

# PARK NOTES

SPECIAL ISSUE

SUMMER 2012

## BUILDING FOR A LASTING CARL SCHURZ PARK: BELOW AND ABOVE GROUND



ROBERT ENGLEBRIGHT

“*Carl Schurz Park has great bones*”—Adrian Benepe, NYC Commissioner of Parks and Recreation  
Jeffrey Evans’ detailed timeline of the history of Carl Schurz Park, *The Little Park on the River*, chronicles the long life of the Park. Spanning centuries, the story of Carl Schurz Park is the story of an urban oasis in progress. A major marker in that story is the extensive renovation of the Park that began in 1939. Along with many other City parks that had suffered serious decline in prior decades, Carl Schurz benefited from a top to bottom renovation, restoration and re-landscaping. While the partnership continued on page 4

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

Looking ahead....

And now comes the hard part.

Ever since its inception, the Carl Schurz Park Conservancy (previously the Association) has conservatively shepherded its funds. Like the flight's end comments by your pilot from the cabin, the Conservancy "knows you have many choices when it comes" to supporting a nonprofit. We remain mindful of our mission. And what investments to make in your Park that we believe you will value.

Clearly, as the growth of your gifts and volunteerism indicate, we have been doing something right. And, in your comments to us, you like what you see when you visit 'your front yard.'

Now, as articles in this issue of Park Notes demonstrate, the Conservancy is focusing ahead on what we call the Park's 'hardscape.' As we continue our funding for the lawns, gardens, trees, active areas and events, we are now looking at the long haul: working with our partners in the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, and our elected officials, we have begun to identify those critical features of this public park that have suffered decades-long neglect. Read: stonework, drains, fencing. Compared to the gardens and the lawns, these are the less visible, but hugely critical, elements of the physical plant of Carl Schurz Park.

Or, the 'hardscape.' And, withal, the hard part.

It is going to take a steady hand to ensure that we maintain what we have accomplished as we embark on this new phase of park improvements. And that you, our generous friends, will help us move ahead with these critical infrastructure renovations.

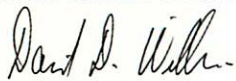
For the past year, Parks Department management has walked with us, poked around with us, dug with us and surveyed with us as we assess priorities, determine what is financially feasible and what Parks and the City should do. And what we, as citizen caretakers, can contribute.

We feel, now, that this is as it should be.

If, as it was once famously writ, the wise man builds his house upon a rock then it could justifiably be said that your Conservancy is on the right track in laying a new foundation for the secure future of Carl Schurz Park.

Equally, we believe you, our donors and volunteers, are all the wiser for supporting the Conservancy's endeavors. Clearly, the proof is in the pudding.

And so we shall continue. As we have for decades past. And will for decades to come.



David D. Williams  
Executive Director



ROBERT ENGLEBRIGHT



ROBERT ENGLEBRIGHT

## 'PRESS FIVE TO REACH EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT MEG CLEARY'



Meg Cleary

In early May the Conservancy welcomed its new, fulltime Executive Assistant, **Meg A. Cleary** to the Conservancy. Joining us from the law firm of Podell, Schwartz, Schecter and Banfield LLP, Meg was one of over 200 regional applicants.

Meg's many responsibilities range from the maintenance and updating of the Conservancy's database, to assisting fundraising campaigns and support of the Conservancy's numerous

Park events.

"It didn't take long for me to realize what makes the Conservancy such a success," said Meg.

"In three words it's 'volunteers', 'volunteers' and 'volunteers'! I myself volunteer once a week at Free Arts NYC so I know what the dynamics are.

You get involved because you believe in the cause. And you stay because it's not only fun and gratifying, but also integral to the success of the organization."

A resident of Woodside, Queens, a graduate of SUNY Oneonta and enrolled in the Masters Program for non-profit Management at the New School, Meg joins the Conservancy at its crossroads of steady growth and increased administrative details.

Not a moment too soon!! ☺

# THE GREENING OF CARL SCHURZ PARK: A COSTLY ENDEAVOR

There is nothing a park-goer loves more than a beautiful, clean, green lawn. No surprise there. It is the true sign of a well-maintained park and a delight to all who gaze upon its verdant beauty or relax upon its fragrant softness. The Conservancy has spent years establishing two such lawns at the center of our Park, one funded by the Conservancy, the second generously funded by neighbors **Lenard** and **Fern Tessler**.

What may surprise a visitor to the Park is that there is nothing more labor intensive or costly than maintaining them.

To keep them at their best,


our park lawns must be aerated and reseeded every spring to prevent compaction of the soil and grass loss. They should be mowed and trimmed every week during the 6+ months of the growing season. And while the Conservancy pays for a private contractor to cut the grass, budgetary constraints limit the work to every other week. They must be kept adequately watered to prevent the grass from dying. And during the freeze/thaw of winter months, when they are at their most vulnerable, they must be fenced and protected from all foot traffic.

The Conservancy is often asked why we have made these

lawns passive use—no dogs or sports at any time. The answer is quite simple: a look at the severely browned and damaged lawns elsewhere in the Park shows what wear and tear can do to a lawn.

Constant pounding of the earth from sports causes compaction of the soil. It often becomes so hard and cement-like that water will pool on its surface, unable to penetrate into the ground. Grass will not grow under these conditions. Dog urine is extremely toxic to grass and will quickly kill large patches. Dog's nails easily dig up the grass killing the root systems and causing loss. And

during the freeze/thaw of winter months, even the most gentle use of a lawn will kill the delicate roots causing grass to die. And of course everyone knows the trauma of stepping in dog waste or trying to clean it off of a small child!

The Conservancy has been gratified with the degree to which our responsible neighbors have respected the signage posted in each of these two restored lawns. With continued care and understanding by the community, these once brown areas of the Park will remain green and inviting for years to come.  by **Judy Howard**, Conservancy Board Chair



The 'Circle Lawn': Once upon a time and now.

*continued from page 1*

between the Conservancy and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation has, over the past forty years, resulted in the sparkling renewal of the lawns, gardens and trees, the ‘hardscape’ of the Park – its walkways, drains, fences and stonework – are in critical need of repair.

‘At our Board retreat last year it did not take us long to zero in on the physical plant of our Park,’ said **Judy Howard**, Conservancy Board Chair. ‘We feel we have done a great deal to bring back the beauty and health of our lawns and gardens. Now we’re looking down the road to the long-term health of our Park and what we see is a steady, committed march to rebuilding the existing ‘bones’ of the Park, as Commissioner Benepe would say.’

The process of assessing the condition of the Park skeleton has already begun. While this assessment will itself take time to complete, the goal remains clear: to repair and restore the infrastructure of Carl Schurz Park for future Park users, as dictated by cost feasibility.

‘Each ‘generation’ of donors, volunteers and City officials has seamlessly built on the foundation of those that came before,’ added Executive Director **David D. Williams**. ‘When I came aboard over twenty years ago so much had already been accomplished. **Laura Mayer** had, for seventeen years, steered this enterprise with an unerring sense of scale and what the Conservancy should do for the Park. And what the City should.’

‘Now,’ said Williams, ‘We envision a new emphasis for

our efforts, building on what we can confidently say is a Carl Schurz Park that has never looked better.’

The Conservancy’s newly minted Infrastructure Committee, the ‘iTeam’, will be parsing the Park’s hardscape, assessing the following areas:

- Drainage
- Stonework
- Walkways
- Fencing

Which is not to say that significant, costly work has not already been done to shore up the Park’s foundations. Ten or so years ago the entire perimeter sidewalk was torn up and redone, including brand new tree-pits. At the same time, the bluestone plaza at East 86th Street was restored.

Similarly, the comfort station adjacent to the playground was sandblasted and outfitted with a new roof and gutters.

These projects were City-funded and coordinated with extensive Conservancy input and oversight.

Now, along with our friends in the Parks Department, and our elected officials, we are embarking on a whole new restoration phase for the Park. Says **Kenneth Creed** of the iTeam:

“Though our small team of committee members was formed only in March, we have already generated a lot of momentum. A deep knowledge base about the park’s infrastructure among committee members and our first meeting host, **Patricia Nadosy**, set us in motion and the planning began immediately.”

Building on the skills within the Parks Department and the committee, Kenny and the



JEFFREY EVANS



DAVID WILLIAMS

*Peter Pan Pond and a mortice challenge.*

iTeam have mapped out a plan:

“Our first order of business is to identify and quantify the infrastructure in the Park. To manage this data and track our progress, a Geographical Information Systems (GIS) map, a digitally layered map of the Park and all its parts will be created. We enlisted US Department of Minerals Management cartographer **Stephen Creed** (yes, related!, ed.) to advise us and offer technical help in the use of GIS. He will stay with us as an advisor. With some crucial assistance from Parks Department Geographer **Terese Flores**, who supplied us with a plethora of geographical data on Carl Schurz Park, an accurate basemap is nearly

assembled.

“Next, infrastructure will be catalogued and plotted on the GIS map. iTeam volunteers on the ground along with various experts will make assessments regarding the condition of each stone wall and path, iron fence and bench and of the whereabouts and effectiveness of drainage systems. The gathered data will be entered into the GIS map where it can be easily retrieved, studied and shared so that work can begin restoring, replacing and improving the park’s infrastructure.”

Answering the infrastructure clarion call are iTeamers **Jill Byatt, Kenny Creed, Shirley Frieko, Judy Howard, Sue Kamm and Clare Thomas.** ☞

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: JILL (BYATT) GOES UP A HILL AND FETCHES MORE THAN A PAIL OF WATER!



DAVID WILLIAMS

Jill Byatt

“After I retired from my job on Wall Street I wanted to involve myself in something a bit more relaxing,” said **Jill Byatt**, ‘volunteer of all trades’ for the Conservancy.

“I volunteered a little for this and then a little for that,” she added, recalling her work for the Gracie Square Art Show, the Holiday Tree Lighting and

the Gardening committee. Finding that Work in the Dirt suited her best, she flung herself without reserve into regular volunteer gardening in the Peter Pan area.

Living proof that you always ask the busiest to do more – which is pretty much how the Conservancy has remained so extraordinarily productive – Jill was asked to help coordinate Carl Schurz Park’s site for Mulchfest, the citywide Christmas tree recycling weekend.

Jill ALSO plunged ahead and joined the Conservancy’s tree mapping program, assessing, measuring and hugging the Park’s London Plane tree population.

Like any volunteer, Jill has remained dedicated to the cause she has chosen because it is rewarding, fun and productive. All Things Gardening has suited

her to a tree... correction: “T”.

“However, no one ever told me it was such hard work!” she said.

Eager to share with others what she has learned plying her volunteer trades, Jill advises future workers in the dirt to take the following precautions: The Key is PROTECTION from the elements, the flora, the fauna... and the tools! (On the latter, that would be those tools wielded by the user, and others nearby!)

### Taking it from the top:

- A hat: Protects the head and face from the sun and rain and from those pesky low hanging branches and entangling shrubs. A ball cap is fine but something that also shades the back of the neck is even better.

- Glasses: Keeps your eyes out of harm’s way around shrubbery, roses and other thorny plants.

- Long Sleeved Shirt: Protects best if it’s bug-and scratch-resistant.

- Gloves: Puts protection between you and lots of things that can cause injury.

- Long pants: Ditto the shirt plus it provides lots of pockets for carrying tissues, extra sun block, keys, money, cell phone, etc., so you can dispense with accessories.

- Long socks: Guards against those creepy crawlies.

- Closed toe shoes: Keeps you afoot! Wear shoes with treads such as work boots, hiking boots, sneakers or special gardening shoes. You’re working with sharp implements, climbing around on hills, etc., and need a steady footing.

- Finally, sun block, lip balm and anti bug cream/spray plus lots and lots of WATER! ☕

## REELING THEM IN: JARED LEFKOWITZ CULTIVATES CRITICAL BUSINESS SUPPORT

**T**he email came across the transom via the Conservancy website: “Would like to volunteer for: Membership. Question /Comments: Young professional who lives close by, looking to volunteer and get involved in anything that would be helpful. Would be looking for more event planning, skilled in marketing and event planning.”

**Jared Lefkowitz**, the “young professional who lives close by” was serious. Over the course of one summer and fall, and following meetings with Conservancy Executive Director, **David D. Williams**, and Director of In-Park Events, **Ann Meschery**, **Jared Brett Lefkowitz** evolved his offer to help

into a very successful volunteer effort to cultivate sponsors for this summer’s SUMMER SOUNDS and SUNSET FILM FESTIVAL programs.

Using some of the skills he has sharpened at The Weather Channel, Jared has helped craft promising marketing campaigns with sponsors ranging from CITYMD, to New York Yoga, to Dorian’s Seafood Market.

“This Park is THE gathering place for our community. For businesses in the area there is no better window dressing for their message than the events in the Park, where everyone is in a great mood and receptive to a compelling message,” said Jared. ☕



DAVID WILLIAMS

Jared Brett Lefkowitz

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT

The Carl Schurz Park Conservancy is grateful to all those who made a contribution between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2011. Without your vital support, our efforts at improving the park and offering annual events would be greatly diminished.

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 The Brearley School  
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And our thanks to over 550 contributors whose donations of \$1 to \$249 totaled more than \$41,500.

## CARL SCHURZ PARK: THE VILLAGE GREEN

**T**he events— from the children’s Easter Egg Hunt, to the Summer Sounds outdoor music concerts and Sunset Film Festival movies, to the Halloween Howl, to the Gracie Square Art Show and Holiday Tree Lighting— all are presented by the Carl Schurz Park Conservancy in a manner totally befitting the spirit of our Park’s community.

“In many of the larger, marquee parks in our City, events may be staged, programmed and funded by outside agencies or interests,” notes Executive Director **David D. Williams**. “We grow our programs from within the organization, trying to balance quiet relaxation or activities with planned, programmed events.”

Adds Director of In-Park Events, **Ann Meschery**: “The Conservancy’s events have managed to capture the best of days-gone-by, small town living

right here in modern day New York City. They have brought the community surrounding the park together on a regular basis to enjoy the Park while enjoying music, film and art. And the year is brought to a close at the Holiday Tree Lighting, a cherished event that is eagerly anticipated year after year and creates a joyfulness rarely encountered in a crowded urban area.”

The Conservancy has been lucky to attract a number of exceptional businesses who have aligned themselves with the Conservancy’s goals to create community engagement with the highest standards. (This year’s blue chip clients are listed in this issue’s events calendar on page 9.)

Ann continued, “We firmly believe that the events we are now regularly scheduling in the Park, are not just the icing on the cake of the Conser-

vancy’s mission. They are a critical element in individual donor/member prospecting and cultivation and essential to broadening awareness of the Park and CSPC throughout the core geography. Furthermore, they are a way of giving back to the community that has been generous with its contributions. With the tremendous positive response we have received over the last seven years to these initiatives, our goal of making Carl Schurz Park the center of this community has truly come to fruition.” ☞



ROBERT ENGLEBRIGHT



ROBERT ENGLEBRIGHT

Bernie May

**IN APPRECIATION... Bernard J. (“Bernie”) May** was a protean volunteer with the Conservancy, swimming in many pools: the Gracie Square Art Show, Summer Sounds and Sunset Film Festival programs, the latter of which he was a co-founding member. Unflappable, witty, generous and quick to offer his help, Bernie –along with his wife Suzanne – were fixtures at many Conservancy events. After a battle with cancer, Bernie passed away on July 6th. He will be deeply missed on many fronts. The Conservancy is especially gratified to be included as a recipient of memorial gifts in his name. ☞



## CARL SCHURZ PARK CONSERVANCY EVENT CALENDAR!

### 2012 VOLUNTEER GARDENING SCHEDULE

Join your neighbors and pitch in! Volunteer as a

CSPA gardener:

**Saturdays from  
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.**

Location: East 86th Street  
Mall at East End Avenue

Please note:

The Carl Schurz Park Volunteer Gardeners are an adult group that meets monthly to work in the Park. Students or children who wish to participate must be accompanied by an adult or parent with whom they work.

**August 18**

**September 15**

**October 20**

**November 17**

**December 15**

All Saturdays. No Rain Dates

### CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES

Summer Sandbox  
Series Continues

**Tuesdays, from  
3:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.**

**Tuesday, August 7**

**MOEY'S MUSIC PARTY**

**Tuesday, August 14**

**GYMBOREE**

Carl Schurz Park  
Playground

### SUMMER SOUNDS

The Conservancy's wonderful  
SUMMER SOUNDS  
concert series returns to the  
John Finley Walk again  
this year.

All concerts held, weather  
permitting, atop the  
East 86th Street staircase,  
overlooking the East River.  
Limited seating on a first  
come, first served basis.

**Wednesday,**

**July 25 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

STEVE SHAIMAN AND  
SWINGTIME BIG BAND  
Back for a *third* summer!  
John Finley Walk and East  
86th Street staircase

Limited seating

### SUNSET FILM FESTIVAL

Head to the East River for  
our FISHY FILM FESTIVAL!

Movies start at 8:30 PM

**Tuesday, July 31**

HAPPY FEET

A joyful noise for the whole  
family with penguins, seals  
and fish. Kids, come early  
and visit the SCRIBBLE  
PRESS table and find your  
inner fishy artist!!!

**Tuesday, August 14**

THE PERFECT STORM  
A HUGE THANKS TO THESE  
GENEROUS SPONSORS FOR  
MAKING THE SUMMER SOUNDS  
& SUNSET FILM FESTIVAL

POSSIBLE



Visit the City's premiere  
open-air juried Art Show, now  
celebrating its 40th year!

**Saturday & Sunday,  
September 22 & 23  
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**

East End Avenue from  
East 84th St. to East 88th St.  
[www.graciesquareartshow.info](http://www.graciesquareartshow.info)

### HALLOWEEN HOWL & HEALTHY HOUND FAIR



A hoot and a holler!

All sizes of dogs in all sorts  
of costumes compete for a  
variety of prizes. And FAME!  
Not to be missed. Now, for  
the third year in a row, visit  
the HALLOWEEN HOWL  
HEALTHY HOUND FAIR to  
learn all about the healthy ways  
to keep your Best Friend in  
the Best of Health!!

**Sunday, October 14  
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Location: Hockey Court and  
Basketball Court

### HOLIDAY TREE LIGHTING

A beloved, family tradition.  
And, an evening your family  
will cherish for years to come.

**December 2,  
5:00 to 6:00 p.m.**

Location: East 86th Street  
and East End Avenue  
Held snow, rain or balmy weather!



SANDYE BERGER

## ATTENTION SHOPPERS: THE PERFECT GIFT IN AISLE THREE

**W**hen asked why he encouraged his family – all three generations – to consider making a CONSERVANCY Christmas donation in his name, former Ogilvy and Mather CEO and Chairman, **Kenneth Roman**, was quick to reply.

“Two things: first the product must be right. Carl Schurz Park was beautiful to begin with, designed by Calvert Vaux. And what the Conservancy has done is really kept it at the highest possible level,” he said over lunch.

“Every time I walk out the door (on Gracie Square) I feel good about it! Those of us who live around or close to the Park feel very proprietary about it.

“When you get to a certain age you don’t want more things in your life.”

It was his wife, **Ellen**, who did what many other deeply involved neighbors have done. For one of Ken’s birthdays: she gave him a bench! Actually, a bench plaque.

“It was Ellen’s idea to give me the bench. But I wanted to come up with an inscription that didn’t advertise my age!”

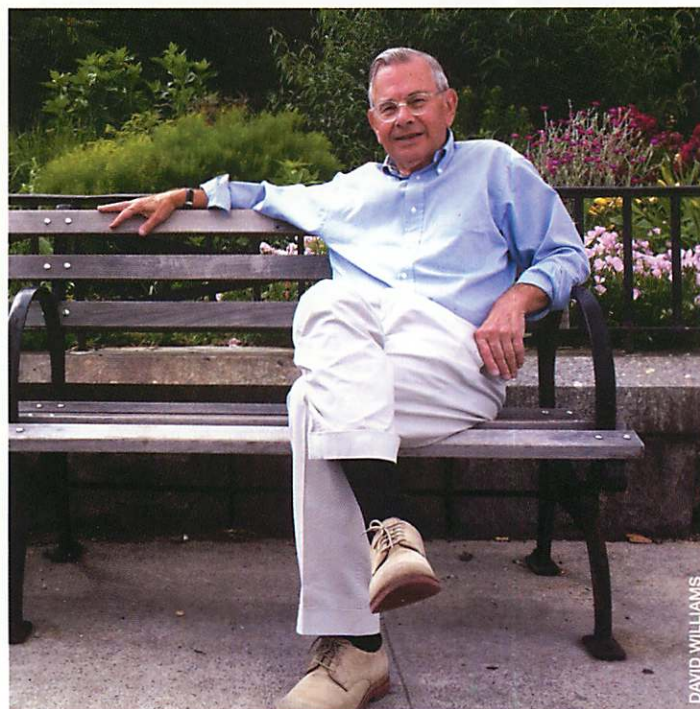
And, befitting his advertising roots, the copy he chose not only suited the occasion but signaled to anyone passing by that this might be a good idea for them:

### From Ellen to Ken

#### On His Special Birthday

Always the marketer, Ken’s pitch to someone planning to give (or get!) is timeless.

“Asking for someone to give in your name, whether an out



*Kenneth Roman, seated on 'his' bench*

right donation (Ken received a donation in his Christmas stocking in '11) or a bench plaque is easy and simple. I get something I want. I don’t get something I have to deal with.

No gift wrapping AND it’s unreturnable.”

And it is lost on no one that the Park benefits.

Our advice: Do as the Romans do. ☺

## RESIDENTS FOR A SANE TRASH SOLUTION SPEAK

“As plans to build the Marine Transfer Station move forward, our organization, Residents for a Sane Trash Solution, is continuing its aggressive drive to thwart the ill-conceived project. Our efforts have grown from a few founders and volunteers to more than 6,000 concerned and informed citizens. While the insanity of placing a dump next to the Asphalt Green Athletic Fields stumbles forward, our community is becoming increasingly awakened and engaged.

“RSTS, [www.sanetrash.org](http://www.sanetrash.org), recently joined suit with Assembly Member **Micah Kellner** demanding that the city ‘come clean’ on the health issues surrounding the proposed Marine Transfer Station. The city should provide an updated environmental impact study, and residents should get the facts about how the proposed ‘dump’ will impact public health and safety.

“RSTS appreciates this opportunity to remind one and all of their efforts to galvanize everyone in the fight against this critical threat to the health and well-being of our community. Your involvement is essential to our cause of stopping the proposed Marine Transfer Station. Please visit [www.sanetrash.org](http://www.sanetrash.org) for more information and to make your voice heard.” ☺

—Residents for a Sane Trash Solution