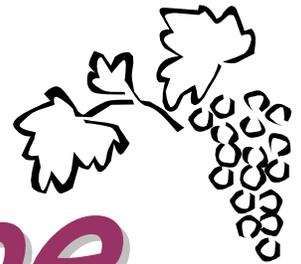




WESTCHESTER RECREATION  
AND PARK SOCIETY, INC.  
P.O. Box 152 • Valhalla, New York 10595

November  
2010



# the Grapevine

## *President's Message*

*By: Joe Lemischak*

The arrival of Fall weather marks the beginning of a new year for the Westchester Recreation and Parks Society. I am privileged to serve the next two years as President of this great organization. I would like to thank all of the Executive Board members for the commitment that they have made to serve our membership. WRAPS has a great history and I know that our current Board will continue this tradition.

Within the last year WRAPS has lost three lifetime members who had a significant impact on our profession; Brian Slavin, Joe Curtis and Bernie Guagnini. All three were part of the "Old Guard" and their contributions to the recreation field and our society will last for years to come. WRAPS has committed to making a donation in each gentlemen's name to the causes that were dear to their heart.

I would like to thank Kevin Cook for organizing our kick off BBQ at Tibbetts Brook Park. Attendance was very good and everyone enjoyed themselves. Kevin has a full slate of seminar/luncheons scheduled over the next several months. I would like to ask our membership to make every effort to support WRAPS functions. In addition to the monthly luncheons we have the Downstate Conference coming up this month, our WRAPS Holiday Party in December, and the Awards and Scholarship Banquet in June, these are tremendous educational and social opportunities. Please join us. I look forward to seeing you all during the year ahead.

## *Donations in Honor of 3 Lifetime Members*

WRAPS would like to send our condolences to the families of **Joe Curtis, Bernie Guagnini and Brian Slavin** who passed away this year. All three were lifelong members of WRAPS. WRAPS will be making a donation of \$200 each to their respected organizations.

**Joe Curtis** retired in 1989 after a long and successful career in the Parks and Recreation field, finishing his career as **Human Services Commissioner for the City of New Rochelle**. Joe was a lifelong member and Past President of WRAPS. Donations in the name of Joe Curtis can be sent to either the Friends of Westchester County Parks at 25 Moore Avenue, Mt. Kisco, NY 10595 or to the Rotary Club of New Rochelle at P.O. Box 785 New Rochelle, NY 10802.

**Bernie Guagnini** retired in 1986 after spending 31 years as the **Superintendent of Parks and Recreation for the Town of Harrison**. Donations in the name of Bernie Guagnini can be sent to Swim Across America at PO Box 217, Larchmont, NY 10538.

**Brian Slavin** retired in 2002 after 32 years of service as **Superintendent of Recreation for the Town of Yorktown**. Donations in the name of Brian Slavin can be sent to Phelps Memorial Hospital Hospice Program at 701 North Broadway, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591.

## Like Father... like Daughter... like Granddaughter.....

By: Kathy O'Connor

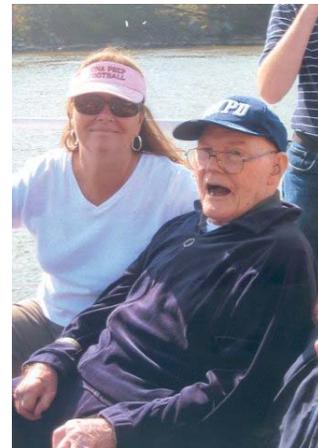
For those parks and recreation professionals that did not have the opportunity to ever work with or have the pleasure of meeting Joe Curtis, I will attempt to shed some light on the personality who so loved the parks and recreation field, as well as life in general. To say that he was the original “energizer bunny” is an understatement! Joe was constantly thinking outside the box and challenged all who worked or lived with him to do the same. Status quo was not accepted. He didn’t care if the new idea was not successful, as long as it was something that hadn’t been done before.

Joe was a “people person” to the highest degree. He was a Commissioner in Long Island, White Plains, Boston and New Rochelle, Past President of NYSPRS(2x) and of WRAPS, college professor, author, fitness “nut,” and family man...father of eight daughters. He was a professional that also enjoyed mentoring any and all fellow professionals as well as students and young men and women who were looking for career guidance. The king of communication, he corresponded with Popes, Presidents, war buddies and hundreds of friends. When I was in high school, he spoke at a career conference discussing the importance of preparing for retirement. Not that the topics is anything out of the ordinary, but the audience were high school students! For 46 years he was an active professional and remained almost as active after he retired as he was while still employed. He had lifelong hobbies and volunteered with organizations that he believed in, all related to recreation and parks.

When I told my father that I had declared myself a Leisure skills and services major (fancy name for Recreation Administration) at UMass, Amherst, he was thrilled. When I started my first class the text book that we used was written by him. I do believe I am probably one of the only professionals who ever had their parent be the author of one of the text books! I was always so proud of the fact that my own dad was so well respected in the field that I had entered and had grown to love too. How lucky was I that when I was struggling with one of the many issues we professionals deal with on a frequent basis, I was able to sit and chat with him over

Sunday dinner and pick the brain of a brilliant professional in this field. I often told him I was going to use all his ideas and tell everyone they were mine!

Consequently, when my daughter Lauren graduated from Springfield College in Rec Admin, I was extremely proud of her and her grandfather was beaming. He too spent a great deal of time with her discussing all the challenges of our field, but reassuring her that it is also one of the most rewarding fields one could choose to work in. When he left the position of Commissioner of Parks for the City of Boston, and came back to be the Human Services Commissioner for the city of New Rochelle in 1975, it would be the last official position that he would hold. He retired in 1989, and said it was the best position he had ever held and felt that he and the staff that he worked with as well as the mayor and city manger were the most progressive as well as supportive that he had had the pleasure to work with. I believe the feeling was mutual.



During his tenure as the commissioner, the city purchased a leaf dump and developed it into the beautiful oasis on the sound that now bears the name of a man who loved New Rochelle, loved the parks and recreation profession, and truly loved life till the very end. It only seems fitting that the last 5 ½ years of his life were spent living in an apartment in New Rochelle, overlooking the Long Island Sound. In a final tribute to the life and accomplishments of Joe Curtis, the City of New Rochelle decided to rename a popular park in New Rochelle, “Five Island Park”, to “Joe Curtis Five Island Park”. I look forward to the time that I can visit the park with family and friends and enjoy all that the park has to offer and laugh at one of the many humorous statements my dad often made. I will..... soon.

## ***BITS & PIECES***

**Brian Gray, Assistant Superintendent of Yorktown Recreation** and his wife Mellissa welcomed their second child, daughter Addison Grace, on July 28, 2010 at 11:35 am. She weighed in at 7.5lbs and was 20.75 inches long.

**Christine Grey** along with her husband Mike welcomed their second child, daughter Kylee Ann at 8:02 am on June 21, 2010. She weighed 8lbs. and was 20 inches long.

Congratulations to **Nancy Troiano and Joe Bellini** both from **North East Special Recreation** who were married on April 11, 2010.

Congratulations to **Jack Pettersen**, who spent 20 years with the Town of Cortlandt, was just appointed to the **Westchester County Parks Board**.

### **Happy Trails**

Unfortunately for us (great for them) we are losing a number of well respected and long lasting professionals throughout the WRAPS community to retirement this year. Listed below are those who have announced their retirement since the June issue of The Grapevine.

**Ron Belmont, Superintendent of Recreation for the Town/Village of Harrison** is retiring after 36 years of service.

**Anthony Zaccagnino, Assistant Superintendent of Recreation for the Town/Village of Harrison** is retiring after 33 years of service.

**Roslyn Robinson, Senior Citizen Coordinator for New Castle** is retiring after 34 years of service.

**Gary Cahill, Recreation Supervisor for the City of Peekskill** will be retiring this December after 29 years.

**Ken Fisher, Recreation Leader for the Town of Mount Pleasant** will also be retiring this December after 25 years.

**Frank Magaletta, Recreation Supervisor II, for the City of White Plains** is also retiring this year.

Best Wishes to **Thomas Hroncich, Superintendent of Port Chester Recreation Department** who will be retiring on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 2010. With all he has accomplished in just over 10 years with Port Chester, revitalizing all its major parks, new playgrounds, water spray playground, new turf soccer field, all the while increasing revenues and programming, he will be missed more than he can imagine. Tom also served as Rye Brook's first Superintendent for over 17 years and earlier in his career with Peekskill, Somers and Westchester County Parks. Combined he has served for 35 years. Best of Luck "Hondo", you won't be forgotten.

*Pictured Below: (Left to Right)* **Matt Soall of U.S. Sports Institute along with Karen O'Donnell and Erin Reidel both from the Rye Recreation Department** after they competed in the Warrior Dash at Windham Mountain.



### **CALL FOR GRAPEVINE ARTICLES!**

The next issue of the Grapevine is scheduled to be printed in February 2011.

Anyone interested in submitting materials must do so by Friday, January 14, 2011.

Mail, Fax or E-mail Information to:  
Ike Kuzio ~ Westchester County PRC.  
1 Bronx River Parkway, Valhalla, NY 10595  
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## *Quassy's New Coaster Named: "Wooden Warrior"*

*By: Ron Gustafson*

The heritage of Quassy Amusement Park was apparently on the minds of park management when the group was recently presented with a long list of potential names for its new wooden roller coaster.

Today Quassy officially announced that the name of the new marquee ride will be the "Wooden Warrior." The name was selected from dozens of submissions from regional schools.

"We asked our team to pick their top three selections from the list," said Quassy President Eric Anderson of the voting. "The 'Wooden Warrior' collected five votes, three of which were indicated as the first choice."

Surprisingly, two classes from two separate schools nominated the "Wooden Warrior." The winning classrooms are: Mrs. Barbara Minutillo's fourth grade, Middlebury Elementary School, Middlebury, Conn.; and Miss Lauren Zafrin's fifth grade, R.M.T. Johnson Elementary School, Bethel, Conn.

### **More Than 90 Submissions**

In late August the park asked regional elementary and middle school classrooms to submit their favorite title in a contest to name the new ride.

More than 90 submissions were received by the park and a ballot was created listing only the suggested names with no school identification.

"By not listing the schools on our ballot – only the coaster names – we had a very non-biased process," noted George Frantzis II, a Quassy co-owner. "The name we selected speaks highly of the heritage of the park as Quassapaug is Native American for 'Greatest Pond.' The coaster's name reflects our passion about this property's heritage and our tradition."

"The students will be so surprised when I tell them," said Mrs. Minutillo. Both classes were notified Monday morning that their name was chosen.

"We had around 20 names on the board when we started," she added. "It was a very Democratic process to get it down to the name we submitted to Quassy."

The Bethel students went through a similar process.

"We had around 25 names and boiled it down to 10," Miss Zafrin said. "The kids then voted and 'Wooden Warrior' won."

### **Honors**

The two classrooms will be invited to the park next spring to ride the coaster once it is completed. Quassy also plans on visiting the Middlebury and Bethel schools for a ceremony to honor the winning students.

With the official name of the coaster selected, the park's artist is currently designing a "Wooden Warrior" logo to be used on the front of the coaster train as well as related promotional materials and souvenirs.

Construction of new ride began in early August with much of the concrete footings work already completed. Wooden framework for the mammoth ride has also been fabricated at the park and will be hoisted into place within the next few weeks.

Tracking and other work to complete the "Wooden Warrior" is expected to take several months with construction crews working throughout the fall and winter to get the ride finished. The 1,250-foot ride was designed by The Gravity Group of Cincinnati, Ohio.

The train selected by Quassy for the coaster will be a 12-passenger Timberliner provided by Gravitykraft Corp., the sister company to The Gravity Group – designers of the Quassy ride.

The coaster project is being funded by TD Bank.

Last year Quassy opened a new ticket booth designed to look like the trolley station which serviced the property in the early 1900s. The new roller coaster loading station will also be themed from the "trolley park" era.

### **About The Park**

Quassy Amusement Park, founded in 1908, features more than two-dozen rides and attractions, beach, waterpark, redemption arcade, restaurant and games.

For more information about Quassy Amusement Park visit [www.quassy.com](http://www.quassy.com) or call 1-800-FOR-PARK.

Quassy is currently reserving days for 2011 educational school fieldtrips, birthday parties and catered outings

## ***DATES TO REMEMBER!***

### **November 17**

Annual Downstate Conference  
Westchester County Center ~ White Plains

### **December 10**

Holiday Luncheon  
Crabtree Kittle House ~ Chappaqua

### **January 19**

Regular WRAPS Luncheon Meeting ~  
Westchester County Center

### **February TBD**

Regular WRAPS Luncheon

### **March 16**

Vendors Luncheon  
Westchester County Center, White Plains

## ***WRAPS September BBQ***

What a way to reunite with your fellow WRAPS members after another busy summer! Thank You to Jack Walsh and the rest of the Tibbetts Brook Park staff for opening up the doors and hosting our annual September BBQ. The facility was in excellent shape and everyone had a great time having lunch by the pool!



Thank you to Frank Bernabei for taking and providing the great group photo!



## ***WRAPS HOLIDAY PARTY***

Friday, December 10, 2010

At Crabtree's Kittle House

11 Kittle Road, Chappaqua

12 noon to 3:00 PM

**\$30 per member / \$35 Non Member**

**Plus cash bar**

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Wayne Bass, Treasurer	238-7291
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