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## **Neighbor to Neighbor: Going Green in Queens inspires eco optimism**

By Barbara Morris

When a community volunteer joins a great group with equally great support groups, one would think any proposed joint project would immediately be anticipated a success. So it was when, at a meeting of the Queens Coalition for Parks and Green Spaces, QCP President Fred Kress and Corey Bearak, president of the Queens Civic Congress, told us we were going to have a greening event.

The other boroughs each had one, and we didn't want Queens left out. Each support group did a spectacular job. In the meantime, as we sat around the big table in the overlook's meeting room, it was agreed we needed a name for our project. A brief contest led us to select "Going Green in Queens."

My head was spinning given the speed assignments were handed out, since the deadline we chose - Saturday, March 8 - was coming up. The event was held at the New York Hall of Science in Flushing Meadows Corona Park, thanks to the hard work of our creative outreach folks from Partnership for Parks: Helen Ho, Norman Chan and Hasen King, who worked closely with the city Parks & Recreation Department; the City Parks Foundation; and Queens Parks Commissioner Dorothy Lewandowski and Assistant Commissioner Estelle Cooper. The selected location, with free admission and parking, is an interesting place. We were thrilled. Invitations to participants were sent out and, as quick as a wink, volunteers responded.

It rained hard the day before the event, and on the morning of the event it rained even harder. As we were loading Fred's car with literature, free gifts and prizes, games and other goodies, however, the rain stopped. It didn't rain when we unloaded at the Hall. It was almost miraculous and put us in an optimistic mood.

When we arrived at the Hall, we were amazed that most of the long lines of tables were already being filled by enthusiastic folks with a fascinating array of educational material. Once set up at our own site, I tried circulating to see what type of information was available. Studied properly, my collection would minimally take months. This event wasn't, however, only about collecting literature or finding out from people monitoring the tables what their group was all about.

There were well-planned workshops. On the lower level boardroom, there were workshops about trees (How to Care for Street Trees 101, Masters Level Pruning - More than Just Dead Wood and One Is the Loneliest Number). In the auditorium and Wiscusi Gallery, there were workshops on water ("City of Water," a short film on city waterways and Make Waves in the Blue Movement - Queens Waterfront Communities Make A Splash! Parts I and II); environmental sustainability

(Composting in the City - Indoors and Outdoors, Building Foundations for a Sustainable Future Through Green Building and Solar Energy and How Runoff Water Affects You and Builds Bioswales, Too!); and resources (Building Relationships with Elected Officials, Parks 101 and Grants and Community Building Projects).

Finally, there was a closing ceremony and free raffle during which city Parks Department Commissioner Adrian Benepe - who stood smiling as we all sang "Happy Birthday" to him - stood patiently reading an almost never-ending list of prize winners who had a choice of a gift.

I happened to be one of the lucky ones and chose one of those efficient green Tregators seen wrapped around well-watered street trees. At that same spot in the program, Lewandowski presented Benepe with a clock purchased at the Hall of Science that was said to run on fruit.

I don't know how that works or if you have to keep feeding it, but it sounds like a novel conversation piece. In her very informative keynote address, Lewandowski not only put a happy spin on the heavy rains by reminding us they'll bring beautiful flowers, but also told us some of the exciting future plans for our Queens parks.

When Benepe spoke, he expanded on the future plans for parks throughout the city. He ended our perfect day by saying he was at the other boroughs' greening events, but Going Green in Queens was the best.

More to come.