

CRISP AND BLUE: WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE 2012

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Those who were worried about the forecast for the morning of April 28th had to awaken that day with a sense of glee. The first thing they probably noticed was the silence – the wind that had blasted through the area as they headed to bed on Friday night was nowhere to be found. The second thing they probably noticed was that the sun was shining through their windows – the forecast had called for an overcast morning. The final thing they probably noticed was that the temperature at breakfast was a balmy 36° – the expectation according to the experts was for a low of 28°.

The morning in Shorefront Park kicked off at 9AM with presentations from Suffolk County Legislator Robert Calarco (7th District) and Village of Patchogue Trustee & Commissioner of Parks & Rec Bill Hilton. Although Messrs. Calarco and Hilton were the only dignitaries present, the proclamations they presented were not the only honors our 2012 event received. Not only did we receive our first ever proclamation from the NYS Senate through the office of Senator Lee Zeldon (3rd District), but we also received a letter-of-support from US Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. Her letter might have arrived a few days late, but it still represents the first time we've received recognition on the national level!

Even though the temperature was warmer than forecast and the sky was a beautiful, deep blue, the air was still quite crisp. The cooler-than-usual late-April temperature at the beginning of the morning did not seem to have a negative impact on attendance numbers. As has been the trend since 2009, we had 80 (+/-) participants join our seven facilitators for a wide variety of workshops. None of the seven were new to *World Tai Chi & Qigong – Patchogue*, but one that was absent last year filled the space left by one that could not join us this year. All seven shared the space with honor and truly represented the ideal of “One World, One Breath” as proposed by the principal founder of the international event, Bill Douglas:

For the second year in a row, Sifu Tyrone “Wei” Wicksman of Zhang Style Tai Chi in Centereach could not participate. Elan Abneri, a long-time associate of Water Tiger School and a senior student of Sifu Wei, served in his place. Elan shared his combined expertise in T'ai Chi and in engineering to help people improve balance and rooting in both static stances and in moving postures.

Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement of Port Jefferson Station, first joined our annual event in 2003. After a number of years with a conflicting schedule, she returned to Shorefront for the second year in a row. The only facilitator brave enough to shed outer layers of clothing such as what others wore against the morning chill, she led her workshop at the beginning of the morning on meridian therapy, Tibetan Breathing Qigong, and practice in the Yang-style Long Form.

On a five-year run, Bill Donnelly of Green Cloud Kung Fu in Holbrook was back in the park again this year. Bill's first year in Patchogue was also in 2003, which was followed with a four-year absence. Always seeking to present a new perspective on T'ai Chi, his workshop this year was “The Yin / Yang of Technique” with a focus on tension and release within the muscles while playing T'ai Chi postures and their martial applications.

Aside from Laoshi Laurince McElroy of Water Tiger School, Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation of Old Westbury, has been the only constant fixture at our annual event over our 12 years. Spencer's first year goes all the way back to our second year, 2002, and he has yet to miss a single morning in April! His late arrival this year, however, negated the usual presentation of his perennially popular “T'ai Chi Workout”. Spencer arrived a few minutes after the start of our second round of workshops and focused more on an individual basis on balance and movement coordination using a variety of exercise tools and toys he brought with him.

Sharon Infante, Music Movement and More in Mt. Sinai, returned after missing our 2011 event. Sharon first joined us in 2009, after meeting McElroy Laoshi at a workshop hosted by Judith Budd-Walsh. This year she not only presented Qigong exercises that help begin and end the day and aspects of the Yang-



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style 24-Posture Form, she also introduced folks to exercises that can help address issues associated with PTSD.

Like Spencer, Bob Klein from Long Island School of T'ai-Chi-Ch'uan of Sound Beach also first facilitated in Patchogue at our 2002 gathering. However, Bob hasn't always been an annual fixture. Regardless, we think missing only three events since '02 is a pretty good record! Bob presented two workshops this year. The first was on his original approach to Qigong, Zookinesis. His second workshop was "How to Make Your Form Fluid".

As a co-founder of the international event and coordinator of Patchogue's local participation, McElroy Laoshi is the only facilitator to present at all 12 of our events. Like Bill, he likes variety in his annual presentations. His choice this year was "13 into One — Finding the 13 Root Energies of T'ai Chi in a Single Posture".

A number of other past facilitators were invited. Some, like Nancy Fiano of the Dojo of the Dancing Dragon in Lindenhurst, replied with their regrets. Others did not. We continue to hold out hope to break our standing record of eight programs represented at a single event. That record was set in 2005.

Statistics regarding other past records include the number of participants and the funds raised. The former, 110, was set in 2006; and the latter, \$138, was set in 2003. This year's fundraising amount was a very respectable \$91.

Since its start in 2007, the facilitators' demonstration during the break at 10AM continued to be a highlight of the morning. Elan demonstrated the first section of the Zhang-style Long Form. Judith played the third section of the Yang-style Long Form. Bill almost completed a full run of the same form. Sharon presented her lineage's approach to the Yang-style 24-posture Form. Bob was joined by his wife, Jean Goulet, and they performed their lineage's Yang-style 24-Posture Form. McElroy Laoshi joined the Yang-style 24-Posture Form players to present Water Tiger's approach to the same. Regardless of all the different lineages, it was easy to see the truth in McElroy Laoshi's introductory words to the demonstration, "Every year we take this break ... for our facilitators to live the meaning of 'One World, One Breath' by showing how T'ai Chi & Qigong are not arts that unfold on a singular path, and yet all the paths lead us to the same destination ..."



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A flavor of this point-of-view came out on the mat at the Water Tiger studio the day after the gathering. To paraphrase the words of Lem Coley, a long-time student of Water Tiger:

When we experience the arts from the perspectives of others, we have the opportunity to see the principles — the common threads that run through the arts regardless of style or lineage — from different points-of-view. Doing so cannot help but strengthen our own understanding of how we play.

As is always the case, the play of the morning included extras. During the second half of the event, McElroy Laoshi worked with someone who requested help with his understanding of the Yang-style 24-Posture Form he had learned while in college in Rochester. At the very end of the event, a group gathered in front of the park's band shell to play their Yang-style 24-Posture Form. Though most of the group was from the lineage of a past event facilitator, Stephen Lee of Harmony Taijiquan in Islip, a few others with different experience joined the play.

If success is measured in smiles and the expressions of thanks, there's no doubt how to classify our 2012 gathering!

