



Invitation to Cover

Contact:

Tomasia Kastner / tomasia.kastner@parks.nyc.gov / (212) 360-8284

Christina Pettit / cpettit@cityparksfoundation.org / (212) 360-8162

Partnerships for Parks *It's My Park Awards Reception* Bronx Volunteers to be Honored

Bronx Sole and Jerome Park FANS will be Awarded for Outstanding Service, Activism and Collaboration

Awards To Be Held Next Wednesday, March 27, 2019

March 22, 2019 -- NEW YORK, NY -- Partnerships for Parks is proud to announce its 6th annual *It's My Park Awards Reception*, recognizing New York City park volunteers who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and commitment to their local parks through service, advocacy, and collaboration. *It's My Park* is Partnerships for Parks' signature program to engage volunteers in hands-on service projects throughout New York City neighborhood parks. The reception will be held next Wednesday, March 27, at the Prince George Ballroom, Manhattan. Partnerships for Parks will present seven awards at the ceremony, including the 2018 Golden Trowel Awards for each of the five boroughs, as well as the Rookie of the Year Award and the Tim Tompkins Leadership Award.

This year's honorees are seven outstanding community groups selected from over 280 that participated in the 2018 *It's My Park* program. Together, these groups amounted to more than 24,000 New Yorkers who organized and participated in over 1,100 park service projects in nearly 340 parks across the city. These volunteers are vital to improving and sustaining New York City's 29,000 acres of green space, from parks and street trees to playgrounds and skateparks. Their dedicated stewardship helps build long-term investment in these public spaces and strengthens the social fabric of their neighborhoods.

The ceremony will include remarks from **Sabina Saragoussi**, director of Partnerships for Parks; **Heather Lubov**, executive director of City Parks Foundation; NYC Parks Commissioner **Mitchell J. Silver**, FAICP; NYC Parks Assistant Commissioner **Sam Biederman**; and NYC Council Member **Barry Grodenchik**, chair of the NYC Council's Committee on Parks and Recreation. All five leaders will be on hand to honor and celebrate these inspiring volunteers for their outstanding service.

The Golden Trowel Award recognizes volunteers' commitment to transforming their parks and green spaces into dynamic community assets. It is presented to a community group from each borough that has led *It's My Park* and other programs, and has demonstrated exceptional organizational growth. **This year's Golden Trowel award for the Bronx goes to Bronx Sole,**



led by Justin Mashia and Pedro Rivera and Jerome Park Friends and Neighbors (FANS), led by Debra Travis.

Bronx Sole was formed in 2016 by Justin Mashia and Pedro Rivera to address the alarming statistic that their borough was rated the unhealthiest county in New York for seven years running. On a mission to keep the Bronx strong, Mashia and Rivera created a running group that incorporates local history and began weekly historical run/walk tours. As Bronx Sole grew, they added park service projects and healthy living events to their work. In 2018, they organized a number of *It's My Park* projects at St. James Park, mobilizing community members to weed, mulch, plant seasonal bulbs, and rid the park of trash. They celebrated their second year anniversary with an autumnal park beautification and running celebration. Bronx Sole received recognition for curating the first Run, Walk, Paddle event in collaboration with Bronx River Alliance, which was so successful it will be held again this year. They helped community members in need by setting up a donation drop-box after a fire destroyed a multifamily home in the neighborhood of Belmont. Additionally, they received media attention including a feature in *Runner's World* magazine. Bronx Sole were recipients of Partnerships for Parks' Capacity Fund Grant and graduates of the Partnerships Academy Fellowship, which were instrumental in helping them purchase needed materials and connect with NYC Parks, various community groups, and their local council member to organize borough-wide community wellness events.

The Tim Tompkins Leadership Award is presented to one community group across the five boroughs that acts as an inspirational role model for New York City park volunteers, and demonstrates the leadership and vision of Partnerships for Parks' founder, Tim Tompkins. **This year's Tim Tompkins Leadership Award honoree is Bronx group Jerome Park Friends and Neighbors (FANS), led by Debra Travis.**

Jerome Park Friends and Neighbors (FANS) was founded by Debra Travis in 2016 to tend to the natural areas around Jerome Park Reservoir, which had become overrun with invasive species. Their mission is to care for the planting beds around the reservoir and engage the surrounding community in these efforts. In 2018, Jerome Park FANS hosted an astonishing 29 *It's My Park* projects, working rain or shine every weekend and bringing out over 100 volunteers. They planted more than 1200 flowers, collected over 200 bags of debris, spread 400 pounds of compost and 22 yards of mulch, and removed many weeds that had tangled the area. The FANS then expanded their efforts to Washington's Walk where they painted, cleared debris, planted bulbs, spread mulch, and reinstalled signage. Jerome Park FANS received a Community Service Award from Community Board 8 and were invited to speak at Manhattan College about starting a parks group. Recipients of Partnerships for Parks' Capacity Fund Grant, the group was able to purchase essential tools and a toolbox to store them in. They are graduates of the Partnerships Academy Fellowship, and have successfully used Partnerships for Parks as a fiscal sponsor to secure additional funds for their work in sustaining green spaces in the Bronx.



For more information on the *It's My Park* Program, please visit www.partnershipsforparks.com

It's My Park award winners were self or peer nominated and vetted by a Partnerships for Parks selection committee that focused on nominees' achievements in the past year. Special regard was given to nominees who overcame a challenge in their park or within their community group, coordinated an It's My Park project, and/or acted as an inspirational role model for NYC community park volunteers.

When: March 27, 2019 / 6:30 pm – 9 pm

Members of the press are invited to attend.

Please RSVP to Tomasia Kastner – Tomasia.Kastner@parks.nyc.gov or (212) 360-8284

Where: Prince George Ballroom

15 E. 27th St., New York, NY 10016

On-Site Contact: Tomasia Kastner / Tomasia.Kastner@parks.nyc.gov

Visuals: Remarks from NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, City Parks Foundation Executive Director Heather Lubov, NYC Parks Assistant Commissioner Sam Biederman, NYC Council Member Barry Grodenchik, and Partnerships for Parks Director Sabina Saragoussi
Amanda Foster and Sara Healey, Social Impact, TD Bank; and Steven Beer, trustee, City Parks Foundation, presenting awards
Seven local community groups taking the podium to accept their awards
200 local NYC parks volunteers networking and enjoying refreshments

About Partnerships for Parks: Partnerships for Parks is a unique public-private partnership between City Parks Foundation and NYC Parks that supports and champions neighborhood volunteers by giving them the tools they need to advocate and care for their neighborhood parks and green spaces. More information about Partnership for Parks is available [here](#).

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