

CLOUD BUSTING: WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE 2011

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The weather had been forecast for a clear and warm April morning on the 30th, but it was neither clear nor all that warm when the clock struck 9:00 AM and the 11th year for the *2011 World Tai Chi & Qigong Day – Patchogue* began to unfold in the village's Shorefront Park. People still came, still played, and still had a good time!

With the power of the wind off the bay, people had to listen carefully to the words of Patchogue Trustee Bill Hilton as he and Parks & Rec Director Maria Hendrickson presented Laoshi Laurince McElroy, event coordinator, with the event's ninth proclamation from the village. It acknowledges the health benefits of T'ai Chi and recognizes the 30th as *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day* in the village. Mr. Hilton also gave a nod to the fact the morning marked the 10th anniversary of the event in the park and that McElroy Laoshi continues to support the interests of the village through this event and *T'ai Chi in the Park*.

As one might expect, not everyone was pleased with the clouds and the wind. McElroy Laoshi tells us someone asked him why a warmer place wasn't chosen for the event. "They didn't seem too happy when I suggested Key West as an alternative," he shares with a smile.



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Even though the weather seemed to drive some of the early arrivals away, many stayed. An exact headcount is always difficult every year, but the consensus is that the final number was around 75. This makes it several years in a row that the event has drawn in about the same number of participants – short of our record of 110. We did tie our record with a total of eight facilitators from seven different programs this year. Donations, however, fell short at \$60. The record stands at \$138.

This year did mark a first for the event. After several years of silence from the Town of Brookhaven, we received a proclamation from the supervisor and town council. We also received our third letter of support from the Suffolk County Executive, Steve Levy.

All of the faces of this year's facilitator's were familiar. Seven of the eight have facilitated in the past and the eighth was a fixture for a number of years at *T'ai Chi in the Park*. As is always the case for our time in Shorefront Park on the last Saturday in April, our facilitators were wonderful ambassadors for the diversity that can be found in the arts of T'ai Chi and Qigong:

Elan Abneri, senior student of Sifu Tyrone "Wei" Wicksman's Zhang Style Tai Chi of Centereach, has been participating in the event for a number of years as a student of Sifu Wei and has also shared the front with McElroy Laoshi at a number *T'ai Chi in the Park* sessions in the past. However, this was Elan's first time facilitating for *World Tai Chi Day*. His workshop focused on alignment, balance, and rooting.

Returning to the event after several years with a conflicting schedule was Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement of Port Jefferson Station. Her workshop content was as mixed as it has been in past years. She led people through meridian therapy, Tibetan Breathing Qigong, Bone Marrow Condensing Qigong (*Yin Jin Jin*), and practice in Yang Long Form.

Bill Donnelly, Green Cloud Kung Fu of Holbrook, continued on his streak of participation and returned for a third consecutive year. Bill's focus for his presentation was on Push Hands and various exercises to help folks for solo development.

From Dojo of the Dancing Dragon of Lindenhurst, Nancy Fiano has become a welcome annual fixture at Shorefront Park on the last Saturday of April. This year she introduced people to Chen-Style Silk Reeling exercises.

Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation of Old Westbury, has been with us now for 10 of our 11 years in Patchogue! As has been the trend for the past couple of years, Spencer began his

morning leading people through his popular T'ai Chi Workout and ended leading those willing to meet the challenge in aspects of forms from his lineage.

We've had many co-facilitators over the years, but Bob Klein and Jean Goulet from Long Island School of T'ai-Chi-Ch'uan of Sound Beach have been the only married facilitators in our history. Bob and Jean workshopped two topics this year. The first was an introduction to Bob's original "Zookinesis — Age Reversal Chi-Gung" and the second was "Learning the Dynamics of Chi in the Yang Form".

McElroy Laoshi, Water Tiger School of T'ai Chi Ch'uan of Patchogue, brought a toned-down version of his T'ai Chi Martial Aerobics program to safely introduce the concept to the general public and present a rarely seen side of the art — fast, vigorous, and loud.

Mr. Abneri joined the list of facilitators when a conflict arose with Sifu Wei's original commitment to the event. We had also hoped for a return of Sharon Infante, Music Movement & More of Mt. Sinai, and had received her confirmation as well earlier in the process. However, she also found herself having to bow out of the event due to personal conflicts with the date. As we hear from McElroy Laoshi on the Water Tiger School mat from time to time, "Life happens."

There were, at least, two other programs informally represented as the morning unfolded. Shifu Teresa White, Long Island Tai Chi and Internal Arts of Babylon, and some of her students participated in the various workshops through the morning and played form as the event drew to a close at noon. This was the second year that Sifu Joseph Laracuenta, Taijiboxing of East Meadow, joined us as the morning began to wind down and led several participants through his lineage's T'ai Chi Fan Form.



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Aside from the early comments about the chill in the air, all the feedback has maintained its annual positive tone. Debby Williams, Water Tiger public class student and wife of Water Tiger studio student Mark Williams, thoroughly enjoyed her place in the morning. She shared that she participated throughout the morning and liked recognizing that she was no longer a beginner. One of our favorite comments comes from Shifu White. Later in the day on the 30th, she posted on her school's Facebook page:

It turned out to be a beautiful day with a lot of Long Islanders turning out to celebrate and share the arts that we all love. The T'ai Chi Martial Aerobics was a great workout and it was all extra beautiful being outside near the Great South Bay.

According to McElroy Laoshi the TCMA session was not only a good workout, but was also possibility responsible for the change in the morning's weather. "We were playing a punching sequence that was jab, cross, hook, and uppercut," he explains. "It was like magic as the sun broke through the clouds for the first time of the morning just as we completed a series with an uppercut!"

The mornings every spring in Shorefront are full of all kinds of magic. People coming together to celebrate and share, to teach and learn, to explore and to be challenged. Our facilitators are always committed to giving their best to their time in the front. The people who come to the park are always hungry for whatever the morning might offer.

Although the formula for *World T'ai Chi & Qigong Day* varies from location to location across the globe — thousands of events in over 70 countries across six continents, Patchogue's has found a successful groove. The numbers may not be many, but the experiences are always vastly deep and richly meaningful.

