

DEARBERT

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*

HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY PARKS

GROWING UP IN BROOKLYN, 17-year-old Lamar Banton always knew he wanted to be an architect, building green homes to benefit the environment. So when his high school advisor at **Life Academy for Film and Music** told him about a project in the park near his school focused on environmental sustainability and health, Lamar knew he had to get involved.

“My advisor told me about Anthony Felicano, the Partnerships for Parks Catalyst Coordinator for Kaiser Park. He was looking for students to help with activities there, and I told him to let me know if he needed anything. I started with beach cleanups last year. Now, I’m working on **Building Hearts in Our Park**.”

Building Hearts in Our Park – a health-oriented walk and scavenger hunt led by a coalition of Coney Island-based community organizations – is one of many initiatives happening this summer in New York City’s waterfront parks focused on strengthening the connection between healthy parks and healthy people. Supported by Partnerships, and led by community groups, these projects are taking place in neighborhoods where rates of chronic illnesses like obesity, diabetes, and heart disease are high, to show that prevention is possible through simple lifestyle changes, many of which can be done in well-cared-for parks.

Kumali Zairee, a senior member of the Kaiser Park project, didn’t realize her health was at risk until a doctor’s visit four years ago: “I wasn’t feeling good. I was always thirsty. Diabetes never crossed my mind. Now, I watch what I eat and try to walk a lot. I was back two weeks ago. The doctor was amazed; he can’t even detect the diabetes.”



Kaiser Park’s “Building Hearts in Our Park” poster.

summer2011

DEAR FRIENDS,

Did you know New York is one of the healthiest cities in the U.S., with a life expectancy rate higher than the national average? We’re not surprised. That’s because we know great health is possible for all New Yorkers who take advantage of our city’s parks. And this summer, the offerings are more diverse than ever – from mountain biking in Manhattan to hula-hooping in the Bronx and from Zumba classes along Queens’ salt marshes to kayaking Brooklyn and Staten Island’s scenic waterways. Together, we’re committed to make staying healthy fun, starting with Parks’ BeFitNYC program and continuing with CPF’s free citywide sports activities. With Friends groups as our partner, we want to make sure there’s a form of exercise for every ‘body.’ And remember, being healthy isn’t something to do just for yourself, but for all the people whose lives you touch. Because when healthy people make healthy parks, everyone wins!

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

Building Hearts in Our Park joins two groups who both face health challenges, but whose paths rarely cross: teens and seniors. Catalyst Coordinator Anthony Feliciano says that bridging differences between the groups doesn't have to be hard. "We use icebreakers to help teens and senior feel comfortable, and keep

In Bronx's Hunts Point and Soundview neighborhoods, President of the **New York Walkers Club**, Lon Wilson, and his community partners are also tackling health issues, but in a different way - with the first-ever Hunts Point-Soundview Community Olympics.

"A lot of people don't exercise regularly, so we offer different options and let people see where the park is."

groups small, so people connect. We alternate meeting at night and after school, so people can come when it works for them, and give incentives, like community service certificates, to keep youth engaged."



Lon Wilson of the NY Walkers Club shows how it's done!

"The day includes a health services table, a 5K walk, boot camp, aerobics, Zumba, and games like stick ball and Double Dutch," says Wilson. "We'll also have music, a karate clinic, biking, kayaking, and canoeing. The day finishes with an all-ages hula hoop contest."

Lon encourages groups considering large-scale events to get input from the community board and local police precinct early in the process, and to request in-kind donations from local businesses to help with expenses.

As Chairperson of the **Eastern Queens Alliance**, Barbara Brown's neighborhood challenge was one of location. She loved living near the salt marshes of Idlewild Park

Preserve, yet knew many of her neighbors had never even explored the area. It was that knowledge that led her to start "Stay Fit, Have Fun," a summer exercise program for her community that includes Pilates, tai chi, and stretch and tone.

"A lot of people don't exercise regularly," Brown explains, "so we offer different options and let people see where the park is. Some didn't know there was anything south of 147th Avenue, and got lost because they were convinced there was nothing there."

Last year's program drew 75 participants, and Brown hopes to attract even more this summer:



Velo City youth riders take to the road.

"We realized we needed local press to grab onto the program. The wider it's advertised, the more people take part."

Keeping people healthy and active

is only half the battle though, says Karyn Williams, Co-Founder and Executive Director of **Velo City**, who notes that ensuring parks are places the public wants to use is the other half. It's why her organization is in Soundview Park this summer with a seven-week program teaching teens about advocacy and stewardship of the built environment. "We use biking to teach how the built environment affects how people use space, and whether the environment supports walking or biking or other exercise," says Williams.

As each group illustrates, there's no one approach to healthy people or parks. What's important is engaging the whole community, and in a spirit of play. ☆

Ask City Parks Foundation Sports Director Mike Silverman

Not everyone gets psyched about exercise, so we asked our resident sports expert – City Parks Foundation (CPF) Sports Director Mike Silverman – to help get us inspired about moving our bodies.

Q: How much exercise do people need to stay healthy?

A: For kids, experts recommend at least one hour a day. For adults, at least 30 minutes, three times a week.

Q: How have CPF's sports programs kept pace with changing exercise trends?

A: Our most ambitious initiatives are expanding fitness programs for seniors. CPF senior fitness now provides free yoga, tennis, and fitness walking for people 60 and over at 11 parks.

Q: What program are you most excited about this summer?

A: "Get Up and Go," our new fitness program for kids 8 to 11, which features relay races, obstacle courses, and tug-of-war, all of which have a fitness component. We also distribute handouts on topics like nutrition and stretching, so it's educational as well as recreational.

Q: How can people stay committed to making exercise a part of their lives?

A: Find a time and routine that works for you. The hardest part is staying with it until you notice positive change. The best advice? Find something you enjoy, so you view it as fun rather than work!

Building Hearts in Our Park: A Walk for All Generations

Saturday June 11, 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Kaiser Park, Brooklyn

Entrance on 33rd Street and Neptune/Bayview Avenues

Seniors and youth join forces for a day of health, environmental, and educational activities featuring a walk/scavenger hunt. Prizes and giveaways for all registrants, as well as a puppet show and art exhibit. Contact AFeliciano@CityParksFoundation.org.

Summer Opening Day in Tappen Park

Saturday, July 9, 11:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Tappen Park, Staten Island

Join the Friends of Tappen Park for their start of summer program. The day includes a City Harvest/GrowNYC sponsored youth market; a children's show and activities;

a performance by "Music with Patrick;" a composting demonstration by Snug Harbor and the Staten Island Botanical Garden; and live music by Silas Knight and the Brooklyn Horns. Free and open to the public. Contact the Tappen Park Outreach Coordinator at (917) 974-6180.

City of Water Day in Harlem River Park

Saturday, July 16, 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Harlem River Park, Manhattan

135th to 142nd street, along the Harlem River

The Harlem River Park Task Force hosts a water-themed event featuring volunteer-led tours of the park, fishing by the Urban Park Rangers, rowing demonstrations, and exhibits by local artists. For information, visit www.harlemriverpark.com.

Hunts Point-Soundview Community Olympics

Saturday, July 30, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

(Rain date: Saturday, August 6)

From Hunts Point Recreation Center to Soundview Park, Bronx

This first annual event features a fun 5K walk along the planned South Bronx Greenway and recreational activities from hula-hoop and yoga, to Zumba dance. Even more activities at the finish line, including music, performances, and health education workshops promise a fun day for all. For more information, contact CMartinez@CityParksFoundation.org.

CityParks Productions: Summer Youth Programs

Monday through Thursday, July 5 – August 18

12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Hunts Point and Soundview Parks, Bronx

CityParks Productions, a program of City Parks Foundation, is recruiting 10 to 12 youth, ages 14 to 20, for free, professional film production and technology training in a program designed to spark student's interest in learning while strengthening their commitment to their community. For information, contact Video Coordinator Eddie Pena or Recreation Center Manager Fernando Rosa at (718) 860-5544 or visit www.cityparksfoundation.org.

thingstodo

CAPACITY GRANT SUCCESS STORY: ¡VIVA LA BICICLETAS DE MONTAÑA!



Dawson Smith, co-founder of NYCMTB

Washington Heights may not be the first place you think of when you think mountain biking, but Dawson Smith has long been out to change that, first co-founding the **New York City Mountain Bike Association (NYCMTB)** in 2002, then creating a BMX course amid the 140-foot drop elevations of the neighborhood's Highbridge Park. Now he's using a PFP Capacity Fund grant to expand his audience, by offering Spanish-language trail maps and brochures. Local residents contributed to the translation, which Smith sees as the next step in spreading the word about a sport that, he notes, burns twice the calories of a normal bike ride. "Many people have misconceptions about

mountain biking," Smith says, "But we say, come out and see for yourself, and see what a properly built trail looks like." Smith hopes to build interest when kids are young and riding their first BMXs. And now, with his soon-to-be-released Spanish-language materials, Smith himself is definitely riding high. To learn about NYCMTB, visit their website, www.nycmtb.com.



Kid-size jump hills at Highbridge Park.

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Apply for your own Capacity Grant for our next deadline! 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. Upcoming Deadlines: October 1, 2011 and February 1, 2012.

LEAFLET

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

summer**2011**

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.

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

PARTNERSHIPS
for PARKS



EDITORS: *Wylie Goodman, Jordan Pender* WRITER: *Wylie Goodman*
DESIGN: *Anne LaFond*