



## Invitation to Cover

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# **Partnerships for Parks *It's My Park* Awards Reception Staten Island Volunteers to be Honored**

**Westerleigh Parks Coalition and Friends of Mariners Harbor Parks 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 Staten Island goes to Westerleigh Parks Coalition, led by Douglas Patterson, Brian Whalen, and Brianne Whalen.**



The Westerleigh Parks Coalition formed in December 2017 as an offshoot of the existing Friends of Westerleigh Park. With its origins in beautification and youth engagement in Westerleigh Park, the coalition has expanded to include community-wide engagement in both Westerleigh and Northerleigh Park. In 2018, the coalition organized weekly music concerts and multiple *It's My Park* projects as well as a Halloween party, Earth Day event, and Christmas tree lighting, and also partnered with the Westerleigh Folk Festival. Additionally, they transformed the rear section of Northerleigh Park, which had become overgrown with Japanese knotweed and other invasive vegetation and riddled with garbage. It is now renewed, boasts 17 new holly trees, and is ready for a brand new lawn slated for spring of 2019. With the help of Partnerships for Parks, the coalition secured 501(c)3 status to further their work of programming and beautifying these Staten Island parks.

The Rookie of the Year Award is a new award which recognizes a recently formed community group that led their first *It's My Park* project in 2018 and successfully achieved crucial developmental milestones. **The Rookie of the Year Award will go to Friends of Mariner's Harbor Parks, led by Ibrahim Fall, Hilda Adenji, Dahiem Harris, Gerald Spiller, Kendall Spiller, Emanuel Bloomfield-Jones, and Durrell Braddy.**

The Friends of Mariners Harbor Parks was formed in January of 2018 by a group of lifelong friends and community members with a shared vision. Since its inception, this group has been working to empower, beautify, and advance their community by organizing programs, events, community service opportunities, and art projects. By quickly establishing significant partnerships with community-based organizations and advocates, elected officials, government agencies, and residents throughout Staten Island, the Friends of Mariners Harbor coordinated many successful events including a back-to-school block party, daffodil planting, Winter Wonderland, and career expo. Additionally, the group developed a collaboration with NYC Parks and Partnerships for Parks to work towards the increased use of two renovated parks, The Big Park and Mariners Harbor Playground. The Friends of Mariners Harbor were awarded a Partnerships for Parks Capacity Fund Grant and a Citizens Committee for NYC Love Your Block Grant. In 2019, the group received their first recognition, a Proclamation from the New York City Council.

For more information on the *It's My Park* Program, please visit [www.partnershipsforparks.com](http://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](mailto:Tomasia.Kastner@parks.nyc.gov) or (212) 360-8284



**Where: Prince George Ballroom**

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

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**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](#).

*Generous private support is provided by Altman Foundation, Con Edison, and the MJS Foundation. Public support is provided by the NYC Council under the leadership of Speaker Corey Johnson. Supporting sponsor TD Bank.*

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