



CARING FOR GRAND AVENUE PLAYGROUND

In 1989, when the Aqueduct Housing Development in the West Bronx opened, residents were welcomed to the neighborhood by hundreds of rats which then inhabited the adjacent Grand Avenue Playground. An abandoned lot next to the playground was decorated every other day by another stripped car, and residents had to walk in the street to avoid the mountains of accumulated garbage. In the midst of this, a young boy drowned while playing, for lack of any other safer area, in an open water sewer main.

At the monthly meetings of the new housing association, the tenants agreed that they could not continue to live in such conditions. Even if their own yards and homes were maintained, the surrounding environment did not provide a safe common area for their children. They decided to collectively organize around their needs for a safe and viable neighborhood. Della Johnson, President of the Aqueduct Homeowners and Associates, played an integral role in contacting the necessary city authorities and engendering local community support for cleaning up the playground and vacant lots.

The tenants devised a plan for cleaning up the playground, and were so diligent in their efforts that the dumping abated. At least twice a month they held major clean-ups, and several members put in a few hours every week. Residents also started reporting negative activity to the Humane Society, Parks & Recreation, Department of Sanitation and the Police. Because of their organized and consistent relationship with the city agencies, and their position as a group of residents taking constructive action in their park, residents found the agencies extremely responsive. Sanitation made arrangements to haul garbage the community collected and Parks installed fencing around the playground and the abandoned lot, which the residents and GreenThumb meanwhile turned into a community garden. The playground now is

open every day from morning until dusk. Community members who choose to use the garden follow a set schedule, but can always contact Ms. Johnson to use it at other times.

Commenting on the changes in the area, Ms. Johnson said the key to the tenants' success was making complaints official, meeting with the necessary agencies, maintaining a consistent presence in the playground and garden, engaging youth in their efforts, and relying upon key community members. The support of a core group of about 11 community members, who have all committed themselves to the case and followed through on their commitments, was essential to their success.

Ms. Johnson and the other homeowners are very thankful to all the agencies that assisted them, and are especially grateful to the University Heights Presbyterian Church for donating meeting space, Borough President Ferrer's office, Community Board 5, School Board 10, Bronx Botanical Gardens and the New York City agencies such as GreenThumb, Parks & Recreation and Sanitation who gave encouragement to the efforts of committed neighbors in this neighborhood.

On March 24, 1999, Ms. Johnson shared her experiences with a group of community park organizers from around the Bronx at a *Partnerships'* Crime Workshop. Participants learned a great deal from her efforts as to how to engage support for cleaning up their own parks. In addition, Ms. Johnson says that she was not only a presenter, but a participant as well, learning from others about developing a calendar of events and realizing the need to organize more concrete events in her playground. She looks forward to all the future events in the newly revitalized playground and garden.

Special thanks to Della Johnson for her help with this article.



CITY-WIDE SPRING EVENTS

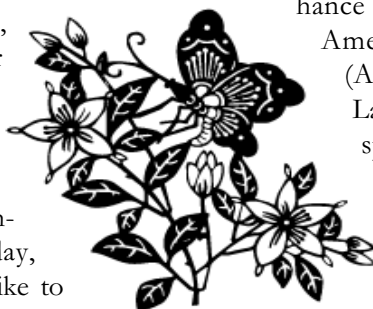
There are many chances to help clean, green, and celebrate New York City's parks, so mark your calendars now!

Help out the city's largest parks by participating in cleaning and greening projects on **New York Cares Spring Clean-Up Day** on Saturday, **May 8**. Call New York Cares, a citywide volunteer organization at 212-228-5000 for information on registering.

Join the City of New York/Parks & Recreation, *Partnerships for Parks*, and the thousands of New Yorkers that volunteer to clean and green over 200 neighborhood parks on **"It's My Park!" Day** on Saturday, **May 22**. All sites are now registered; if you would like to know about a site near you, please call your borough Outreach Coordinator.

Celebrate the city's parks at ***You gotta have Park!***, which takes place at selected sites across the city on the weekend of **May 22-23**. Call 212-360-1357 for more information.

Participate in the **Citizens Committee's "Neighborhood Week"** from **June 5 - 12** by sponsoring an event or clean-up to promote the betterment of your neighborhood. The Citizen's Committee will grant 200 projects \$100 each to help with their events. For applications, call 212-989-0909.



LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND

In 1965 Congress created The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) to use revenues primarily from offshore oil and gas drilling to protect wilderness, wetlands, and refuges; preserve habitat; create parks and open spaces; and enhance recreation opportunities. Please join with Americans for Our Heritage and Recreation (AHR) to renew the push towards using the Land and Water Conservation Fund for open spaces.

If you are interested in getting involved, you can: adopt a LWCF site in your state; meet with local reporters and editorial boards about the need to protect open spaces; write letters, make phone calls, and meet with decision-makers about LWCF sites; build a network of people in our area interested in protecting your adopted LWCF project; or join the AHR Campaign for Open Spaces and Great Outdoors. For more information about Americans for Our Heritage and Recreation, just call 202-429-8444 or e-mail ahr@ahrinfo.org.

AHR is also hosting a national summit in Annapolis, Maryland from June 6 - 8 to discuss the Land and Water Fund. For more information and to register, call AHR or e-mail koneal@ahrinfo.org.

GRANT APPLICATION DEADLINES

July 1, 1999: City Parks Foundation Quarterly Grants Program. Supports projects developed by community groups for parks and playgrounds. Grants, up to \$5,000, are made in four areas: Recreation, Park and Playground Improvements, Environmental Education and Preservation, and Arts and Culture. 212-360-8121

May 21, 1999: Community Training and Assistance Center/Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. Grants for community groups in low income neighborhoods that strive for change through organizing and advocacy. 617-423-1444

PARTNERSHIPS BENEFIT

Join us to celebrate New York City parks, and *Partnerships'* efforts on their behalf, at our Second Annual Benefit on June 22, 1999 from 6:30 - 9 p.m. at Tompkins Square Park. If you would like more information or are interested in purchasing tickets, please call Alyssa Weiss at 212-360-8166.



PLEASE SEND US YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

To save paper and waste, *Partnerships* would like to send announcements, and eventually the Leaflet, via e-mail to as many people as possible. To ensure we have your correct e-mail address, please send us an e-mail today. Just follow these three simple steps:

1. Address an e-mail message to "pfp@parklan.ci.nyc.ny.us"
2. In the "Subject" line, type "E-mail List"
3. In the body of the message type your name and address.

HELPFUL NUMBERS

Partnerships for Parks 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 written 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

Each month, one volunteer from every borough and one from a community garden on Parks property whose efforts have made a positive impact in their neighborhood, are chosen as a *Partnerships for Parks* "Partner of the Month." Presentations to these outstanding volunteers are made at a luncheon with Commissioner Stern and members of other parks groups at the end of each month. **Ricky "Conquistador" Pizarro** from the **Highbridge Unity Center** sets an excellent example of how networking efforts with the key groups help the success of a project. To generate momentum for cleaning up illegally dumped garbage from Highbridge Park, Ricky formed the Highbridge Restoration Project, a team made up of community organizations, the community board, the Borough President's office, Partnerships for Parks and the New York Restoration Project. Organizing large clean-up events, such as one last fall which included over 120 volunteers from all over New York City also helped generate attention to the project. Ricky has also set concrete goals for the Highbridge Restoration Project, ultimately to restore Highbridge Park and the Park's pedestrian bridge that spans the Hudson. Ricky is planning Spring Clean-up activities, putting together a timeline for his project goals, and looking into possible sources of funding. His strong desire and motivation to improve the Highbridge community is a great model for all volunteers. All of the outstanding "Partner of the Month" award winners from March are listed below. Congratulations to all, and many thanks to all those who help in New York City's parks!

MARCH PARTNERS OF THE MONTH:

Bronx: **Ricky "Conquistador" Pizarro**, Highbridge Park, Highbridge Unity Center
Brooklyn: **Andre "Slow Growth" Van Hoek**, Lindsay Park, Friends of Lindsay Park
Manhattan: **Alida "Flower Hill" Palma**, Montefiore Park, Montefiore Park Neighborhood Association
Queens: **Michael "Moo Goong Hwa" Chien**, Korean Gardens, Korean American Senior Citizens Society of Greater New York
Staten Island: **Traci "Tweetie" Javois**, Cloves Lakes and Silver Lake Park, Troop 5441 Cadet Leader
GreenThumb: **Karen "Happiness" Washington**, Garden of Happiness, Bronx

Spring still makes spring in the mind
When sixty years are told:
Love wakes anew this throbbing heart,
And we are never old.
Over the winter glaciers
I see the summer glow,
And through the wild-piled snowdrift
The warm rosebuds below.
— *Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The World-Soul," 1867*

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

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CITY PARKS FOUNDATION



Partnerships for Parks

