

WORLD T'AI CHI & QIGONG DAY – PATCHOGUE 2008: THE T'AI CHI, MY FRIEND, IS BLOWING IN THE WIND

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There was a chill in the air and a great deal of dust in the wind. Regardless, seven facilitators and over 50 members of the public came together in Patchogue's Shorefront Park to celebrate *World T'ai Chi & Qigong Day*. It was the tenth year for the event world-wide and the eighth year for our local event in Patchogue.



**Another year,
another proclamation
from the Village of
Patchogue.**

The morning began with a few words from McElroy Laoshi and the presentation of the sixth proclamation from the Village of Patchogue. Newly appointed Commissioner of Parks and Recreation, Lori Devlin, greeted the early crowd and read the proclamation declaring the day a celebration of the world-wide event throughout the village.

Although Ms. Devlin was the only dignitary on hand for the event, we also received Letters-of Support from New York State Senator Caesar Trunzo (3rd District) and Steve Levy, Suffolk County Executive, as well as a proclamation from the Honorable Jack Eddington, Suffolk County Legislator (7th District). It was the first time the NYS Senate recognized the event, the second time for Mr. Levy's office, and the fifth time for the SC Legislature. We had also received notice that at least one additional dignitary was planning on joining us, but the weather – or other circumstance – must have canceled the intended visit.

The former attendance record was set in 2006 at 110 and the record for the number of facilitators was set in 2005 at eight, but the morning is not necessarily about records. It is instead about experiencing the different sameness that are the arts of T'ai Chi Ch'uan and Qigong.

That purpose was met by our seven facilitators:

Judith Budd-Walsh, Harmonious Movement of Hauppauge, returned to the event after a two-year absence. She had good reasons for both misses. She was away in 2006 for a weekend seminar with Ken Cohen, a prominent Western instructor of Qigong and the author of *The Way of Qigong*, and she missed 2007 for her son's wedding. Her workshop included selections of Qigong from Nei Kung, Xi Jing Jing, Taoist breathing, and Bau Jing; and the Yang Long Form – first third.

Returning for his second year of participation, Sifu Michael Evans of Shaolin Kung Fu Studios in Medford, seemed to frighten people away from his workshop with the "king of weapons." He led folks through the 16-posture Yang-style Spear Set.

The "new kid on the block" this year was Nancy Fiano, Dojo of the Dancing Dragon of Lindenhurst. Ms. Fiano has been a constant figure at past *T'ai Chi in the Park* sessions and has shared the front with McElroy Laoshi. She has also been on the mat at the studio for several of Water Tiger's seminars since January 2007. The focus for her workshop was on balance, alignment and the opening and closing of the energy gates through Silk Reeling Exercises; and she also led some various approaches to Qigong with Fukien Nine, Golden Ball, and Eight Immortals.

Spencer Gee, Spencer Gee Wellness Corporation of Old Westbury, continued his long affiliation with the event. For the seventh year, Mr. Gee brought his very popular T'ai Chi Workout. Water Tiger student Shawn Feeney describes the experience, "It felt like choreography to a Philip Glass piece with its repetitions and slowly unfolding structure."

Another longtime fixture of the event returned for a sixth year. Bob Klein, Long Island School of T'ai-Chi Chuan of Sound Beach, brought two workshops to the morning. He

started with “An Introduction to T'ai Chi for Beginners” and finished with a focus on his own original art “Zookinesis: Age Reversal Chi-Gung.”

Water Tiger’s own Laoshi Laurince McElroy introduced participants to a favorite Water Tiger School walking exercise, T'ai Chi Flying.

Sifu Tyrone “Wei” Wicksman, Zhang Style Tai Chi of Suffolk County, has also become an event regular. He has been a facilitator for three of the last four celebrations. As in his previous workshops, this year’s explored various aspects of the Zhang-style form, Push Hands, and martial applications.

As Master of Ceremonies, McElroy Laoshi shared a little of the history of both the world-wide and the local event during the 10:00AM break in the morning’s workshops:

Although this is only the eighth year we have celebrated the event in Patchogue, it is the 10th anniversary of the event world-wide. When Bill Douglas held the first celebration ten years ago it was little more than a mass demonstration of T'ai Chi in the greater Kansas City metropolitan area. It was, however, covered by some of the international media. By the second year the event had spread to twelve countries. It is now in more than 60 countries across six of the seven continents – darn those scientists and penguin tourists in Antarctica for not participating. I recently asked Mr. Douglas if he could give me a figure on the exact number of individual events, such as this one. His reply, “Like the Tao, they are unknowable.” I can, however, tell you that 2008 marks the first year for participation in such countries as South Korea, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The very popular “Facilitators’ Demonstrations” returned this year to illustrate how differences do not interfere with the concept of “One World ... One Breath.” Sifu “Wei” played the first section of the Zhang-style form; Nancy Fiano with friend and fellow instructor Mike Dalia completed the Cheng Man-Ching Yang style short form; McElroy Laoshi played Water Tiger’s Yang-influenced Straight Sword Form; Spencer Gee wove together Yang-Style postures with a detailed focus on Chan Si; Judith Budd-Walsh modified the movement count to show the entire Yang-Style Long Form from her lineage; Sifu Evans had plenty of safe distance as he demonstrated the 16-posture Yang-style Spear Set; and Bob Klein played the 60-movement Yang-style Short Form from William C. C. Chen.

One of our favorite comments about the morning is an observation regarding the group demo’s plethora of approaches to the art of T'ai Chi. It comes from Water Tiger student Michael Kandel. Michael tells us, “I was able to see the T'ai Chi in what each facilitator did and what was their interpretation of T'ai Chi.” He adds that he was both happy and surprised that he could make such determinations.

If there was one point of controversy to the morning, it was due to what one participant called its Lollapalooza-style with many workshops unfolding simultaneously. Although we imagine there were those in the middle, we only heard from the extremes. Some people told us that they loved being able to see other pockets of T'ai Chi happening around them as they played. Other people told us that they found it very frustrating that they could not participate in everything that was offered since workshops did not unfold consecutively.

Even with controversy, there was enough joy in the morning to make it a wonderful morning of T'ai Chi and Qigong on New York State’s Isle of Length!



Once again , the group facilitators’ demonstration was a major highlight of the morning’s celebration — (L to R) Sifu “Wei” ; Nancy Fiano and Mike Dalia; McElroy Laoshi (in between Ms. Fiano & Mr. Dalia); Spencer Gee; Judith Budd-Walsh; Sifu Evans; and Bob Klein.

