



GROWING STEP BY STEP AT WEST 181ST STREET



When Jeanlee Poggi and several of her neighbors in Washington Heights, Manhattan formed the **West 181st Street Beautification Project** in 1986 to make their community a more beautiful and nicer place to live, little did they know that they would eventually oversee a range of projects that would nurture nature as well as local youth.

Their first project seemed simple enough: cleaning and beautifying the Pinehurst Avenue Terraces, a step garden on 181st Street that had become a dumping ground for beer bottles. “We chose it because this was where we could do something visible,” Ms. Poggi recalled. After posting signs, 30 people showed up for the clean-up, and a core of six volunteers continued to monitor the space. Before long, a planning committee—which eventually became the Project’s Board of Directors, began to meet monthly. Realizing that the Terraces needed even greater work—the retaining walls were crumbling and the soil needed to be revitalized before planting—they conducted their first annual membership drive to raise funds for the project.

Months of persistence—making countless telephone calls to city officials to confirm that the Department of Transportation controlled the space, obtaining permission from DOT and the local Community Board for the renovations, and getting a commitment from the City Volunteer Corps to provide volunteer labor—finally paid off. By the summer of 1988, the Terraces were rebuilt, and filled with flowers and trees.

Since then, Ms. Poggi said, the Project has used the same techniques—organizing, advocacy, and lots of sweat la-

bor—to beautify additional parts of their neighborhood and create programs for area youth. Activities include: maintaining and creating family programming for the Pinehurst Terraces step garden; creating a playground in a Port Authority lot, named the George Washington Bridge Park, and providing stipends to young adults and teens involved in leading activities there; establishing, with the Police Athletic League, a summer playstreet and a year-round youth leadership program; advocating on behalf of Fort Washington Park, and co-sponsoring the annual Little Red Lighthouse Festival.

Ms. Poggi said that as the scope of the Project grew over the years to meet the needs of its community, it also developed as an institution. The Project has been blessed with a core group of leaders since the beginning, providing the group with a remarkable sense of stability and institutional memory. In 1990, the Board incorporated in New York State as a non-profit group, allowing the Project to open a bank account, and enabling it to purchase liability insurance. As an incorporated group, it could begin to seek funds from public and private groups for its projects, and convinced another neighborhood group with federal 501c3 status to act as its fiscal agent. As the group became more serious about fundraising, it eventually applied for—with pro-bono help from the Lawyers’ Alliance—and received its own 501(c)3 status.

Another key to the group’s success, said Ms. Poggi, has been endless networking. The group continually reaches out to the Latino community in Washington Heights, knows many local business owners, and over the years, has developed ties to city and state officials, both civil servants and politicians. “Every agency we’ve contacted understands persistence and patience,” she said. “They know we stick to our commitments.”



For more information about the 181st Beautification Project, contact Jeanlee Poggi at 212-946-1703.

SPRING INTO SPRING!

Join volunteers from across the City to celebrate and spruce up our parks in time for Spring weather!



New York Cares Spring Clean-Up Day is on **Saturday, May 6**. Join in greening and clean-up projects in the City’s largest parks and gardens. 212-228-5000.

Join the City of New York/Parks & Recreation, *Partnerships for Parks*, and the thousands of New Yorkers who volunteer to clean and green their neighborhood parks for “**It’s My Park!**” Day on **Saturday, May 20**. Participating sites must register by **April 14th**. Contact your borough outreach coordinator or Carrie Grassi at 212-360-8126 or knoll@parklan.cn.ci.nyc.ny.us.

Celebrate the City’s parks at **You gotta have Park!** the weekend of **May 20-21** in Prospect Park, Flushing Meadows Park, Forest Park and Clove Lakes Park. Contact your outreach coordinator for more information.

HELP WRITE HISTORIC SIGNS

Learn about your neighborhood park by helping to write historic sign text! Very few New Yorkers know who parks are named after or why. Therefore, Parks & Recreation is aiming to have historic signs in every park space by the end of 2001. Researching and writing about the history of a park in your neighborhood can be a fun project for students or adults. If you would like to participate, or you have any questions, please contact Kate Clark at 212-360-8240 or kclark@parklan.cn.ci.nyc.ny.us.

MAKE A SPLASH

In last month’s Waterways & Trailways article, one fun water-based activity was inadvertently omitted: swimming (only in safe, clean spots of course!). The Manhattan Island Foundation supports efforts to rehabilitate swimming pools, helps neighborhoods establish and expand swimming programs for children, and organizes annual swim events in the Hudson River and around Manhattan. For more information, contact the Foundation at 212-873-8311 or www.nycswim.org.



FUNDING DEADLINES

Late March, 2000: Greenacre Foundation provides support to community groups that carry out greening projects in Manhattan. 212-649-5674.

March 31, 2000: Green Step Environmental Grant and Mollie Parnis Dress Up Your School Grant Program. Youth Unlimited awards up to \$1,000 grants to youth groups to create and implement, or sustain, a youth-run project. 212-989-0909 x 324.

April 1, 2000: City Parks Foundation Quarterly Grants Program. Supports projects developed by community groups for parks and playgrounds with grants of up to \$5,000. 212-360-8121.



SUMMER JOBS!

Parks is hiring more than 250 Playground Associates to work in neighborhood playgrounds planning programs for youth. Positions are also available with the Mobile Unit program, which brings arts and crafts, and sports to various locations throughout the city all summer. Candidates for both positions must be at least 18 years old, with six months of work experience in a recreational program, or have a HS Diploma/G.E.D. plus 60 college credits. For more information, call Abdullah or Amy at 212-360-8211.

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.nycparks.org

www.partnershipsforparks.org

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.

Tim (Sailfish) Tompkins, Director

This issue of the Leaflet was edited by Dana (Violet) Litvack.



CITY PARKS FOUNDATION



City of New York
Parks & Recreation

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

PARTNERS OF THE MONTH

Every month, *Partnerships for Parks* holds a luncheon with Commissioner Stern, during which he presents certificates to the "Partners of the Month" for their outstanding efforts. January's Partner from Manhattan, **Beverly "New Vision" Smith**, is dedicated to improving her neighborhood and **Courtney Callender Playground**. Two years ago, Ms. Smith, Director of the Community Liaison Unit of the Abyssinian Development Corporation, started The Citizens for Courtney Callender Playground. Beverly offered her expertise in directing members of four block associations (West 129, West 130, West 131 and West 132 Streets) that were concerned about the conditions and illegal activity in the playground. Beverly conducted a series of meetings, and helped develop a mission statement for the group. Due to her efforts, the group received funds to participate in a Community Park Clean-Up Day, and the playground is scheduled for capital funding.

Thanks to everyone who makes a difference in New York City Parks, and a special thanks to the other January partners listed here: Bronx: **Brenda "Tweety" Beal**, Friends of St. James Park • Brooklyn: **Robert Leddick**, McGolrick Park Historic Preservation Committee • Manhattan: **Beverly "New Vision" Smith**, Abyssinian Development Corporation, Courtney Callender Playground • Queens: **Sandra Robishaw**, ARROW, Astoria Park • Staten Island: **Linda Allocco**, YMCA in Staten Island



IT PAYS TO HAVE THE CARD...

That's the *ParksCard*, of course. New benefits include:

- **New York Botanical Garden** offers one free admission for every ticket purchased of equal or greater value.
- **Bronx Equestrian Center** in Pelham Bay Park offers \$5 discounts on all horse rentals.

The *ParksCard* signifies that you have "joined the parks," working with us on their behalf. *ParksCards* are free affiliation cards that recognize and thank park supporters for their efforts. If you support your parks in some way and would like a *ParksCard*, please call our volunteer hotline at 212-360-1357.

"Those who dwell as scientists or laymen,
among the beauties and mysteries of the earth
are never alone or weary of life..."

—Rachel Carson, *The Sense of Wonder*, 1965

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

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