

## LIVE AND IN LIVING COLOR: 2022 WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY

Water Tiger School Staff  
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After two years of remote events with Facebook Live in 2020 and a Zoom session last year, we were back in-person for this year's *World Tai Chi & Qigong Day*. "I thought there was a possibility that I'd forget to do something as I planned and coordinated this year's event," admits event coordinator and host Laoshi Laurince McElroy of Water Tiger. "But, it all seemed to get done."

He also admits he had concerns about what attendance would be. Part of this was due to the continuing Novel Coronavirus pandemic, but there was also concern because, in the past, Water Tiger has always had a number of public classes that could be used to stir interest. "The pandemic has either killed programs at some libraries or put them on hold for now," McElroy Laoshi explains.

At the beginning of the morning, it seemed his concern was warranted with only a few people as the event opened without the usual greeting. However, as the morning unfolded, the hard count hit 48 — just five less than 2019! We're also happy to report the donation basket total was a very respectable \$348.00! This still comes in well over the previous high record of \$285 in 2017, but it falls short of the 2019 new record of \$371.25.

The morning did begin with a fairly stiff wind blowing through the park; yet, the sky was clear and the sun was quite a warming influence. A number of people commented how the wind might've been a bit of a challenge early in this year's event, but nowhere near to the degree it always was in Patchogue's Shorefront Park for the first 17 years of our annual Long Island event.

Of course, Town of Brookhaven Supervisor Edward P. Romaine joined us as the morning unfolded. Instead of his usual appearance at the very beginning of the morning, he arrived deep into the first round of workshops. "I offered to pause the session since he told me he had two other stops to make," says McElroy Laoshi. However, the supervisor wouldn't allow him to do so, offering advice you might hear from any one of our facilitators: "Sometimes it's important to just take a pause and enjoy the moment."

As well as speaking to feeling our annual event "has become a tradition" in the Town of Brookhaven, Mr. Romaine's address also included thoughts such as this: "It is an event that helps people learn the mind-body practices that can improve everyone's quality of life."

Aside from the proclamation from Brookhaven, this year's event received state and county recognition. From NYS Senator Mario R. Mattera, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, we received our second Certificate of Recognition issued by a sitting senator. Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone issued his second Letter-of-Support; the first was in 2019.

We were pleased this year saw a new addition to our facilitator list with Joseph Laracuenta III. Over the years, we have seen him in the periphery and there have been a few years we've been treated by him to things like a fan form as the event winds down. McElroy Laoshi tells us he was happy Joseph reached out to him this year to ask if he could formally participate. We almost missed Spencer Gee this year because he didn't see the initial invitation email or its follow-up. He called on the Tuesday before the event and the wheels to include him fired into action. Unfortunately, Joseph Panico, of West Babylon, had another scheduling conflict and again passed on this year's invitation. Regardless, we did surpass the 2019 facilitator numbers with nine workshops from eight different programs.

Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement (Port Jefferson Station) returned for her 15<sup>th</sup> time this year. Her workshop on the 30<sup>th</sup> was *Season Healing Qigong and Tai Chi Flow*. Unfortunately, Judith wasn't able to stay for the demonstration.

Also joining us for the 15<sup>th</sup> year, Bill Donnelly, who is based in Patchogue, presented *Basics — The Foundation to Techniques in the Form* for his workshop. His contribution to the group facilitator demonstration was his lineage's Yang Long Form.



**At the beginning of the morning, it seemed concerns about light attendance were warranted.**

Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation (Roslyn Heights), returned this year after an absence since 2017. This year he was, again, joined by Maria Campanella and he tweaked his usual presentation approach with a workshop titled *Tai Chi Bootcamp Workout*. Spencer's compound contribution to this year's demonstration included T'ai Chi Ball, Yang-style T'ai Chi Hand Form, T'ai Chi Straight Sword, and Flywisk / Whip Freestyle.

Like every one of their previous 15 years with us, Bob and Jean Klein, Long Island School of T'ai-Chi-Ch'uan (Sound Beach), presented two workshops as the morning unfolded on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The first session's workshop was *Animal Qigong* and the second session's workshop was *The Original William C. C. Chen Yang Style Tai-Chi*. Bob and Jean both played the 60-Movement Yang Short Form for the demonstration.

As noted above, Joseph Laracuenta III of East Meadow joined us for the first time this year. His workshop was *Tai Chi Fundamentals* and his compound contribution to the mid-event demonstration included showing balance by playing his lineage's Yang-Style, 24-Posture Short Form with a bottle of water on his head, followed by Damo's Cane Kung-Fu.

Since McElroy Laoshi led both remote sessions in 2020 and 2021, this year was actually his 22<sup>nd</sup> time facilitating for our annual event on Long Island — don't forget he also hosted and presented at Water Tiger's event in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2000. This year he chose to lead people through Huang Xingxian's Five Loosening Exercises for his workshop. Wielding *The Blade of the Water Tiger*, his demonstration on the 30<sup>th</sup> was Water Tiger's Yang-Influenced, Simplified 32- Posture T'ai Chi Straight Sword Form.

Traveling from Staten Island, where he teaches privately, Laoshi Joel Valerio returned for his seventh year facilitating at the event. His workshop this year was a presentation of The Standing Eight Pieces of Brocade and, for the demonstration, he played Water Tiger's Medium-Frame, Yang-Style 24-Posture Short Form.

After a very long absence, Tyrone "Wei" Wickson, Silent Mind Tai Chi (Stony Brook), rejoined us for the morning this year. *The Basics of the Zhang Style Form* was the focus of his workshop. On behalf of his instructor, Elan Abneri demonstrated the Zhan-Style Form during the mid-event break.

It was actually the light attendance at the beginning of the morning that led to facilitators starting their workshops before the welcoming comments from McElroy Laoshi. Following Supervisor Romaine's presentation, our host caught everyone up with details of the history of the worldwide event and of our own small contribution to it; he touched on our safety protocols; and, as is his custom, addressed diversity in the arts before introducing the facilitators for the demo:

I'd like to acknowledge there's a Taoist precept that can be expressed as "Keep what is useful, discard the rest". In other words, consider what we have learned, what we have experienced; determine what works for us; and put aside what doesn't work for us. We should note: the word is *discard*, not *disparage*, not *denigrate*. The long and the short of what I'm getting at here is that the diversity we see in the arts of T'ai Chi and Qigong are not a weakness, but a strength.

That strength was on full display throughout the morning and a sense of community actually carried into the breakdown of the event with some of the facilitators, a number of students, and a few event participants lending a hand — truly *One World, One Breath*.



**As he has for nearly every year since he took office in 2012, Town of Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine (L) was at the event to present to Laoshi a supporting proclamation from the town.**

