



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
Queens Volunteers to be Honored**

Allied Rockaway Foundation for Animal Recreation and Fitness and Friends of Francis Lewis Park will be Awarded for Outstanding Service, Activism, and Collaboration

Awards To Be Held Next Thursday, February 27

February 21, 2020 -- NEW YORK, NY -- Partnerships for Parks (PfP), a joint program of NYC Parks and City Parks Foundation, is pleased to announce a special 25th anniversary ***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. In 1995, Partnerships for Parks was founded to support community groups that had sprung up in the wake of the fiscal crisis to reclaim their parks. Today, PfP supports nearly 600 groups working to sustain 400 parks and green spaces across New York City, engaging over 25,000 volunteers annually. The awards reception will, for the first time, recognize both newer groups that are making an impact with **Bright Future Awards** as well as groups that have been involved in their local green spaces over the past 25 years with **Legacy Awards**. *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 Thursday, February 27, at the Prince George Ballroom, Manhattan.

This year's honorees are ten outstanding community groups from across the city, five selected from over 400 that participated in the 2019 *It's My Park* program and five selected from PfP's quarter-century of work in New York. This year alone, the groups participating in *It's My Park* amounted to more than 26,500 New Yorkers who organized and participated in over 1,280 park service projects in nearly 330 parks across the city. Over the last 25 years, the volunteers working with PfP have been essential to improving and sustaining New York City's 30,000 acres of green space, building long-term investment in these public spaces and strengthening 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; and **NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver, FAICP**. All leaders will be on hand to honor and celebrate these inspiring volunteers for their outstanding service.



The Legacy Award recognizes Partnerships for Parks' long-standing partners, who have embodied PfP's mission by working with local residents and decision-makers to transform their parks and green spaces into thriving centers of community life. It will be presented to a community group from each borough that has led *It's My Park* and other programs, and has shown a long-term commitment to their community and local green space. **The Legacy Award for Queens goes to Allied Rockaway Foundation for Animal Recreation and Fitness (ARF-ARF), led by Zina Moratti, Keren McEneaney, Bill Molloy, and Galit Tsadik.**

ARF-ARF formed in 2008 to prevent Rockaway Freeway Dog Park from being used as a waste transfer station. Through large-scale petitioning, the group saved the park and committed to sustain it long-term. They've installed "poop-bags", mosquito magnets, and a bulletin board and secured city funds to install a water fountain and benches, create an agility area, and repave walkways. The group expanded to provide free or low-cost pet services and supplies and assist the homeless animal population, particularly in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. ARF-ARF hosts frequent events for pets and their companions including ice cream socials and costume contests and provides crucial pet services like adoptions, vaccinations, and spay/neuter services to address the needs of the larger pet-owning community.

The Bright Future Award recognizes newly-formed community groups who led their first *It's My Park* project in October 2018 or later and have achieved crucial developmental milestones. It will be presented to a group from each borough whose swift and successful growth acts as an inspiration to others. **The Bright Future Award for Queens goes to Friends of Francis Lewis Park, led by Dorian Mecir, Danelle Brink, and Kimberly Kuhnle.**

Friends of Francis Lewis Park was founded in 2019 to improve the park and engage the surrounding community. Since then, they have brought needed amenities, events, and programming to the park; hosting several *It's My Park* projects, a 9/11 vigil, and a summer tree planting. FOFLP also arranged for the removal of dead tree branches covering the view of the bay, installed a Little Free Library, advocated for the park to be a Mulchfest site, and secured a fiscal sponsor. Additionally, the group purchased a Christmas tree for an annual lighting event and was awarded our Capacity Fund Grant to host two concerts, both firsts for the park.

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, or over PfP's quarter-century of work. 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: February 27, 2020 / 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, Amanda Foster and Sara Healey of TD Bank, and Partnerships for Parks Director Sabina Saragoussi
- Ten local community groups taking the podium to accept their awards
- 300 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.

Presenting sponsor



###