

CLOUDY WITH A SENSE OF COMMUNITY: 2017 WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE

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For yet another year, the weather forecast for the morning was less-than-ideal. Rain was even falling in the area within an hour of the scheduled opening ceremonies. The early morning rain coupled with a brisk wind off Patchogue Bay to make attendance at the start of the morning the lightest we've seen in a number of years – coming in at around 35. As the morning unfolded, though, the event numbers accumulated to a total closer to 80. Although this figure is below our attendance records over the past few years, it still remains in a range that is respectable and only about 25 bodies short of last year.



The early morning rain coupled with a brisk wind off Patchogue Bay to make attendance at the start of the morning was the smallest we've seen in a number of years.

With some in t-shirts and others looking like they were preparing for an arctic adventure, the morning began with a few words from Laurince McElroy, Event Coordinator, and his introduction to Village of Patchogue Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Joseph E. Keyes Jr., who presented our 15th proclamation from the village. There was additional recognition during the break at 10:15, which brought Suffolk County Legislator Robert Calarco with an 11th proclamation from the 7th District's office, and Edward Romaine, Town of Brookhaven Supervisor, with his fifth letter-of-support and the sixth proclamation from the town. Others holding political offices supported us through the postal system. The event table held the sixth letter-of-support from US Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand and the fourth proclamation, as well as third letter-of-support, from NYS Senator Thomas D. Croci (3rd District). We were pleased that all the politicians attending the event on the 29th, in their own way, played off part of Mr. McElroy's welcome message that was given at the start of the morning and the beginning of the break:

"One world, one breath" is something that holds extra meaning this morning. To breathe, we need clean, pollution-free air. We need a hospitable climate. I am glad that you are here with us today, but hope you join me in spirit in joining our brothers and sisters that are marching today – across the country and, hopefully, across the world – in the People's Climate March.

Even with the lighter numbers in Shorefront Park this year, we still brushed by last year's very impressive fundraising figure of \$285.00 – which broke the previous record by 59.4%. Our current total for this year comes in at \$297.00.

Unfortunately, we did see a significant drop in our facilitator list for this year. A combination of logistics issues, personal schedules, and student wishes dropped our number to nine facilitators from eight different programs across Long Island:

Elan Abneri, a senior student of Sifu Tyrone "Wei" Wicksman at Silent Fist Tai Chi (Huntington Station), returned after missing 2016. This year, he focused on *An In-depth Look at Repulse the Monkey*.

Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement (Port Jefferson Station), maintained what has become her usual mixed-bag of play for her workshop. That bag contains Tibetan breath and meridian therapy, plus an abbreviated version of her lineage's Yang-style Long Form.

This year, Bill Donnelly, who is based in Patchogue and teaches privately, presented a series of drills entered into through what is commonly known as the Yin / Yang Symbol, a.k.a., T'ai Chi Symbol or *Tai Chi Tu* (*Taiji tu*).

From Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation (Roslyn Heights), Spencer Gee brought his ever-popular *T'ai Chi Workout* again this year. His 2017 approach included resistance bands, strike bags, riding crops, and other things.

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 *Self-Defense Principles of Tai-chi-Chuan* and the second was *The Dance of the Tiger and Dragon in Tai-chi Forms*.

Local Event Coordinator and International Event Co-Creator, Laurince McElroy of Water Tiger School of T'ai Chi Ch'uan in Medford, presented a deep dive into the martial flexibility of T'ai Chi Ch'uan through his workshop this year, *Wave Hands Like Clouds: A Portal to Self-Defense*.

For the third year in a row, Joseph Panico of West Babylon returned to take people through the details of his lineage's Yang-style 24-Posture Form.

Joel Valerio, who teaches privately and lives in Ozone Park, presented a workshop focusing on the most popular Qigong sets in the world. It was titled *Weaving through The Standing Eight Pieces of Brocade*.

As he introduced each of the facilitators for what has become one of the most popular features of our annual event, the facilitators' group demonstration, Mr. McElroy repeated some words he first spoke at last year's event:

I'd like to ask you to notice the facilitator signs here, there, and yonder around Shorefront: there are no titles. This annual event is not about the individuals, it is about the art itself. Although each of our facilitators approach the art from their own perspective seen through the lens of their own lineage, you won't see us clamoring to say that our way is better for anyone but us and you won't read posts from our facilitators online after this morning wraps up with titles like: *The Mistakes Others Make* or *Is T'ai Chi Dying*.

The variety of those approaches was quite evident as the annual group demonstration unfolded. Elan Abneri played a Zhang-style form; Judith Budd-Walsh played a Five-Element form sequencing into Fair Lady Works the Shuttles from her lineage; Bill Donnelly played his lineage's Yang-style Long Form; Spencer Gee and his associate played two-person sets; Bob and Jean Klein played William C. C. Chen's 60-movement Yang-style short form; Laurince McElroy played a slightly up-tempo approach to Water Tiger School's Long Form; Joseph Panico played the 42 Combined Form; and Joel Valerio played his lineage's Yang-influenced Orthodox *Jian* Form.

There was a little bump in the road as the second half of the morning unfolded. A public safety officer from the Village of Patchogue did a drive-by and demanded participants move from the grassy areas surrounding the band shell to the concrete basketball courts. Apparently, the village had seeded the grassy areas earlier in the week and he was afraid our presence would "disturb" the seeding. We were, however, very pleased that everyone adjusted easily and were conscientious to not infringe on each others' spaces as the workshops became more compressed.

The brisk wind, the threat of rain, the bump in the road, none of these things came close to stopping our participants from demonstrating in many ways for the 17th consecutive year how we can truly live in one world with one breath.

We couldn't be happier.



One of the most popular features of our annual event: the facilitators' group demonstration. Pictured (L to R): Bill Donnelly (hand and foot only), Joseph Panico, Judith Budd-Walsh, Jean Klein (barely), Bob Klein, and Elan Abneri. Not pictured: Spencer Gee and his associate, Laurince McElroy, and Joel Valerio.

