

## RAIN, RAIN , GO AWAY: 2019 WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY

Water Tiger School Staff  
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Friday, April 26<sup>th</sup> was an undeniable washout. Even though accumulation in Coram was just over an inch at 1.07 inches, it seemed like it was always raining to some degree. This pattern held well into the overnight.

Although it didn't look good, Water Tiger's Laoshi Laurince McElroy, Local Event Coordinator and International Event Co-Creator, tells us that he was holding out every hope: "Every forecast I could find had the rain stopping between midnight and 1:00AM."

It did.

Expecting soggy ground under clearing skies at Diamond in the Pines, McElroy Laoshi arrived to find the ground surprisingly dry and not the least bit spongy. He believes such an expectation of soggy ground coupled with cooler temperatures and a strong wind to drop participation numbers to the lowest they've been since the early years of the event. The hard count was 53.

The wind was a bit of a challenge beyond, perhaps, keeping people away. Setting up the canopy came close to becoming an unplanned flight for a couple of the people holding it down until it could be anchored. More than once through the morning, people were chasing programs, other pieces of paper, and an occasional bill from the donation basket across the grounds.

Even with the lighter number, we shattered the previous record for fundraising with this year's event. The last record stood at \$285 from 2017. This year hit the remarkable height of \$371.25!

The morning began as it did last year with Town of Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine. This year he presented McElroy Laoshi his seventh letter-of-support and the eighth proclamation from Brookhaven.

As happens every year, we received additional recognition before the event. All were firsts for us. NYS Senator John J. Flanagan, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, issued a Certificate of Recognition for the event — although we've received various recognition from other NYS senators, this was our first from his office and the first-ever certificate from a NYS senator. There were also letters-of-support — both for the first time — from Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone — although not the first from the executive's office, it is the first from Mr. Ballone — and Town of Brookhaven Councilwoman Jane Bonner, 2<sup>nd</sup> District — also not the first from a person on the town council, but it is the first from Ms. Bonner's office. She also spent some time with us during the mid-morning break.

It's interesting to note that Supervisor Romaine and Councilwoman Bonner used similar thoughts when they addressed the crowd. Mr. Romaine's came during his more formal remarks at the beginning of the morning and Ms. Bonner's came during her more casual remarks at the mid-morning break. As usual, Mr. Romaine spoke to the conundrum that no one needs to play T'ai Chi more than a town supervisor, but the position doesn't seem to allow him the time. Ms. Bonner suggested that politicians are probably perfect candidates for the stress reduction benefits of T'ai Chi.

Another light number this year could be found in our facilitator list. Joseph Panico, of West Babylon, had a scheduling conflict and passed on this year's invitation. This was his first miss since he joined our annual event in 2015. Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation (Roslyn), initially thought he'd be able to be with us through the first part of the morning; but, he realized as the morning arrived that he wouldn't be able to lead his workshop with us and reach the location for a seminar he was scheduled to facilitate in New Jersey in a timely fashion. Yet, he still drove to Coram so that he could offer McElroy Laoshi his apology in person and add a generous gift to the donation basket.

We'll tweak McElroy Laoshi's words from his welcome speech to introduce this year's facilitators and share what they shared with our participants. This year saw seven diverse workshops presented by eight diverse facilitators from seven diverse programs across Long Island and into one of the five boroughs. In all of this diversity, we know attendees were able to find the common threads that are the principles of T'ai Chi and Qigong.



**The morning began as it did last year with Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine (L) and event coordinator Laoshi Laurince McElroy from Water Tiger School of T'ai Chi Ch'uan.**

Elan Abneri, senior student of Sifu Tyrone “Wei” Wicksman at Silent Fist Tai Chi (Huntington Station), was with us for an eighth time. This year, his workshop was *An In-Depth Look into a Variety of the Tai Chi Form’s Movements* and his contribution to the demonstration was the Zhang-Style T’ai Chi Form.

This year’s workshop from Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement (Port Jefferson Station) was *Tai Chi Flow*— which split her time between *Healing Qigong* and her lineage’s Yang-Style Long Form. Her choice for the demonstration was the Five Element Form into last third of the Long Form. This was Judith’s 14<sup>th</sup> year with us.

Joe Cronin, who is based in Bethpage and teaches privately and publicly across the island, joined us for the second year in a row. His workshop focused on the Primary Xiang Gong set and B. K. Frantzis’ Opening the Energy Gates. For his part in the demonstration, he played what he calls Three Flavors of Yang-Style — the first part is the 24-Posture Short Form, the second part is the first chapter of the Large-Frame, Yang-Style Long Form, and the third part is the first chapter of Master Yu Cheng Hsiang’s Four-Chapter Yang-Style Long Form.

*“Pong” and Its Relation to Other Techniques in the Form* was Bill Donnelly’s workshop this year — his 14<sup>th</sup> with us. Bill is based in Patchogue and teaches privately. He played the 37-Posture Yang Form for the demonstration.

We had a pair of workshops from Bob and Jean Klein, Long Island School of T’ai-Chi-Ch’uan (Sound Beach), as has been their standard over the 15 years they’ve been with us. The early morning workshop was *Tiger Qigong* and the late morning workshop was *Generating Flows of Energy in the Yang Form to Heal the Body*. Bob and Jean both played the same unspecified Yang-style form for the demonstration.

The thing about being the coordinator of this annual event is that you can’t miss one. So, it should come as no surprise that McElroy Laoshi has been at all 19 of our 19 events on Long Island — plus one in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2000. He, once again, took advantage of the abundant trees at Diamond in the Pines and repeated last year’s workshop, *Branching Out Your Energy Work: An Introduction to Arbor Qigong*. For his part of the demonstration this year, he played his way through Water Tiger’s Grasp Sparrow’s Tail to the Four Cardinal Directions and halfway through Water Tiger’s Dragon Strikes to the Four Diagonal Directions.

Laoshi Joel Valerio, who lives on Staten Island and teaches privately, returned for his sixth year in a row facilitating at the event and, for the second year in a row, presented *Eight Trigram Qigong* for his workshop. For the demonstration, he played the first two sections of Water Tiger’s Medium-Frame, Yang-Style Long Form.

Just before McElroy Laoshi brought the facilitators together for the popular mid-morning group demonstration, he spoke to what he believes is an important point-of-view exemplified by this all-inclusive event:

“I’d like to acknowledge that I used the word *diversity* quite a bit in my opening statement earlier this morning. Some might view the diversity you’ve seen so far today in the first session as a weakness, a dilution, of the arts we all play; but, you won’t see that attitude from us.”

Although our list of facilitators remains pretty consistent year after year, the fact that this group of people, who approach the arts from what can sometimes be vastly different points of view, can continue to come together is testament to the truth of McElroy Laoshi’s statement. A sense of community is something that is, unfortunately, not very common in the world of the martial arts. Many lineages build walls around their programs. Walls separate. In the arts — and in life — we are better, we are stronger, when we come together and share with one another than we are when we are divided.



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