

BRIGHT SUN , CALM WATER: WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE 2010

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It was a wonderful day in Shorefront Park on Saturday, April 24th for Patchogue's 10th *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day*. We didn't break any records - the numbers to beat are eight, 110, and \$138 for our greatest number of facilitators, greatest attendance, and greatest donation amount, respectively. This year we had seven facilitators, a few over 80 participants, and \$95 in donations.

The last two years both started in the fog with the 2008 mist being dense beyond belief. This year, however, we had sunshine and just a little breeze off the bay from the very start of the event at a few minutes after 9:00 AM. Although sunscreen is always a recommendation for events at Shorefront, it was definitely a necessity for this year's celebration.

One of the strengths of Patchogue's part in the global event has always been the "official" recognition we've been able to garner every year. The village's event has received a lot of paper over the years. The list includes two supportive resolutions from the New York State Assembly, a letter of support from the New York State Senate, seven proclamations from the Suffolk County Legislature and another seven from the Village of Patchogue, plus two letters of support from the Suffolk County Executive. Many of these documents have been delivered personally and there was also a visit in 2002 by a representative from the governor's office. This year saw a mix of recognition. Village Trustee and Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Lori Devlin, joined Laoshi Laurince McElroy of Water Tiger School of Tai Chi Ch'uan in greeting the early crowd. Another proclamation from the village was added to the collection the day of the event. A few days following the morning in the park, McElroy Laoshi received a letter-of-congratulations from Steve Levy, Suffolk County Executive. Adding a little sense of the odd and unexpected this year was a call from Ralph Macchio — actor, director, and writer best known for his role as Daniel Larusso in the 1984 movie *The Karate Kid* — extending his best wishes. The call came into the Water Tiger voice-mail:

Hey folks this is Ralph Macchio calling – my wife gave me some information through a friend that it's *World Tai Chi Day* coming up in Patchogue in Shorefront Park on April 24th. Anyway – I am running and busy, but ... I'm sending my good wishes and hoping that all goes well and wonderful for you guys. ... I studied a little Tai Chi when I worked with Francis Coppola on *The Outsiders* ... Anyway, ... Wish you well to all and make it a great day!

The seven facilitators again demonstrated the diversity that is available to those interested in playing the arts of Tai Chi Ch'uan and Qigong:

Bill Donnelly, Green Cloud Kung Fu in Holbrook, returned for a second year in a row and presented a workshop on how Qigong practice can help a martial artist develop internal power.

This is the third year Nancy Fiano, Dojo of the Dancing Dragon in Lindenhurst, has joined us. She introduced people to warm-up exercises and form play from the family art of Master Sam Chin named I-Liq Ch'uan, which combines aspects of Tai Chi, Baqua, and Hsing-I.

Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation in Old Westbury, added a ninth appearance to his long history with the Patchogue event. He began his workshop leading his usual Tai Chi Workout, but completed his hour leading a handful of folks through one of the forms from his lineage.

From Music Movement and More in Mt. Sinai, Sharon Infante returned to make her second appearance at the event. Sharon focused on Qigong exercises that help begin and end the day, as well as on aspects of her 24-Posture Yang-style Form.

When Bob Klein, Long Island School of Tai-Chi-Ch'uan in Sound Beach, accepted the invitation to participate this year, he indicated he was glad to "be coming home". Mr. Klein chose to participate in the



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Central Park event last year making 2009 one of the few years over the last several he has not been in Patchogue. His focus for the morning was on beginning Push Hands with applications for every day life.

Water Tiger School's Laoshi Laurince McElroy, in celebration of 2010 (4707) being The Year of the Tiger, introduced folks to four of the five walks of the Tiger from The Five Animal Frolics (Wu Qin Xi). Those who have participated in Water Tiger's Animal Frolics seminars and Qigong Class easily recognized why The Tiger Twisting was left out of the mix!

This was an "on" year for Sifu Tyrone "Wei" Wicksman, Zhang Style Tai Chi Chuan. Sifu Wei's workshop again explored various aspects of the Zhang-style form, Push Hands, and applications.

The broad slate of facilitators and the participants from many different lineages helped to make the morning truly represent McElroy Laoshi's hope for the Water Tiger events in the park - little pockets of T'ai Chi & Qigong going on here, there, and yonder. Folks moving similarly, yet differently - while embracing both.

At no other time during the morning was there such a clear expression of these similar differences than during the "Facilitators' Demonstration" during the break from the workshops at 10:00 AM.

Continuing to embrace the "One World ... One Breath" vision of the event's founder, Bill Douglas, McElroy Laoshi sought to offer a bilingual experience. Water Tiger student Si-Je Patricia Hsieh provided Spanish versions of McElroy Laoshi's remarks at the opening of the morning and during the break.

Aside from a multitude of comments on the beauty of the weather, folks have been focusing their post-event observations on breadth of approaches experienced. People from one lineage were working with people from another lineage; all finding themselves at once confused by having to make adjustments to the way they are accustomed to playing, while also finding a sense of the familiar in the uncomfortable.

Water Tiger student Mary Walsh very astutely recognized aspects of our Grappling Push Hands while participating in Bob Klein's workshop. She says, "The exercise we were doing was similar to our Grappling, but it was also different in regard to hand positions."

McElroy Laoshi explains:

It's interesting that we had Bob Klein playing Push Hands and Nancy Fiano leading people through aspects of Sam Chin's I-Liq Ch'uan. It was a combination of my experiences at Bob Klein's school in Sound Beach and a seminar with Sam Chin that led to the creation of our Grappling Push Hands exercise!

We never know from where the next "light bulb" moment might arise. According to McElroy Laoshi, it is this concept that drives Water Tiger's leadership in bringing *World T'ai Chi & Qigong Day* to Patchogue year after year. "The broader the net," he says, "the bigger the possible catch." He continues, "Students of these arts cannot always find the time or the funds to expand their training on their own." His hope is that this event, in conjunction with *T'ai Chi in the Park*, can serve as a stopgap for those that might otherwise be limited in what they can experience.

Although there are those that have an opposing opinion, we embrace the Taoist principle: open yourself to as much as you can; keep what you find useful; disregard the rest.



There was a clear expression of similar differences at the "Facilitators' Demonstration" during the break — (L to R) Jean Goulet & Bob Klein, Sharon Infante, Spencer Gee, Bill Donnelly, Nancy Fiano, and Laoshi Laurince McElroy.

