

UNDER A WELCOMING SKY: 2016 WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE

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As the extended forecast for Saturday, April 30th, became less and less extended, the weather expected for the day of the event was across the spectrum. There were clouds, there were clear skies, there was rain, there were warm temperatures and cool temperatures. As the clock drew close to 9AM the actual morning of the event, the sun began to break through the clouds. With clearing skies and very little breeze off of Patchogue Bay, the weather for the morning was often judged a 10.



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The welcoming sky and temperature were probably contributing factors to the addition of a few people over last year's numbers; though, at 100, our total participants were still a little short of the record of 110. We blew the door off of last year's fundraising record of \$178.82 with a new total of \$285.00 (with more pending)!

The efforts of Laurince McElroy, Event Coordinator, in securing recognition from various political offices and bodies were also well met in 2016. US Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand sent her fifth letter-of-support. NYS Assemblyman Andrew R. Garbarino (7th District) secured our fourth resolution from that political body. NYS Senator Thomas D. Croci (3rd District) provided our third proclamation from the senate and his second letter-of-support. Our tenth proclamation from the Suffolk County Legislature was presented the morning of the event with the surprise walk-in of Legislator Robert Calarco (7th District). Edward Romaine, Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, was on hand during the 10A break to present our fifth proclamation from the town; he'd sent his fourth letter-of-support before the event. Patchogue's new Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Joseph E. Keyes Jr., arrived at the start of the morning with Maria P. Giustizia-Hilton, Director of Parks and Recreation, to present our 14th proclamation from the village. A thread seemed to weave through the three presentation speeches. It was how the world — especially in today's contentious environment — needs more events like ours in Shorefront Park. Events that bring people together instead of driving them apart. We couldn't agree more.

Our facilitator forecast was for a record-breaking total again this year, but the actual list kept us even with last year's count. We had 11 facilitators from 10 different programs from across Long Island and, this year, into the City:

Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement (Port Jefferson Station), presented another of her 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.

Bill Donnelly, who is based in Patchogue and teaches privately, focused his workshop this year on Yin and Yang in T'ai Chi and Qigong.

For his ever-popular *T'ai Chi Workout* this year, Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation (Roslyn Heights), mashed together T'ai Chi ball exercises, turning step drills, and T'ai Chi for self-defense.

There was another partnership this year between Chris Jurak, Mountain Stream T'ai Chi and Qigong (Brightwaters) and Teresa White, Long Island Tai Chi (Babylon). Their joint workshop was *Form Meets Function: Comparing Traditional Applications of Pre-Imperial Yang and Northern Wu Styles of Tai Ji Quan* with Chris's focus on Yang-style and Teresa's on Wu. As the morning wound down, they also joined together this year to again oversee a session of open Push Hands play.

Bob and Jean Klein from Long Island School of T'ai-Chi-Ch'uan (Sound Beach), as is their habit, presented two workshops this year. The first was *Animal Exercises Chi-gung* and the second was *Internal Principles of Tai-Chi Forms*.

Coiling and Spiral Essences (*Jeuan Jing* and *Chan Si Jing*) as well as the Five Directions became a part of the scheduled workshop, *Expansion and Contraction: Linking Body, Breath, and Qi*, from Laurince

McElroy from Water Tiger School of T'ai Chi Ch'uan (Medford), who is also the Local Event Coordinator and International Event Co-Creator. In his words: "I went where my group took me."

Joseph Panico of West Babylon returned for his second year and took people through the details of his lineage's Yang-style 24-Posture Form again this year.

The new kid on the block this year was Alan Sims of New York City. Alan, a published author and translator of things T'ai Chi, Qigong, and Taoism, presented Torso Method Exercises and Tai Chi Diagram Spiraling. As the event drew to a close, he also demonstrated a rare Chen-style form to fellow facilitator, Bob Klein.

Laoshi Joel Valerio, who teaches privately and lives in Ozone Park, was back for his third year. Joel's workshop this year was *An Introduction to Push Hands*.

Participants, politicians, and facilitators weren't the only people in the park for the event. For the first time since 2003, we had a reporter in our midst. A video journalist from Verizon FiOS News 1's *Push Pause* program and his assistant spent the better part of the morning shooting footage of all aspects of the event. This included the welcoming, through the political presentations, to various workshops and the facilitators' demonstration. They also shot interviews with some of the facilitators, as well as some of the morning's participants. As of the publication of this report, the finished product has yet to appear on *Push Pause's* website and we're hoping that we'll eventually be furnished with a copy of the segment for our archives.



A video journalist from Verizon FiOS News 1's Push Pause program and his assistant spent the better part of the morning shooting footage of all aspects of the event — shown here interviewing Bob Klein (L), Long Island School of T'ai-Chi-Ch'uan.

"The reporter succeeded in making me get a little misty," admits the event's coordinator, Laurince McElroy. "He asked what brought me the most pride as the event coordinator and, as I was talking about how our facilitators all come together and share so much, so openly, I began to tear up."

Laurince was not the only person to observe this coming together. Later in the day on the 30th, a long post from one of the event's participants, Joan M. McLoughlin, appeared on Water Tiger's Facebook page. It read, in part:

It was so well orchestrated by all the facilitators and the fine people assisting them. Knowledge and sincerity clearly abounded when it came to helping people understand what the event was all about. Wonderful to observe so many different people with various situations, coming together to seek paths to better health for both body and mind. There truly seemed to be a sense of "oneness".

Part of that "oneness" was certainly demonstrated, as usual, during the break at 10A with the facilitators playing separately, together. Bill Donnelly's Yang T'ai Chi Long Form; Spencer Gee's 108 Short Form from Cheng Man-Ch'ing's lineage with variations of traditional, silk reeling, fa-jing, and silk reeling step approaches; Chris Jurak's First and Second Chapters of the Yang 108 Form and the Tung Family Fast Form; Bob & Jean Klein's 60-Movement Yang Short Form; Laurince McElroy's Yang-Influenced Orthodox Straight Sword Form; Joseph Panico's 42 Competition Form; Alan Sims' beginning of the Chen Family 1st Routine from Jou Tsung Hwa's lineage; Teresa White's Northern Wu Straight Sword Form; and Joel Valerio's compilation of the short forms from the Water Tiger School lineage.

Since the morning of the event, the word heard most often when discussing what kind of morning it was: *perfect*.

