



More Than Child's Play: Playgrounds and Recreation Shape Youth Development



For more than 100 years, New York City has recognized the critical role that parks and recreational facilities play in the physical and social development of children. Parks and recreational facilities across the City have provided formal programs that develop the minds and bodies of our youngest residents, and created environments conducive to informal play and appreciation of nature.

In recent years, physical education classes in schools have been cut back, and safety concerns have driven children indoors, leaving them to spend their free time in front of the television or computer. Such play and recreation—whether through formal sports leagues, or just playing tag in an attractive park—shape their physical and social development. Further, it helps children develop creativity, resourcefulness and flexibility, and can lead to a reduction in teen violence.

One recent report, *Play, Recreation & Sports: A Celebration*, suggests that a long history of cuts in spending on parks and recreation has threatened to undo the City's legacy of meeting the needs of its youngest residents. Researchers from the City University of New York emphasize the need to gather more information about the ways children use the City's facilities for play, recreation and sports. More research, the report states, would show how vital a service parks and recreational facilities provide. In interviews with elementary-schoolers from the Mott Haven section of the Bronx, for example, the report found that many of the children were eager to play in their local parks. But, despite hard work and much improved playground facilities in recent years, decades of budget cuts leading to a lack of comfort stations, security personnel, and playground equipment, have made them a less-than-ideal place to have fun.

“After decades of decline in public funding, young people in all five boroughs currently find themselves without adequate recreation facilities in which to play, without sufficient programming to channel their energies and their intellect, and without the natural environments needed to connect them to the earth we all love so dearly,” the report declares. The study also found that the percentage of City funds allocated for recreation has dropped from a high of nearly .12 percent in the 1950s to only .02 percent in 1998. At the same time, the number of full-time recreation staff working for the Department of Parks & Recreation has also plummeted—from more than 3,500 in 1957 to approximately 300 in 1998. Since 1986 alone there has been a 75% reduction in recreation staff.

The study notes that thousands of city children continue to take advantage of parks and recreational centers to have fun and develop new skills, both physical and social. But with more substantial funding, they note, an even greater number of children would have the opportunity to play and learn in safe and attractive settings. *(Continued on back page)*

PARKS 2001: JOIN THE CAMPAIGN FOR PARKS

Parks 2001, a citywide campaign to restore, reform, and revitalize parks and recreation services in New York City, continues to gather momentum. Parks standards have risen dramatically, our parks are now far cleaner and safer than eight years ago, and the City has invested over \$1 billion in capital projects. More needs to be done towards maintaining these capital improvements. This citywide movement seeks to build on and continue Parks' accomplishments by focusing on increasing the funding and services for our city's green spaces. The campaign seeks to ensure that at least 1% of the City's budget is spent on parks, which currently receive less than half that amount. So far, several dozen candidates have pledged their commitment to this goal, which will ensure regular maintenance of all facilities, personnel and resources to ensure safety, programming to engage youth and seniors, and efficient and equitable use of resources.

Organizations wishing to sign on to the Parks 2001 platform can do so by logging on to www.parks2001.org or by calling Christine O'Connell at 1.866.54PARKS (212.490.1440). Over 1,000 organizations have formally endorsed the platform so far. As an endorsing organization you can send information to your members, be listed on the Parks 2001 website, or volunteer staff time to the campaign. You will receive informational materials, petitions, flyers and postcards to candidates to distribute at events and to your members. Individuals can also volunteer to help out at campaign headquarters, hand out flyers in your local park, attend candidate forums, write letters, donate your professional skills, and more.

Parks 2001 Rally
Saturday, September 8, 2001 at 1pm in Union Square Park
Help Make Park History

UPDATES FROM THE BOROUGH COALITIONS

Five borough-based coalitions of parks and greening groups form a vital core of the Parks 2001 campaign. These coalitions have been meeting regularly, pushing the agenda of increasing Parks' budget with local candidates and officials. **Staten Island Parks Alliance** has been getting a lot of press lately, with articles in *The Register* and *The Advance*. The **Bronx Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces** and the **Manhattan Parks and Greenspace Coalition** are busily recruiting residents to join their coalitions and

support the campaign. The **Queens Coalition for Parks** organized a large rally at York College to gather supporters for the movement. The **Brooklyn Parks Advocates** helped organize a borough president candidate forum which was attended by two hundred concerned citizens.

To get involved with the coalition in your borough, or to learn more, log on to www.itsmypark.org. ❁



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"Too many children today consider an open concrete area with a single basketball hoop to be the park where they can expect to spend the formative years of their childhood," the report says. "We have the means—now we must find the will—to do better.

Organizations interested in combating the lack of funds for public recreation can get involved with Parks 2001; log on to www.parks2001.org or call 1.866.54PARKS (212.490.1440). ❁

BE INSPIRED AND INSPIRING

Does your group have a success story to share? Have you had your first Family Fun Day? Have the flowers lasted all year long without being stolen? Have you been able to boost membership or create better ties to local businesses? Tell us!

You don't have to have thousands of people attending your events or million-dollar renovations underway to be a "success". A great success story describes a significant change that's taken place in your park as a result of the work your group has done.

Call Charlotte (Weaver) Kaiser at 212.360.8180 or, email charlotte.kaiser@parks.nyc.gov. Stories will be posted on our website, www.itsmypark.org, and may be featured in future issues of the *Leaflet*.

SAVE THE DATE

Fall Clean Up Day:
Saturday, October 21, 2001



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

www.itsmypark.org

www.nyc.gov/parks

Partnerships for Parks believes that parks are essential to the life of New York City, and that community involvement is essential to the life of a park. We work to start, strengthen, and support neighborhood park groups; to link them together so that they can learn from each other and be stronger collectively; and to promote parks in general so that people will be more likely to join in efforts to restore and preserve them.

Peter (Donegal) Crumlish, Deputy Director

This issue of the Leaflet was edited by Blaise Allysén Kearsley and Dana (Violet) Litvack

PARTNERSHIPS ANNOUNCEMENTS

FREE WORKSHOPS FOR GROUPS ADVOCATING FOR PARKS

How can you maximize your group's impact on the political process? Contact us about workshops and tip sheets on political advocacy techniques. Call Charlotte (Weaver) Kaiser at 212.360.8180 for more information.

NEW BENEFIT FOR PARTNERSHIPS' SUPPORTERS

Great news! If you are a Queens or Manhattan resident, you are entitled to receive Sunday and Monday *Newsday*, city edition, at the incredible low price of only 49 cents a week for 13 weeks. Subscribe today and save over 67% off regular home delivery rate. To take advantage of this special *Partnerships for Parks* limited time offer, call *Newsday* toll free at 1.800.400.4112 and ask for Operator 853.

"IT'S MY PARK!" DAY THANK YOU'S

Many thanks to "It's My Park!" Day sponsors **Benjamin Moore, Gap Inc., NYC Department of Sanitation Office of Community Affairs, WPLJ and A Class Act** for their generous support. We would also like to thank **The Rocky Horror Show, Wendy's and Eastern Mountain Sports** for their donation of raffle prizes.

FOURTH ANNUAL BENEFIT WRAP UP

We were thrilled with the success of the 2001 *Partnerships* Benefit. Thank you to the Benefit Committee and all of our supporters for their commitment. We would also like to acknowledge our sponsors, **Alaska Glacier Refreshments, Bertelsman, Best Cellars, Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Brooklyn Brewery; CD 101.9, Central Park Summerstage, Chateau Sonesta Hotel; New Orleans, Chelsea Piers, Eastern Mountain Sports, Extra Vertical, Hadleigh's, Indiana Market & Catering, Kenneth Cole, Lower East Side BID, Luna Park Cafe, M & T Pretzel, Museum Magazine, Nextel, O'Neal's, Scribner, The Sharper Image, Starbucks, STOMP, Time Out New York and Zagat**, for their generosity. See you at our *fifth* annual benefit!

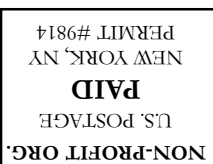
NAME THAT TREE!



Parks & Recreation is planning to label an additional 20,000 trees by year's end. If you have a tree in your neighborhood that you'd like identified and labeled, or for information about this project, call your Outreach Coordinator, or the Central Forestry at 718.760.6800.

What a delicious sound!
It is not merely crow calling to crow,
for it speaks to me too.
I am part of one great creature with him.
Henry David Thoreau, 1859

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



Partnerships for Parks
CITY PARKS FOUNDATION
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