

Six-year-old oyster gardening program seeks to save the Sound

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Public officials and oyster gardening program volunteers gathered on the Friends of the Bay's boat to clean and measure the oysters one final time.

Will Sheeline/Herald

By [Will Sheeline](#)

Community members, volunteers, scientists and public officials gathered by the Laurel Hollow docks on Wednesday to celebrate the success of the North Shore Oyster Gardening program. Hundreds of thousands of oysters have been seeded in local harbors in the six years since the program began, helping to clean the water and improve the quality of marine life.

The program, run by the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee, started in 2017. The committee is a partnership among the nine villages within the local watershed, as well as Oyster Bay and Nassau County, whose goal is to protect and improve water quality in the area. The program is an extension of that goal, because oysters are famously efficient natural filters of up to 50 gallons of water a day, stabilizing nitrogen levels in the Long Island Sound. And because they form large clusters, oysters also provide natural habitats for many other types of

marine life in the Sound.

Barry Udelson, a marine ecology and aquaculture specialist with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, has worked with the program since it began. On Wednesday he explained to the gathering the importance of reintroducing the bivalve mollusks to the ecosystem.

“The big thing about this program is that we’re not fighting against Mother Nature,” Udelson said. “The more of these programs that exist, where we’re putting oysters and clams back into the harbors, the more we’re helping to boost the natural population.”

Thanks to the oyster gardening program, roughly 500,000 oysters have been planted in four community gardens, each encompassing dozens of smaller gardens, since 2017: at West Harbor Beach, in Bayville; Beekman Beach, in Oyster Bay; Laurel Hollow Dock, in Laurel Hollow; and Eagle Dock, in Cold Spring Harbor. The West Harbor Beach and Laurel Hollow Dock gardens have single set, or partially matured, oysters, while the other two grow oyster larvae on shells.

The gardens are tended by more than 100 area volunteers — everyone from Boy and Girl Scouts to Oyster Bay and Cold Spring Harbor High School students, to members of local organizations like the Cold Spring Harbor Beach Club and the Lloyd Harbor Bath Club.

Rob Crafa, coordinator of the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee, highlighted the efforts of the volunteers and everyone who worked to make the program a success. “Aside from the oysters, the real star of the show is the community,” Crafa said. “The residents and the volunteers really do give up their time and their treasure to sponsor a cage and to get involved in the work that it takes to maintain it.”

Twice a week from June through September, volunteers head out to the moorings and their assigned oyster gardens, to clean and measure the oysters. They also help construct the cages in which the oysters are held in April and May.

Several elected officials spoke at the news conference, commending the work done by the protection committee, as well as Heather Johnson, executive director of Friends of the Bay. The mayors of Laurel Hollow and Oyster Bay Cove emphasized how important and popular the program was in their communities.

“Quite frankly, I had to get my arm twisted to start this, because I thought, who’s going to want to get in the water, get dirty, clean cages, that kind of thing?” Laurel Hollow Mayor Daniel DeVita said. “The response was overwhelming.”

“The people love it,” added Charles Goulding, the mayor of Oyster Bay Cove. “Not everything I do in the village is popular. That one is very popular.”

Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino reminded the gathering that in many ways, it’s the area’s harbors and natural beauty that make living on the North Shore so special.

“This bay is one of the finest resources anywhere in America,” Saladino said. “When people like Billy Joel could live anywhere and they choose Oyster Bay to live, well, doesn’t that speak for itself?”

11:30 ↗



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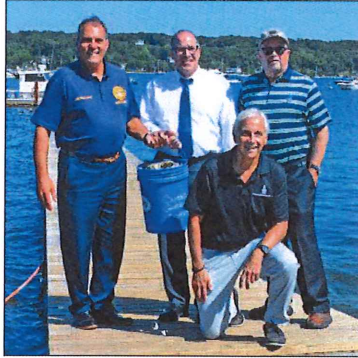
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friendsofthebay1987 Yesterday, elected officials from Town of Oyster Bay and Village of Laurel Hollow, and representatives from Friends of the Bay, Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Adelphi University gathered to distribute oysters grown in the North Shore Oyster Gardening Program.

Since 2017 the North Shore Oyster Gardening program, a project led by the

Environmental Groups Partner To 'Keep Oysters' In Oyster Bay

Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino and Town Clerk Rich LaMarca joined with members of the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee to celebrate another successful oyster gardening program. In what is becoming an annual demonstration of another healthy and productive summer,



(l-r) Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino and Town Clerk Rich LaMarca, Mayor of Laurel Hollow Daniel DeVita, Mayor of Oyster Bay Cove Charles R. Goulding.

officials from the Town of Oyster Bay, Village of Laurel Hollow and Village of Oyster Bay Cove joined with environmental groups and residents representing 150+ oyster gardens from the North Shore Oyster Gardening Program to clean and measure one final time before placing them in the nearby spawner sanctuary.

Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino said, "The Town of Oyster Bay is proud to work with our residents to keep the oyster in Oyster Bay, making sure our favorite shellfish is not just part of our storied history but a vital part of the Town's future. The Town of Oyster's own shellfish hatchery is adding to this effort by producing millions of clams and oysters annually to further protect and strengthen our waterways."

Engaging hundreds of residents in environmental stewardship and seeding 200,000 oysters is only part of the story. As a direct result of the North Shore Oyster Gardening program's efforts in the just the past year the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee, which sponsors this effort, has:

- Facilitated Long Island Sound Study funded research to monitor the spawner sanctuary and identify locations for additional sanctuaries in Oyster Bay and Cold Spring Harbor,
- Pinpointed and is addressing sources of pollution in Cold Spring Harbor, and;
- Inspired Hempstead Harbor to the west and the Huntington/Northport complex to the east to develop similar community oyster gardening programs.

Town of Oyster Bay Councilwoman Michele Johnson said, "The Town of Oyster's new shell recycling program



Placing the oysters in the the Cold Spring Harbor.

will provide another opportunity for local restaurants and residents to support the local environment. The recycled shell material will be used to enhance the aquaculture efforts like the North Shore Oyster Gardening program and prepare suitable bay bottom for natural recruitment of oysters while reducing waste going to our landfills."

Mayor of Laurel Hollow Daniel DeVita said, "The Village of Laurel Hollow is proud to have been a part of this program from the beginning. These oysters will immediately enhance the bottom habitat for other marine organisms and continue filtering the water. In a year or so they could be filtering up to 50 gallons of water each or millions of gallons per day in total. That is incredibly important to the quality of life of our residents who cherish the beach, boating and fishing to which water quality and healthy habitats are essential."



Barry Lamb with the gardening cages full of oysters.

Heather Johnson, Executive Director of Friends of the Bay said, "Friends of the Bay is excited to be a part of the success of this program in generating more advocates for our local waters. We are also proud our water quality monitoring program can assist researchers in supporting the local oyster population."

Rob Crafa, Coordinator of the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee remarked, "It is inspiring to see the enthusiasm and dedication of so many members of the community tend to the oysters week after week and support the growth of this program over the last

six seasons! Their efforts have supported grants to monitor the existing spawner sanctuary and locate new ones, investigations to determine pollution sources impacting our beaches and shellfish beds and initiation of similar programs in Hempstead and Huntington/Northport harbors."

Since 2017 the North Shore Oyster Gardening program, a project led by the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee, has trained, equipped, and supported hundreds of volunteers raising oysters to enhance our local waters, not for consumption. Each volunteer, family, or organization sponsors and tends to one or more "oyster gardens" which are cages containing up to 1,000 oysters. The gardens are hung between buoys at one of four community gardens in Oyster Bay and Cold Spring Harbor. Volunteers support every aspect of the program from building the cages in April and May to bi-


weekly cleaning and measuring of the oysters from June - September. During this time under the care of the dedicated volunteers the oysters grow from 12-14 mm in size (about the size of your pinky nail) to over 70 mm (slightly less than three inches)!

Volunteers and organizations interested in becoming an oyster gardener or sponsoring oyster gardens in 2023 are encouraged to contact Rob Crafa, Coordinator of the Oyster Bay/Cold Spring Harbor Protection Committee at 631-848-2090 or rob@oysterbaycold-springharbor.org.



Collecting the cages from under the water.

Photos: Patricia Brexel



Locust Valley Library

October Adult Programs

REGISTER AT www.locustvalleylibrary.org

<p>From Italy with Love Sunday, October 2 at 2:30 PM Celebrate Italian Heritage month with tenor Saluator Chiarelli.</p> <p>Nature Trail Club Sunday, October 9 at 9:15 AM Location: Shu Swamp Nature Preserve</p> <p>Friends' Magical History Tour Saturday, October 15 at 9:30 AM Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.</p> <p>The Evolution of Salsa Sunday, October 16 at 2 PM Performer Jose Obando. Co-sponsored by The Town of Oyster Bay.</p> <p>Archivist and Research Librarian's Approach to Genealogy: Zoom Tuesday, October 18 at 7 PM Brought to you courtesy of the Genealogy Collective. Sponsored by the Locust Valley Library</p> <p>A Night of Spooky Fiction Tuesday, October 25 at 7 PM Presented by Robert P. Ottone.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Ongoing Programs</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MONDAYS</p> <p>Yoga with Morgan Rose 9 AM - 10 sessions for \$40</p> <p>Tai Chi with Marvin German 5:30 PM - 10 sessions \$50</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TUESDAYS</p> <p>Yoga with Morgan Rose 5:30 PM - 10 sessions for \$40</p> <p style="text-align: center;">WEDNESDAYS</p> <p>Casual Books October 12 at 10 AM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">MOVIE THURSDAYS</p> <p>October 13 & 27 at 1 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FRIDAYS</p> <p>Valley Quilters & Knitters at 1 PM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">SATURDAYS</p> <p>Danceercise with Carol 9:30 AM - 10 sessions for \$50</p>
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