



ANNUAL REVIEW 2017
KEEPING YOUR PARK CLEAN, GREEN AND HEALTHY

FRIENDS OF DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD PLAZA

EDITORIAL

On January 21, 2017, the Women's March put Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza on the map with international media coverage, celebrity speeches and aerial photos of record-breaking crowds.

Now, we're asking city government to heed the needs of this town square and UN gateway. In the face of terrorism and homelessness, city officials can ill afford to ignore the vulnerabilities of this 1.5 acre municipal park with a crowd capacity of 8000 people in densely populated midtown Manhattan.

Bomb-resistant, shatter-proof trash bins have become *de rigueur* in central plazas and airports since the Paris bombing. The rusty oil-drum bins in Hammarskjöld park are worse than a bad joke.

At the Mayor's Town Hall (9-26-2017) for our district, we requested that Hammarskjöld Plaza be designated an "anchor park" or base-lined in the budget to receive funding and resources from city government to address
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"Never for the sake of peace and quiet deny your own experience or convictions."

DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD,
UN SECRETARY GENERAL
NOBEL PEACE LAUREATE

The largest march in NYC history filled Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza beyond capacity.



Landscape architect Alexandro Zervos, NYC Parks & Recreation, presented the design scope of capital improvement project for review at CB6 and also at our Annual Meeting.

BIG ACHIEVEMENTS, BIGGER NEEDS

It's been a banner year for the Friends of Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, and we wish to thank all of our members and donors for their support.

Restoration of the Katharine Hepburn Garden was completed on schedule (see page 6), and we scored \$675K in capital funding from Councilman Dan Garodnick for infrastructure repairs and improvements to be administered by the Parks Department. The scoping process and community review took place this year. Next, the plan will be reviewed by the Public Design Commission, then bid out to contractors in 2018. Construction is expected

to start in 2019. When completed, the park will be restored to its original lustre. In addition, the capital project provides for new lighting to illuminate the sculpture platform, access from the platform to the garden's footpath via a gated entrance, and a permanent fence to replace the battered mesh fencing that protects the front flower border.

Our advocacy efforts through Community Board 6 resulted in improved support from Parks' mobile crew to supplement the cleaning services we contract from the Doe Fund. The fountain pedestals and seating
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A Fond Farewell to Dan Garodnick



Councilman Daniel Garodnick was elected to office in 2005 and twice re-elected. Term limits end his tenure, and we will miss him. He protected tenant rights and supported a green agenda that resulted in better parks and a cleaner, safer environment. Dan generously supported our work with capital project grants and discretionary expense funding. He participated in FDHP events, cooked at the greenmarket and staged a bike helmet give-away. You're a Friend forever, Dan!

DAG'S PATIO CAFE

Think Global, Act Local

BY HANITA BLUMFIELD

Many New Yorkers have a sense of *anomie*, physically close and yet alone, captive to cell phones and electronic devices, experiencing the distance of living among strangers. So with this dystopian model of urban life, Dag's Patio Cafe is priceless in that it facilitates a sense of connection. It's the hub of the park, where we're all neighbors.

The old adage, the way to turn strangers into friends is through breaking bread together, works well here. The snack bar features a full breakfast menu, burgers, frankfurters, chicken sandwiches and really good coffee. The \$5 frozen margaritas are a bargain, and the bar draws a mix of residents, diplomats and office workers, especially for live music at Happy Hour.

Reviews on Yelp praise the quality of beef and wax poetic about the nearby fountain. Here, romances bloom and meetings convene over the noise of honking horns, church bells, barking dogs, chortling babies and music. Toddlers make their needs known regardless of their native languages.

Operated as a lease concession by Hospitality Holdings, partners Mark Grossich and Kenneth McClure live near by and often team up with Friends of DHP to tie-in the cafe with special programs such as this year's *Sing for Hope* Piano.

Next year, we envision Latin dancing and a salon-style program to feature luminaries from Turtle Bay in an intimate outdoor setting. Although we regret that the cafe is closing for winter, it's not too soon to plan for spring. If you are a performer, a talent manager or an events planner, let us know!



COMMAND CENTRAL AT WOMEN'S MARCH. Borough President Gale Brewer and Millie Margiotta sip coffee and witness history in the making. In rear, wearing orange, sculptor Phyllis Hammond.

(right) UN group meets at Dag's Cafe.



The way to turn strangers into friends is through breaking bread together...



Daniel Sefik, a musician for the hit show *Hamilton*, was one of many who tickled the keys of the Sing for Hope Piano, organized by Friends of Dag Hammar skjold Plaza.



IMPROMPTU PICNIC: Manager Kenneth draws on his inner chef to produce a delectable array of dishes prepared with produce from the greenmarket. Ripe tomatoes, sautéed squash blossoms. Yum! Our volunteers got very lucky!

Toddlers make their needs known regardless of their native language.



The Dag Dog is topped with bacon, cheddar cheese, fried onion and mustard.



OUTDOOR OFFICE: Parks horticulture chief (center) Mercedes Nunez meets with (left) Anne Hersh and (right) FDHP President Sherrill Kazan.

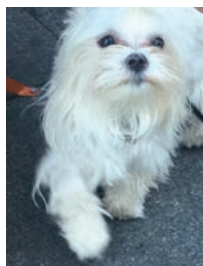


FDHP president Sherrill Kazan with sculptor Phyllis Hammond (print shirt) and Bozena Massey, who curated the exhibit for the Plaza. At far right, Eleanora Kupencow, whose colorful metal sculptures have also graced the park.

DOGS OF DAG

BY HANITA BLUMFIELD

He was a rescue dog. When I first saw him, he gripped my heart, and I knew he was the dog that would be my special friend for life. Mazel loved Dag Hammarskjold Park. He staked out a claim on certain trees and knew their history by the keen sense of smell that all dogs possess.



He even had a kind gesture for the pigeons who knew better than to zero in on his treats.

Mazel is now in doggie heaven, but he left me with an affection for the pets who frisk and frolic in this rare space with room to run and sniff.

On parade are Standard Poodles with the requisite bows, French Bull Dogs competing for most popular breed, Welsh Corgis, whose bark may sport an English accent; tiny Yorkshire Terriers, who are convinced that they are the Alpha dogs, and mixed breeds whose diversity of physical type indicates that they

are not partial to pet purity; but truly believe that love conquers all.

Modern day pet families put to rest the notion that men do not favor small dogs-. Just look around!

The regulars Pepina, Lexee, Pogo, Van, Beauregard, Trixie, and Bacon among others help to bring together a diverse population and foster the community spirit that is



a hallmark of this special park. And they certainly contribute to the health and wellbeing of their owners who cannot remain sedentary when the pleading brown eyes of Jasmine or

Rex communicate that they yearn to visit the park to greet friends and spread good will among neighbors.



The friends even include Virgie, the Parrot, who ensconced on Steve's shoulder, looks on with amusement

at the antics of the dogs of Dag.

Hanita Blumfield co-authored *The Dog Lovers' Guide to the Good Life* with East Hampton artist Carol Saxe. The book profiles venues that welcome dogs. Hanita recently joined the FDHP Board of Directors and will be a regular contributor to our newsletter.



Family affair: Bob and Mimi Stinson with Oliver, a regular Dog of Dag.

DOG RUN IN TURTLE BAY

Want to run your dog off-leash? Peter Detmold Park offers a large fenced dog run next to open space with a gazebo and chess tables. Enter at 49th and FDR Drive or from Beekman Place via a staircase. A footbridge provides access to the East River path.

OKTOBERFEST AND AUTUMN GLORY

Moms, dads, uncles, aunts, friends and kids of all ages gathered in Dag Hammarskjold Plaza on a spectacularly beautiful Saturday in October.

Chrysanthemums were in full bloom, the fountains provided the sound of cascading water, and pigeons enjoyed the remains of bratwurst sandwiches (though not the beer).

The major draw and the symbol of this Oktoberfest were pumpkins. They lined the walkways in myriad sizes and visually yielded the full range of shapes and orange hues.

Children negotiated the size, recognizing that they would need to carry (mostly by their parents) the large ones home.

Toddlers, just learning to walk and talk, imitated the older ones as they sat together to paint colorful images on what was seen as a simple canvas waiting for a child's imagination, "new masters" of the art.

Older generations lent a hand and grew nostalgic as they thought back to their initiation into painting pumpkins and forming balloons into myriad shapes (as some would say "back in the day").

The Friends of Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, a volunteer organization, provided a signature example of their commitment of time and energy to foster the community spirit that makes this park so unique to our neighborhood. New friendships were formed, and many persons decided to join this dedicated group and help in whatever way they could.

Most important, friends and neighbors from all over the globe demonstrated that Dag Hammarskjold Plaza will continue to be a source of community cohesion in this ever changing midtown neighborhood.

Hanita Blumfield



(above) Membership Chair Kim Baker is all smiles with never a dull moment. Her eye-catching display paid off with donations and new members. Managing the tent: (l-r) Hanita Blumfield, Sherrill Kazan, Millie Margiotta and Consuelo Gallego. At kids table, Events Chairman Paul Crawford.



PHOTOS: VIVIAN GORDON

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS!



We wish to thank all who showed their support by becoming a member or making a donation. Every dollar helps further our common cause of making Hammar skjold park a clean, green and safe environment where a child's joy and creativity are at home with nature.

Escape the Concrete Jungle, Enter an Enchanted Woods

Did you know that Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza boasts the largest public garden on the east side of midtown Manhattan? Here, you can take a walk in the woods and find sanctuary, unplug and breathe!

In 2016-2017, we carried out a major rejuvenation of the park's Katharine Hepburn Garden, developing a masterplan with noted garden designer Ronda Brands, who mapped and supervised the installation of thousands of new plants.

Public gardens are subject to die-out from natural causes and myriad abuses from humans. For the strolling garden, the *coup de grace* was a series of scaffolding incursions to meet safety codes for repairs to buildings above the retaining wall. Although we worked with their managers and contractors to mitigate damage, compacted soil and loss of plant life was inevitable.

This year, the transformation of the woodland garden began in May with four days of plant installations by professional landscapers. Then our volunteer gardeners installed rope stakes to keep visitors on the path, which was relaid last year.

In June, we enhanced the front flower border with native species to attract pollinators and expand the color palette. In autumn, volunteer groups planted thousands of spring-flowering bulbs.

Our commitment to park beautification and advocacy efforts through Community Board 6 persuaded the Parks Department to provide a part-time gardener.

As we put the garden to bed for winter, we're already planning for next year. In the works are a fairy-garden mural, a book box for swapping good reads and garden parties. It's only 90 days till spring!



GARDEN PHOTO BY DANIELLE CAMPISI



Rain or shine, we plant! Green-thumb Danielle Campisini, Garden Chair Anne Hersh veteran gardener Bob Stinson.



On Saturdays, Allan Levy arrives before the rest of us have finished breakfast. He's living proof that gardening is healthy for seniors!



Teamwork: Kim Baker and Sandra McKee tuck in native plants to extend the bloom season, host pollinators and attract butterflies.



(above) Ibis World volunteers enjoy "giving back" to the community.

(below) This youth group from The Temple in Atlanta did more than tour NYC, they provided community service as part of their educational program. Their supervisors helped too!



Many hands make light work

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization. Our home-team of gardeners helps provide routine upkeep while groups from the corporate and nonprofit community join in for special assignments like bulb planting, mulching and composting.



(above) Wild-Type Creative Solutions engaged two mentoring circles as volunteers. Here the group recycles Oktoberfest hay bales to mulch shrubs. Fresh air + exercise = brain power.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We thank **Zeckendorf Development** (50 UN Plaza) for their generous support, which made possible the masterplan and restoration of the park's Katharine Hepburn Garden in 2016 and 2017. In addition, support from the **Greenacre Foundation** has sustained our community garden program for more than a decade.

VOLUNTEER OPENINGS

OFFICE MANAGER

We seek a computer literate office manager with organizational skills who can work alone as well as manage volunteers. Retirees welcome! 10-15 hours per month, flexible days/time.

SECRETARY OF BOARD

We seek an individual with writing and planning skills to record minutes at our board meetings (6 per year). Other activities include sending meeting announcements and preparing agendas. The Recording Secretary serves as an officer of FDHP Board of Directors.

SOCIAL MEDIA GURU

Help spread our message through social media, videos and newsmaking tweets. We're building a team and need genius!

BE A PARK MONITOR

If you live nearby and like to be outdoors, help monitor and report on conditions in the park from cleanliness to homelessness and public hygiene. Monitors document and report problems to Parks, NYPD and other agencies.

APPLY NOW:

Send an email with resume and/or tell us about your skills, interests and availability. editor.hersh@hammaskjoldplaza.org. You may also apply online at FDHP website, click on Volunteer.

its special needs, enumerated with handouts containing graphic images.

Security Cameras

Following the Town Hall, park officials conducted a site visit to review security cameras for the garden. We offered to purchase the cameras more than a year ago and still await equipment specifications.

Digital Bulletins

Inquiries about electronic bulletin boards to replace the damaged case-ments at each end of plaza fell on deaf ears. Digital bulletins could alert the public to mass rallies and disruptions.

Where's the Wi-fi?

Wi-fi is all over the city but not in Dag Plaza despite the population it serves as a global destination. Why are other parks more deserving, Mr. Mayor?

Protection from Toxic Fumes

Pollution from tour buses poses a continuing threat to public health. On a block with a church, a school and Dag's Cafe, diesel fumes and idling engines aggravate respiratory problems. The bus companies pay the tickets issued by NYPD and continue to pollute.

Replace Trees NOW!

Trees help mitigate air pollution by absorbing toxic fumes and emitting fresh oxygen. Yet some empty tree beds remain unplanted for more than a year, collecting water which breeds mosquitoes and tripping unwary visitors, despite repeated phone calls and emails.

Speak Up! It's Your Park

In the coming year, we will continue our advocacy campaign in public forums and media. Only by speaking up can we expect city and state officials to take appropriate measures. Take heed Community Board 6, City Council and Borough President Gale Brewer. The needs of Hammar-skjold Plaza extend far beyond the neighborhood. ANNE HERSH, EDITOR

wall benefited from a pressure washer supplied and operated by Parks staff.

None of these improvements would have happened without the continued efforts of Friends. We are citizen custodians and park watchdogs. We articulate the needs of Dag Hammar-skjold Plaza. To fully represent the community, we need YOU!

What's at Stake

Park associations like ours derive their funding from public and private donations in order to supply the programs and services that the cash-strapped NYC Parks Department cannot. Although the public/private partnership model is criticized for creating inequities in the city's sprawling park system, it also engages neighborhoods as stakeholders.

The success of conservancies that rescued Central Park and Union Square

"We are eager to build coalitions with community groups and to form alliances with merchants, property managers and owners... to protect our neighborhood and its central greenspace."

SHERILL KAZAN, PRESIDENT

are well documented, but even small parks like Abingdon Square in the West Village have been transformed by financial support from nearby buildings, which benefit from a cleaner, greener park and a proactive community.

Community Listening Tour

Condos and coop boards, building agents, small business, corporate sponsors and FDHP members all have a role to play in determining the future of Dag Hammar-skjold Plaza.

We are proud of our achievements, AND with a larger financial base, we could do much more. In 2018, we are embarking on a listening tour to engage stakeholders, exchange informa-

tion and make Dag Hammar-skjold Plaza the shining jewel of the neighborhood.

"We are eager to build coalitions with community groups and to form alliances with merchants, property managers and owners," notes FDHP President Sherrill Kazan.

Parks=\$ Green Neighborhood

"Some of us would like more concerts, movies and other community events. Others want after-school activities for children. Security is always an issue. We need a seasonal park custodian to keep law and order and attend to the many odd jobs that a heavily-trafficked park requires. By working together, we can preserve and protect our neighborhood's central green space," she states.

Properties increase in value when attractive parks are within walking distance. In our densely populated neighborhood, the Plaza is our outdoor arena—and its garden, our sanctuary. Like any valuable asset, it should be protected and preserved.

FRIENDS OF DAG HAMMARSKJOLD PLAZA is a tax-exempt nonprofit 501(c)3 community organization. Membership is open to all who support our mission regardless of sex, race, color or creed.

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