of the city's residents are foreign-born. Parks groups looking to reach out and engage immigrants in their communities can check out a recent publication from PFP: *A Guide to Immigrant Outreach in NYC Parks: A How-to Manual for Parks Groups*. The guide distills outreach tips and strategies learned through the Immigrants & Parks Collaborative. You can find the guide as a downloadable PDF on the Partnerships for Parks website by going to Get Involved > Projects & Initiatives > Immigrants & Parks Collaborative. The Immigrants & Parks Collaborative website is at Immigrantsparks.org.

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

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How to reach us

www.PartnershipsForParks.org

www.nyc.gov/parks

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.

You can also follow us on [facebook.com/partnershipsforparks](https://www.facebook.com/partnershipsforparks).

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
NYC Parks

Alison Tocci, President
City Parks Foundation

Jason Schwartz, Director
Partnerships for Parks

**PARTNERSHIPS
for PARKS**



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