

PARK NOTES

SPRING 2017

Planting for a Resilient, Sustainable Future

Those of you who knew our park in the 1980's and 90's are among the most appreciative visitors — particularly when it comes to the park's landscape. You saw it when the lawns and gardens were in a serious state of neglect. At that time, funding for city parks was limited and difficult to obtain for any type of project. The volunteer gardening arm of the Conservancy had yet to be established, and only on rare occasions did a Parks Department gardener come over to tend the 14-plus acres. Carl Schurz was sometimes referred to as "Needle Park," and city staff likely spent time dealing with the issues that gave it that reputation. While the park has always been very dog-friendly, back then, people didn't necessarily feel compelled to pick up after their dogs. On some days, walks and lawn areas could be minefields. By the early 2000's, the Conservancy decided enough was enough — it was time to win back the park for the neighborhood. We joined

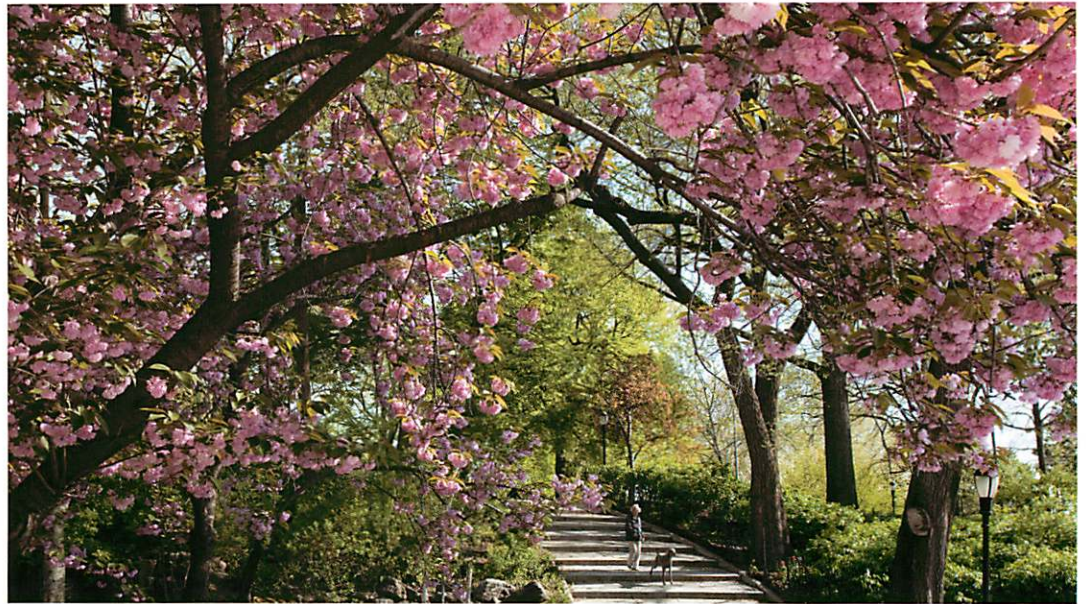


Photo ©2011 Betsy Pinover Schiff. Her recent book "Sidewalk Gardens of New York" features Carl Schurz Park on pages 144 & 145.

forces with a Parks Department energized by a new dedicated Carl Schurz Park gardener, and set our sights on restoring the landscape.

In prioritizing goals for the restoration, the Conservancy's Gardening Committee reviewed historical maps, planting plans and photos dating as far back as the 1930's. The planting dates on these documents show us the age of what has survived. We estimate that about 50 trees in the park (out of about 650 total) date back to the 30's,

and perhaps a few shrubs as well. The plant selections included natives and exotics, with many types of trees and shrubs that we still use today — lindens, hawthorns, oaks, cherries, roses, viburnums, lilacs and rhododendrons, to name a few.

The only noticeable flaw in those designs from the 1930's had to do with the spacing of the London plane trees. Many were planted too close together in allées. Even though they may have survived through

the years, these London planes can look more like toothpicks than the graceful, broad canopy trees they are meant to be. Next time you find yourself on the walkway that runs along the west side of the playground, look up, and you will notice the spindly tops that result from overcrowding.

Over the ensuing decades, the park's landscape was left to deteriorate slowly. Few improvements were made. The notable exception was in

Continued on page 4

Chairperson's Letter

How lucky we are to have spring! After many long, cold months spent mostly indoors, there is almost nothing as exhilarating as the first sign of warm weather. And one of the best places to experience this sheer joy is our own Carl Schurz Park.

There one can be surrounded by the most dazzling display of all size, shape and color of flowers. Our park is awash in blooms heralding the onset of spring and the coming of summer.

Each year, as I begin to prepare my hillside garden for the return of summer perennials, I am struck by the thought that some of the greatest moments can be found in some of the simplest places. For many of us locals this luxury requires little effort at all.

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is deeply committed to restoring and maintaining our splendid greenspace. In this edition of *Park Notes* we have highlighted how we use your vital donations to ensure the beauty and sustainability of Carl Schurz Park.



Judy Howard
Chair, Board of Directors



A Focus on Trees

There is nothing more precious than our tree canopy. Making sure it is healthy and well maintained is of vital importance to us. Thanks to your support we, at the Conservancy, have been able to seriously focus on the more than 600 trees in our Park. After decades of neglect, our goal is to rejuvenate all existing trees, remove hazardous limbs and increase the number of tree varieties and cultivars.

While the NYC Department of Forestry does remove dead limbs and trees, we have undertaken a more consistent effort. Through the years, our modest pruning program has grown. Annually, we examine and if necessary prune almost every tree in Carl Schurz Park. In targeted, highly used areas like the playground, trees are pruned more frequently.

In order to accommodate the ever growing number of park users, new trees have been carefully situated with an eye towards increasing lawn areas and usable space. We have judiciously sited replacement trees within our shrub borders to allow for as much open area as possible. We have also turned our attention to introducing much needed evergreens and colorful, flowering under-story trees to provide added four season interest. ■

Conservancy hires Operations Associate

Jessica Goetz joined the staff of the Conservancy in March 2017 as an Operations Associate. She assists the Director of Operations in supporting the Conservancy's various committees, programs and volunteers. Her tasks also include updating the Conservancy's database and assisting with fundraising efforts. Jess formerly worked as a Case-work Representative for Congressman Bill Pascrell Jr. (NJ-09).



"I am very excited to work closely with the Conservancy's amazing volunteer base to help maintain the green spaces of Carl Schurz Park." ■



*Nina Mortellito and Lily,
photo by David Williams*

Recently, Director of Operations Patrick McCluskey sat down with Nina Mortellito, a long-time Park volunteer, Chair of the Dog Run Committee, and Member of the Board. As always happens when speaking to this avid dog lover and ardent Conservancy supporter, the focus of the conversation turned to her experiences with the dog runs. But she is clear that no matter how one may get involved with the Conservancy, what you get in return is invaluable.

PM: I know you have lived on the Upper East Side for a long time Nina, but how did you first get involved with the Conservancy and the Dog Runs?

NM: Originally when I started going to the Park with my puppy, I don't think I had even looked at the Small Dog Run. I did what every new dog owner does: I was petrified to take my dog for fear that something would happen. Of course people were really

Volunteers Make it Happen! Friends Make it Fun!

Nina Mortellito: Volunteer, Dog Lover, Board Member, Friend

welcoming, and as soon as she put her foot down she was playing and it was wonderful. And then I would look at the Large Dog Run. I did not want to go in there with her until she was about two. We had a big snowstorm, and I wanted to really let her run, and of course I immediately lost her in the snow because she was white! She hid under a bench, and when I saw her eyes I thought, 'okay, we're alright!'

PM: So she basically dictated that you get involved by loving the Park and the Dog Runs.

NM: It was because of her and it was because the Small Dog Run at the time had the most treacherous stairs, no railing, the boards were breaking apart, the railing on the one side was only knee high, and there was only one gate. It was not good. So I went to a meeting and met David Williams and I started working with this wonderful group. We all had puppies that were about the same age.

PM: And you got right to work, and soon you were

helping to lead the charge?

NM: We had no extra money for anything, so we scrubbed the run ourselves. Now that is done professionally every week, and twice a month in less peak seasons. A couple of guys who were very good carpenters built a second gate; The Park paid for new stairs and eventually we were able to add that back panel and put mesh up higher and raise the gate in the back. I don't even remember being told I was head of the committee, it just happened!

PM: Why did you feel it was important to be involved rather than just be a friend who utilizes the Park and the Runs?

NM: The truth is I can never stop interfering (she laughs)! If I knew it could be better or fixed, I knew we could do it. And you make friends! And the more friends you make, the more people you can have come in to help, and you make more friends.

PM: What would you say to people who only have a little time but want to get involved?

NM: I say please yes! They say what can I do? And I say, clean up the run every time you come in, sweep the leaves, pick up poop, and use the hoses. And the biggest help is coming to the Dog Run Clean-up Days, which happen once in spring, and once in fall.

PM: Along with all you do for the Dog Runs, you are also at almost all our other events helping out too. When did you start to help out with other events?

NM: I can't really tell you, except that I seem to never say no! It started out so innocently, can you lend a hand, etc. — and one thing would lead to another. I know in the summertime with the concerts, I always man the table when we have items for the dog runs, so that was a natural. But the art show, I said something about the measurements for the booth, and next thing I knew I was in charge of the measurements — which I'm good at! But what a team effort, and again how I have met so many good people.

Continued on page 11

For the last 15 years, the Conservancy has worked on improving the landscape section by section.

the mid-1970's, when the Conservancy — then a neighborhood association — collaborated with the city to restore the cherry tree allée at 86th Street.

In the late 1980's, the condition of the green spaces had degraded so much that the Parks Department, even though operating on an extremely tight budget, felt they had to do something. They created a plan to renovate the “Peter Pan Cul de Sac,” and the area leading up to it from the 87th Street entrance.

A review of those design documents made it clear that plant choices were based on economics. Plant lists contained species that were inexpensive or easy to propagate. Priority was given to plants with characteristics like rapid growth rates and a minimal need for water. The plans called for multiple units of a few plant species, which was certainly cost-effective, but translated to low plant diversity within the park. The list of new plants for the entire area was comprised of large quantities of fewer than 10 different species — 185 cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*), 134 holly (*Ilex crenata*) and almost 20,000 ivy (*Hedera helix*). Manhattan euony-



At top: As maintained and improved by the Conservancy today; above: Prior to renovation in 1990.

mus (*Euonymus kiautschovicus* ‘Manhattan’) was also planted, and is the most common shrub you will find in the park today.

While a few specimens remain from this circa 1990

installation, much is gone. Of what survived, plants like the hollies became thuggish and had to be cut back or removed altogether. Overall, the gardens were sterile. Few birds or pollinators

would have been attracted to the area, and some plants were actually draining the soil of nutrients.

For the last 15 years, the Conservancy has worked on improving the landscape section by section. A goal throughout has been to restore ecologic diversity in the park. Scientific research has shown us how proper plant selection creates resilient and sustainable landscapes. We have put great effort into making smart choices on native or adapted species for our projects. We ask what each plant can contribute:

- ☞ Does it have fruit/seeds that are edible and nutritious for birds?
- ☞ Do its flowers attract pollinators like bees and butterflies?
- ☞ Can it provide habitat for the insects that supply a source of protein for birds?
- ☞ Does it fit into the plant community?

We have exchanged ilex, ivy and euonymus for native amelanchier, fern and juniper. The Conservancy has brought in hundreds of species — everything from bladder-nut to vitex — all of which serve a role in making

For a planting plan outlining the ecologically diverse selections, see page 9.

Planting Plan for a Resilient, Sustainable Future

| Botanical Name | Common Name |
|---|------------------------|
| * <i>Ailanthus altissima</i> | TREE OF HEAVEN |
| <i>Amelanchier laevis</i> | SMOOTH SERVICEBERRY |
| <i>Aronia arbutifolia</i> | RED CHOKEBERRY |
| * <i>Berberis thunbergii</i> | JAPANESE BARBERRY |
| <i>Carya glabra</i> | BROOM HICKORY |
| <i>Ceanothus americanus</i> | WILD SNOWBALL |
| * (also new) <i>Cercis canadensis</i> | REDBUD |
| <i>Clethra alnifolia</i> | SWEET PEPPERBUSH |
| * (also new) <i>Cornus florida</i> | FLOWERING DOGWOOD |
| * <i>Cornus kousa</i> | JAPANESE DOGWOOD |
| * <i>Cornus mas</i> | CORNELIAN CHERRY |
| * (also new) <i>Cornus racemosa</i> | GRAY-STEMMED DOGWOOD |
| * <i>Crataegus crus-galli</i> | DWARF HAWTHORN |
| <i>Diospyros virginiana</i> | AMERICAN PERSIMMON |
| <i>Fothergilla gardenii</i> | DWARF FOTHERGILLA |
| <i>Fothergilla major</i> | LARGE FOTHERGILLA |
| * (also new) <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> | VIRGINIAN WITCHHAZEL |
| * (also new) <i>Hydrangea quercifolia</i> | OAKLEAF HYDRANGEA |
| <i>Ilex opaca</i> | AMERICAN HOLLY |
| <i>Itea virginica</i> | VIRGINIA WILLOW |
| <i>Juniperus virginiana</i> | BURK EASTERN RED CEDAR |
| <i>Lindera benzoin</i> | SPICE BUSH |



Crabapple.

| Botanical Name | Common Name |
|--|---------------------|
| * <i>Lonicera maackii</i> | AMUR HONEYSUCKLE |
| <i>Mahonia aquifolium</i> | OREGON HOLLY |
| <i>Malus sargentii</i> | SARGENT CRABAPPLE |
| * (also new) <i>Nandina domestica</i> | HEAVENLY BAMBOO |
| <i>Osmanthus heterophyllus</i> | OLIVE HOLLY |
| <i>Physocarpus opulifolius</i> 'Monlo' | DIABOLO NINEBARK |
| <i>Pieris japonica</i> | JAPANESE PIERIS |
| <i>Quercus bicolor</i> | SWAMP WHITE OAK |
| * (also new) <i>Rhododendron</i> 'PJM' | PJM RHODODENDRON |
| <i>Rhododendron vaseyi</i> | PINKSHELL AZALEA |
| <i>Sassafras albidum</i> | SASSAFRAS |
| <i>Spiraea thunbergii</i> | THUNBERG SPIREA |
| <i>Staphylea holocarpa</i> | BLADDERNUT |
| <i>Symphoricarpos</i> | HANCOCK |
| <i>x chenaultii</i> 'Hancock' | SNOWBERRY |
| * (also new) <i>Taxus x media</i> | ANGLOJAPANESE YEWE |
| <i>Taxus x media</i> 'Densiformis' | DENSIFORMIS YEWE |
| <i>Viburnum acerifolium</i> | MAPLELEAF VIBURNUM |
| * <i>Viburnum carlesii</i> | FRAGRANT VIBURNUM |
| <i>Viburnum dentatum</i> | ARROWWOOD VIBURNUM |
| <i>Viburnum lentago</i> | NANNYBERRY VIBURNUM |
| <i>Viburnum prunifolium</i> | BLACKHAW VIBURNUM |

* existed before renovation



Redbud.

Unearthing History



Recently, Board Chair Judy Howard, Gardening Committee Chair Susan Bernstein, and Conservancy Historian Jeffrey Evans met with past Carl Schurz Park Association President Laura Mayer. Back in the 1970's, Laura was instrumental in forging the, first ever, public-private partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate the transfer of important historical documents to preserve the integrity

of the Conservancy's institutional knowledge. Laura released a virtual treasure trove of materials including dozens of photos from the 1938–1940 construction of the FDR Drive and subsequent restoration of Carl Schurz Park. We found the photos to be of such interest that we have posted them on our website under historical archives. We hope you will enjoy this photographic journey as much as we did. ■

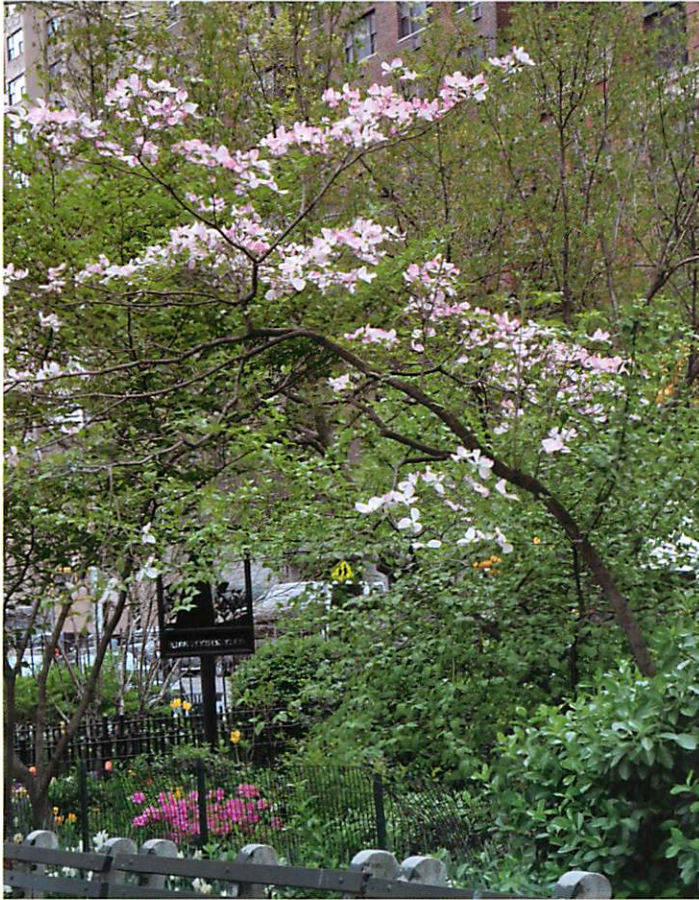
The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate the transfer of important historical documents to preserve the integrity of the Conservancy's institutional knowledge.



Top left: Park circa 1939; top right: 86th Street entrance 1939; bottom left: Hoop Garden 1940; bottom right: Esplanade 1940.

our park's landscape stronger and healthier. And the park looks fantastic.

For those who were here in the 1980's, you have seen former sandboxes on the esplanade turn into beautiful gardens full of shrubs, grasses and perennials. Next time you're out for a stroll, take a closer look. You'll discover that they're bustling with many forms of life — the sign of a rich, vibrant and sustainable park. ■



At top: Flowering dogwood; above: Fragrant Viburnum.

What is it? Osage Orange—

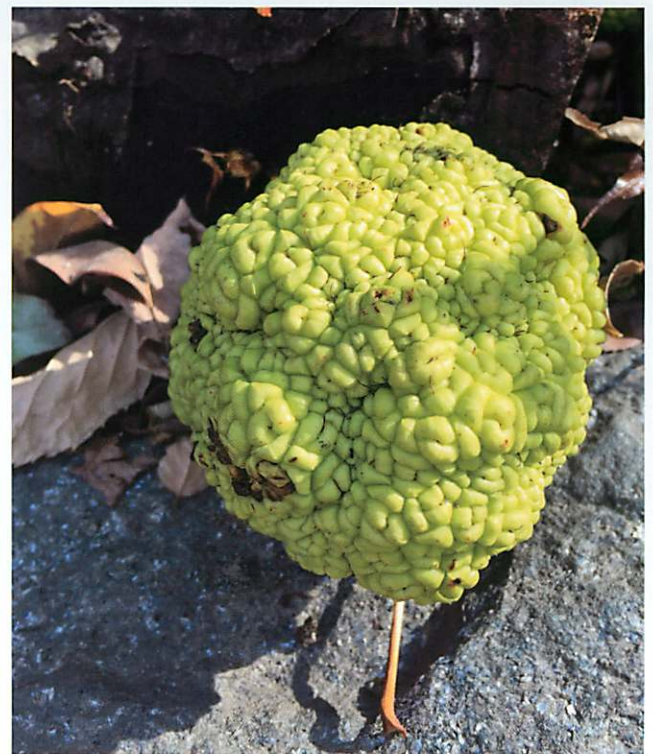
Every fall brings curious looks from passersby, park-side, at East End Avenue and 85th Street. There, littering the ground, one will see many unusual and eye-catching “fruit”.

These wrinkled lime green orbs are Osage Oranges (*Maclura pomifera*) which have fallen from the tree above. Only the female tree will bear fruit which is inedible, although squirrels love the seeds found inside.

The tree was named after the Osage Tribe, which lived near its home range, and also for the aroma of the ripe fruit.

This useful and historically significant tree was once a favorite of settlers who, by planting them closely in rows, used them to create natural fences. The strong, dense wood was prized—its limber branches used for the construction of bows by Native Americans and wagon wheels and railroad ties by settlers.

The use of the fruit as a natural bug repellent has not been proven. If one is tempted to pick them up, avoid breaking them apart as the milky juice may irritate the skin. ■



THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is grateful to all those who made a contribution between January 1, 2016 and December 31, 2016. Without your vital support, our efforts at improving the park and offering annual events would be greatly diminished.

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\$75,000 and over

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Biscuits and Bath for
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 two dog runs

Insomnia Cookies for
 donating cookies to the
 Sunset Film Festival.

Instavet for supporting the
 cleaning of our dog runs.

Yura for their donation
 of breakfast for the Gracie
 Square Art Show and
 goodies at the Sunset Film
 Festival.

*In addition to their gifts
 to the Conservancy, these
 individuals generously
 hosted 'Party on the Park'
 dinners in their homes.

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy Event Calendar

Flowers!

Plant "Sale"

Saturday May 13th

9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

East 86th St. & East End Ave.

Kids!

Summer Sandbox Series

August 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th

4:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Harvest Festival

Saturday, October 21st

11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Playground at 84th St.

Tunes!

Make Music New York

Wednesday, June 21st

4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Citywide concert series! Celebrate the first day of summer!

A collaboration with Manhattan Borough President, Gale Brewer

Summer Sounds 2017

Mitch Frohman

Latin Jazz Quartet

Tuesday, July 11th

7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Steve Shaiman and

Swingtime Big Band

Wednesday, July 19th

7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Open air concerts on the John Finley Walk at the top of the East 86th St. staircase.

Movies!

Sunset Film Festival 2017

"Why ask for the moon when we have movies under the stars in Carl Schurz Park?!"

Disney's Moana

Tuesday, July 25th

8:30 p.m.

The film tells the story of Moana, the strong-willed daughter of the chief of a Polynesian tribe, who is chosen by the ocean itself to reunite a mystical relic with a goddess.

Erin Brockovich

Tuesday, August 8th

8:30 p.m.

Starring Julia Roberts, a true story of a tough, single mother of three, who without legal training coordinates the groundwork for challenging the environmentally irresponsible actions of a large energy company.

The Hockey & Basketball Court

Art!

The 45th Gracie Square Art Show

Saturday & Sunday

September 9th and 10th, 2017

10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

East End Ave. from

East 84th St. to East 88th St.

www.graciesquareartshow.info

(rain or shine)

Woof!

Halloween Howl &

Healthy Hound Fair

Sunday, October 15th

12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m.

The Hockey and Basketball Court, and John Finley Walk

Tree!

Holiday Tree Lighting

Sunday, December 3rd

5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

East 86th St. and East End Ave.

The Peter Pan Society



We all treasure our favorite memories of Carl Schurz Park — enjoying a picnic with friends on Hillside Lawn, watching the boats ply the East River, seeing the glee of a small child swinging through the air in the Cat Bird Playground, listening to a Summer Sounds concert on the Esplanade under the stars, walking through the verdant Park on the first days of spring, relishing the sight of glorious tulips in the Hoop Garden.

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy has recently created The Peter Pan society to honor those who want to help to ensure that future generations will be able to create memories like ours. We would love to invite you to join The Peter Pan Society by including CSPC in your estate plans. ■

Volunteers Make It Happen . . . continued from page 3

PM: What else do you think people need to know about the Conservancy?

NM: The first thing that immediately comes off the top of my head is that people don't know we have only a few paid employees, and that volunteers do every other thing. When you look around and see all these beautiful flowers and trees, our dog run, our playground, and how clean the Park is . . . it's all volunteers.

PM: We would not be able to do what we do without our volunteers.

NM: And we must keep our momentum going. People need to know that what the volunteers do make this Park what it is, and how much they will get back — not only in the Park. It's not just when you go there. All of a sudden you're doing all sorts of things with these people outside and not just related to the park! We are a great community and there are so many nice people, I am lucky. ■



HOW TO DONATE

Donate Online

For online donations, visit www.carlschurzparknyc.org

Matching Gifts

If your employer matches gifts, please follow their matching gift protocol to initiate the match; we will complete the process to multiply your support.

Planned Giving

Please consider including the Conservancy as a beneficiary of your estate. You may call our office to speak with us.

Stock Gifts

For instructions on how to donate stock, please call or e-mail our office.

Please mail your gift to:

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy
1483 York Avenue, #20523, New York, NY 10075-1021
212-459-4455

Carl Schurz Park Conservancy Mission Statement

The mission of Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is to restore and beautify Carl Schurz Park, complementing the efforts of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Our goal is to enhance the public's enjoyment and involvement in the Park. The Conservancy organizes volunteers to execute its projects and sponsors community events that are open to all.

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