



A VIEW FROM THE RIDGE

Diane Fishman, co-founder of the **Bay Ridge Parks and Waterfront Council**, told of her group's accomplishments at a **Partnerships for Parks** workshop this spring. These workshops brought park leaders together to discuss the challenges they had faced and the successes they had achieved. The following is a summary of Ms. Fishman's talk and is the second in a series:

Metamorphosis

Only two years ago, Owl's Head Park and Shore Road Promenade in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, were not inviting places. Crime, drugs, and homelessness made many local residents afraid to enter the parks.

In 1995, Diane and Jerry Fishman founded the **Bay Ridge Parks & Waterfront Council** to reclaim Owl's Head and Shore Road. Since then, the Council has succeeded in transforming the parks into clean and safe spaces enjoyed without fear by the entire community, even at night. Reflecting on the group's successful campaign, Ms. Fishman offered advice to other neighborhoods facing problems similar to those of Bay Ridge.

Taking Aim

Ms. Fishman recommends that a group first compose a strong mission statement to keep it focused on its priorities. For example, the Council's main goals included: 1) reducing crime, 2) raising interest in the parks, 3) spurring publicity about its efforts, and 4) bringing people into the parks. The Council constantly refers to these four goals to make sure it stays on the right track.

Making a Name

The Council built credibility by courting the support of politicians, the media, bankers, and civic leaders and asking them to join their board. It reached out to the community by contacting over 120 civic organizations in Bay Ridge.

Proving Itself

To establish a track record, the Council spent 300 days -- 81 consecutively -- during the first year cleaning out Owl's Head Park. Between 20 and 300 people participated daily. During this blitz, the volunteers removed, among other things, scores of needles and 21 mattresses.

The Council also demonstrated its abilities by organizing several large special events in its first year, including: **You gotta have Park!** which served as a celebratory event at the end of its marathon clean-up; **Tom Sawyer Day**, which involved painting a wrought-iron fence two miles long; and **Ski Brooklyn**, a winter festival complete with artificial snow.

Filling the Coffers

During its first year, the Council was able to raise over \$100,000, much of it for individual projects and events. The Council won grants from foundations, elected officials, and state agencies. Neighborhood businesses also contributed significantly. The group has been particularly successful in asking companies to fund one-time events. In certain cases, smaller companies donated goods or services rather than cash. The Council also raises money through its membership fees. Ms. Fishman stressed the importance of keeping the basic fee very low, preferably \$5 or less, so as to maximize membership and participation.

When fundraising for specific projects, Ms. Fishman added, it's important not to underestimate your needs; the best thing to do is to write out a comprehensive budget and expect hidden costs to add 10 to 20 percent. And, regardless of where your money comes from, she says that the golden rule is to write thank you letters to everyone who contributes. Not only are letters a perfect way to express your appreciation, but they also let people know that you are putting their money to good use.

CLEAN-UP DAY '96

On **October 19**, thousands of civic-minded New Yorkers will descend upon parks across the City as part of Parks & Recreation's annual fall Clean-Up Day. Community groups and volunteers will rake, sweep, paint, and plant at over 200 sites across the five boroughs. We hope that you will join us.

Please call us at **(212) 360-1357** if you would like to participate or request more information.



NEWS FROM THE BOROUGHS

The **Riverside Park Native Plant Project** is beginning to bloom. Project leaders **Teresa Elwert**, **Susan Klimley**, and **Heather Weigel**, along with over twenty volunteers, have planted and tended half of the quarter-mile project area. The goal is to increase plant diversity, improve the habitat for birds, and restore the original conception of the park as a natural extension of the Hudson River Valley. Now flowering are Joe Pye Weed, Blue-stem Goldenrod, Black-eyed Susan, and White Wood Aster. You can see the project by entering the park at 108th Street and walking south.

This summer was a very successful one for **The Parks Council's** Summer Youth Employment Program in the Bronx. The two teams in Crotona Park, led by **Johanny Lopez**, **Cyrus Smith**, and **Charlene Conyers**, spruced-up Indian Lake and Victory Garden. As side projects, they cleaned the picnic area, scraped and painted the barbecue grills, cleaned two of the playgrounds, and (*see overleaf*)

"Conventionally, neighborhood parks or park-like open spaces are considered boons conferred on deprived populations of cities. Let us turn this thought around, and consider city parks deprived places that need the boon of life and appreciation conferred on them."

Jane Jacobs

The Death and Life of Great American Cities, 1961

ROUND UP *(continued)*

even painted the once drab cement pillars in Playground 10 turquoise and black. **Josue Veliz's** group in St. Mary's Park was equally diligent in its work, clearing out several overgrown hillsides. The park now looks and feels better-groomed, cared for, and, above all, safer.

In Queens, a group of long-time volunteers are forming the **Friends of Springfield Park**. They held their first meeting this August in the brand new park house, which was kept open for the evening by Springfield's parkie, **Neil Bunner**. Up to 60 children a day enjoyed arts and crafts and a free lunch in the building this summer. These activities, along with Neil's commitment to maintaining the park, have given the group of volunteers new life. To benefit the new "Friends" group, National Links is organizing a walk-a-thon in the park for September 28th.

The **City Parks Foundation** produced a six-week concert series this summer at two Brooklyn parks and at Williamsbridge Oval in the Bronx. Shows at Herbert Von King Park attracted huge crowds and generated so much enthusiasm for the park that community members are now meeting to start athletic and cultural programs. At Fort Greene Park, the concert series added momentum to growing efforts to revitalize the park.

The **Prospect Park Greeter** program was introduced last April by the **Prospect Park Alliance**. Volunteers staff major park entrances in teams of two, directing visitors to park activities and facilities, providing trash bags to picnickers who need them and information to anyone who wants it. Prospect Park Greeters also give information on the park's surrounding neighborhood and local public transportation. Roving Park Greeters travel the park drives via foot, bike or roller blades in order to reach even more park users. Public response has been positive and the Greeters enjoy their jobs a great deal.

On Saturday, September 21, over 200 people participated in the **Annual International Coastal Clean Up** at Pelham Bay Park's Orchard Beach and at numerous sites throughout the city. This year was the 9th annual clean-up event in Pelham Bay and participants included local Boy Scout and Brownie troops as well as **New York Cares** volunteers.



CITY PARKS FOUNDATION



City of New York
Parks & Recreation
Rudolph W. Giuliani, Mayor
Henry J. Stern, Commissioner



Partnerships for Parks



CITY PARKS FOUNDATION
830 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10021

Address Correction Requested

ENVIRONMENTAL BOND ACT: A REASON TO VOTE

On November 5, New Yorkers will vote on the Environmental Bond Act. If passed, the Act will provide \$1.7 billion in funding for statewide environmental initiatives, many of them in New York City. According to the New York Conservation Education Fund, the City could receive up to \$1.3 billion to help pay for the following:

Municipal Parks & Open Space - The bond would provide \$250 million statewide to acquire land that provides public access to the waterfront or improves water quality.

Environmental Restoration - A revolving loan fund would help finance the clean up of 92 abandoned sites in the City which pose health risks to their neighborhoods.

Solid Waste Initiatives - \$75 million would fund the capping and closing of Fresh Kills landfill.

Clean Water Program - Three of the City's sewage treatment plants could be upgraded. Discharge from eight combined sewer overflows could be cleaned up.

Clean Air Quality - This program could expedite the conversion of 759 coal-fired furnaces in 266 public schools.

For more information about the Bond Act, call the New York Conservation Education Fund at (212) 777-3536.

We urge you to vote this November.

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:	212-360-3456
To report graffiti, vandalism, or crime:	800-201-PARK

Partnerships for Parks is a joint initiative of the City Parks Foundation and the City of New York/Parks & Recreation. Our goal is to spur greater community support for and involvement in parks. We do this by working to create, strengthen and support community-based parks groups; by linking groups so that they can learn from each other and be more effective as a constituency; and by promoting parks so that people are more likely to support them.

Tim Tompkins, Director

This issue of the Leaflet was written by Matt (Lasso) Lasner, Michelle (Wisdom) Solomon, and David (Walrus) Walch

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
NEW YORK, NY
PERMIT #9814