

T'AI CHI UNDER THE SUN: WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE 2013

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There have been years when we could barely see the band shell through the fog. There have been years that we have found ourselves slightly damp from a light rain as the morning begins. There have been mornings that the wind coming off Patchogue Bay felt like “gale force” would not be wrong for an official NWS categorization. There have been mornings that folks were so bundled that they looked like they were coming to Shorefront Park in search of penguins. For the first time in our 13-year history, the sky was clear, the air was calm, and the temperature was warm. From the first greeting to the end of the last workshop, *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day – Patchogue 2013* was a full morning under the sun.



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There was another first this year. We had to share Shorefront Park with a softball tournament on the adjoining diamond. Everyone had to keep an ear to the east in case the call of “Heads!” was made to announce a wild, foul ball. After the event was set-up and running, however, none were hit in our direction. The extra people in the area also made parking a bit of an issue. Regardless, we were able to add a few bodies to this year’s count and had close to 100 as the morning unfolded – an increase of 10% and close to our all-time record of 110. We were also able to collect a \$171 to help meet our expenses moving forward – shattering the previous record of \$138.

We didn’t break any records with our number of facilitators this year, but we did add a new face and program to our roster. All in all, we had eight facilitators representing seven programs from across Long Island.

Elan Abneri, a long-time associate of Water Tiger School and a senior student of Sifu Tyrone “Wei” Wicksman of Zhang Style Tai Chi in Centereach, was back for a third year as a featured facilitator. Elan’s workshop was an in-depth exploration of the T’ai Chi posture *Grasp the Sparrow’s (Peacock’s) Tail*.

A well-known face at our annual event, Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement of Port Jefferson Station, has now led workshops for eight of the ten events that have been held since she first joined us in 2003. Her workshop at the beginning of the morning was on meridian therapy and Tibetan Breathing Qigong.

Bill Donnelly of Green Cloud Kung Fu in Holbrook also first joined us in 2003. 2013 marks the sixth consecutive year he’s been in Shorefront Park on the last Saturday in April. Bill added to our variety this year by leading people through a Silk Reeling (*Chan Si*) set for his workshop.

Only Laoshi Laurince McElroy of Water Tiger School has a better attendance record than Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation of Old Westbury. Spencer first joined us for our second event in 2002 and hasn’t missed a year since! As he does every year, Spencer brought a bag of toys and made good use of its contents as his “T’ai Chi Workout” unfolded during the morning.

Chris Jurak from One-to-One Care Physical Therapy of Bay Shore was the new kid on the block this year. He connected with us through the event’s listing on Water Tiger’s Facebook page – another first for us! Chris presented his “Taiji & Qigong for Spinal Health and Pain Relief” workshop twice before the morning drew to a close.

Another facilitator who first joined us in 2002 is Bob Klein from Long Island School of T’ai-Chi-Ch’uan of Sound Beach. Over the years, he’s only missed three events. Bob and his wife, Jean Goulet, presented two workshops this year. The first was “How to Teach T’ai Chi” and the second focused on Chen-style T’ai Chi.

Even though this was Water Tiger’s 13th *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day* in Patchogue, it was our 14th offering. The first was the 2000 event in Des Moines, Iowa (USA). The Water Tiger himself, McElroy

Laoshi, has been instrumental in every event. It was his leadership early in the annual international event's history that led Bill Douglas to designate him one of its co-founders. McElroy Laoshi's workshop this year was "String of Pearls — One Image, Two Principles".

An eighth facilitator, Sharon Infante, representing a seventh program, Music Movement and More in Mt. Sinai, had committed to the event, but a serious illness kept her from attending. She did, however, send her wishes with her regrets: "My best to my peers and the community. I pray for great weather, great teaching moments, and a fabulous turnout!"

2013 marked another year of success in garnering the support of political figures across the spectrum from national to local. Aside from letters-of-support from US Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand and Brookhaven Town Council member Timothy P. Mazzei (5th District), we received three in-person presentations. The first was made shortly after the beginning of the event by William Hilton, Village of Patchogue Trustee and Commissioner of Parks & Recreation and Maria P. Giustizia, Director of Parks & Recreation. Mr. Hilton told the crowd that while others look to the return of the flounder to the offshore waters or to the blooming of certain flowers as a sure sign of spring, he looks to *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day* in Shorefront Park. Their presentation marked our eleventh proclamation from the Incorporated Village of Patchogue. The second presentation was made at the beginning of the 10 AM break by Robert Calarco, Suffolk County Legislature (7th District). Mr. Calarco acknowledged the health benefits of the Chinese arts, as well as the legislature's respect for those that have committed themselves to the spiritual growth and well-being of their fellow citizens. His 2013 proclamation is the eighth our event has received from the Suffolk County body. The final presentation happened at the end of the 10 AM break and was made by Edward P. Romaine, Town of Brookhaven Supervisor. During his double presentation, Mr. Romaine joked with the attendees about recognizing his own need to take up the arts of T'ai Chi and Qigong to help relieve the stress caused by his job. His presentations marked the first time we've received a letter-of-support from the supervisor's office and the second proclamation we've received from the Town of Brookhaven.



Presenting a first-ever letter-of-support from the supervisor's office and a second proclamation from the town, Edward P. Romaine, Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, joked with the attendees about recognizing his own need to take up the arts of T'ai Chi and Qigong to help relieve the stress caused by his job.

As always, there was great variety in the annual facilitators' demonstration during the 10 AM break. Elan demonstrated a Zhang-style form. Judith played a shortened version of her lineage's Yang-style Long Form. Bill completed a full run of the same form from his lineage. Spencer presented a hybrid T'ai Chi form "with whirlwind body actions, tornado stepping, and silk reeling body weaving". Chris played two forms he identified as Mountain Stream Primordial Axis Two-Handed Straight Sword and Way of Transformation Dragon Style Primordial Axis Boxing. Bob was joined by Jean to demonstrate Chen-Style. McElroy Laoshi played Water Tiger's Yang-Influenced Orthodox Straight Sword Form. It was easy to see the theme for the morning reflected in these demonstrations as they were, indeed, seven people walking different paths leading to the same place.

Posting on Water Tiger's Facebook page after the event a senior student at Water Tiger, Mark Williams, shared how he experienced the same feeling in a workshop he attended:

While the movements and some of the intentions are different from that which I am familiar, I gained an enhanced insight into the postures and their possible martial applications ... it added to my understanding ... deepening my experience.

With the wonderful weather and breadth of the offered workshops led by deeply talented teachers, it's no wonder that a number of people have let us know: "That was the best *World Tai Chi Day* ever!"

