

15 YEARS OF CELEBRATION THROUGH EXPLORATION: 2015 WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE

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Our 15th *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day – Patchogue* began with a visit from the mayor of the village, Paul Pontieri. Although we're joined every year by various dignitaries from the village, this was the mayor's first time with us for the presentation of the village's proclamation. Mayor Pontieri spoke to the beauty of Shorefront Park, the importance of exercise modalities such as Tai Chi and Qigong, and to the fact the event has a history in the village longer than his time as mayor. Our first proclamation from the village was issued by Mayor Edward Ihne in 2003. Mayor Pontieri's first was the following year. The mayor was joined by Bill Hilton, Village of Patchogue Trustee and Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, and Maria Giustizia, Director of Parks and Recreation.

It was a little chilly in Shorefront Park at the start of the event – as was indicated by the variety of outwear, hats, and scarves worn by the initial attendees, but the sky was clear and people were enthusiastic. "I was a little worried when I first checked the weather," admits Laurince McElroy, Local Event Coordinator. "The local temperature was a brisk 34° at 6:30AM." He thought people might stay in warmer places rather than venture out to celebrate the arts of Tai Chi and Qigong. "Fortunately, people bundled up and came to Shorefront," he says with a smile.

Although the number of people in the park didn't crack the all-time record of 110, the morning did see a total in the neighborhood of 95. We were, however, able to squeak by the 2013 donation record amount of \$171 by \$7.82!

Two of our originally slated facilitators were unable to make the event. Sharon Infante of Music, Movement, and More from Mt. Sinai had a training opportunity she didn't want to miss and Ed Turney of Shaolin Kung Fu & Fitness in Rocky Point had to step to the front of the room at his studio to cover for ill instructors. Regardless, we still broke our facilitator count again this year, barely. Last year saw 10 different facilitators representing 10 different programs. This year saw the same number of programs represented, but by 11 different facilitators. For the first time in our 15-year history, we also had two facilitators from two different programs share the front in a joint workshop. Chris Jurak of Mountain Stream Tai Chi and Qigong (Brightwaters) came together with Teresa White of Long Island Tai Chi (Babylon) to lead what we called *Open Push Hands Play*.

The rest of our facilitator and workshop detail included:

Marking a consistent half-decade with us, Elan Abneri, a senior student of Sifu Tyrone "Wei" Wicksman at Zhang Style Tai Chi Chuan (Centereach), focused on *An In-depth Look at Brush Knee Twist Step*.

Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement (Port Jefferson Station), first stepped to the front 12 years ago and joined us for a 10th time this year to present another mixed-bag of play for her workshop. It included Tibetan breath and meridian therapy, plus an abbreviated version of her lineage's Yang-style Long Form.

2002 was the first year at our annual event for Bill Donnelly, Green Cloud Kung Fu, and 2015 also marked his 10th year participating. His workshop this year focused on rooting and balance.

Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation (Old Westbury), hasn't missed a single year out of 14 since he first stepped to the front for our annual event in 2002. His yearly *Tai Chi Workout* is always fresh and is always an event favorite.

Aside from partnering with Teresa White, Chris Jurak offered participants an introduction to the "Tai Chi Ten Directions Form", a series of basic Tai Chi movements that is the first sequence taught in his school's curriculum. This was Chris's third consecutive year with us.

Another facilitator who first joined us in 2002 is Bob Klein from Long Island School of Tai-Chi-Ch'uan (Sound Beach). Over the 11 years he's joined us, he's been joined by his wife, Jean, four times. This year was one of those times. As is usual for their annual contribution, Bob and Jean presented two workshops this year. The first was *Primordial Chi-gung* and the second was *Tiger Chi-gung*.



Joining us for the first time, Village of Patchogue Mayor Paul Pontieri (L) opens our 2015 event.

The only person with a full 15/15 record is Laurince McElroy of Water Tiger School (Medford). Since his first event was actually in Des Moines, IA, a year before our first Patchogue event, his record is actually 16/15! He used his 2015 workshop to continue his crusade touting the benefits of drilling deep into what we do. He called it *Single-Moment Practice: The Magic is in the Minutia*.

Joseph Panico of West Babylon was slated to make his first appearance at our event last year. Unfortunately, he was not able to make our rain date due to a scheduling conflict. There was no such complication this year and he took people through the details of his lineage's Yang-style 24-Posture Form for his premiere workshop with us.

Joel Valerio continues to attend classes at Water Tiger while he teaches privately using his home in Ozone Park as his base of operations. Facilitating for the second year in a row, his workshop incorporated T'ai Chi Rulers he made himself — and allowed people to take home — for a workshop he called *T'ai Chi with Tools*.

Before Teresa White joined Chris Jurak for *Open Push Hands Play*, she led her own workshop titled *Characteristics of Classical Northern Wu Style Tai Ji Quan - The Fighting Art of the Manchurian Palace Guard*. We were happy to have her with us in the park for the second year in a row.

As always, the facilitators' demonstration was a high point of the morning and was described by one member of the crowd as "mind-blowing". There was something new this year: someone from the crowd joined the facilitators and switched from following one to following another — as best she could. Since Mr. McElroy was part of the demonstration, there was little he could do in regard to addressing this breach of protocol. He reports apologizing to the facilitators after the event and being pleased by the responses. Judith Budd-Walsh replied: "Her presence served to demonstrate to the audience how the facilitators were aware of external distractions and yet not concerned and moved among them authentically." A similar note was received from Bob Klein: "I wasn't aware of the 'guest'."



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To bring his fellow facilitators to the demonstration space, Mr. McElroy used a metaphor drawn from a different kind of art: "... it's a moment for our facilitators to paint a picture in movement. Each will be using their own brush, painting from their own palette. If my fellow facilitators will join me — the canvas has been stretched ..."

Placed on that canvas were three different versions of the Yang-style 24-Posture Form, detail from and complete versions of the Yang-style Long Form, a "60-movement" Yang-style form, a cutting from the 83-Movement North Wu-style Form, a Chen-style form, a Zhang-style form, and two weapon forms: Chen broadsword and White Ape straight sword.

Another guest — this one, official — was Town of Brookhaven Supervisor Edward P. Romaine, who joined us at the break for a presentation of a supporting proclamation from the town. During the presentation, Mr. Romaine joked with the attendees, as he has in the past, 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. The event also received letters-of-support from US Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand, New York State Senator Tomas D. Croci (3rd District), and Mr. Romaine.

Citing some words of appreciation serve as a nice summary of our 15th year in celebration:

"This was sooo much fun — I wish it could have been an all-day event!" — Rich Black via Facebook.

"... a wonderfully, organized tribute to the martial arts, tai chi and qigong." — Judith Budd-Walsh via email.

