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## I Love My Park Day volunteers at Letchworth State Park

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## An icon gets a facelift

In 2011, a *New York Times* [travel piece](#) called [Niagara Falls State Park](#) "shabby" and "underfinanced." The oldest state park in the nation is now primed to lose that label: State Parks Commissioner Rose Harvey recently unveiled [plans](#) for \$25 million in improvements to the park. The event also included a ribbon cutting on a new solar installation on top of the Niagara Falls Discovery Center roof.

Frederick Law Olmsted designed much of the original park and the goal of the revitalization, according



[Niagara Falls improvement plan](#)

## Spring 2012



### Celebrating 25 years of advocacy for New York's parks and trails

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### Stay connected!

There are lots of ways to stay up-to-date on the latest news affecting our magnificent state park system and stay connected to other park supporters. If you're not already on our email list, visit our [website](#) to join. You can also follow us:



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### Become a non-profit member

Is your Friends group a member of PTNY? PTNY works to build the capacity of Friends groups, expand outreach and communications, and enhance advocacy efforts. With continued economic constraints, it is more important than ever that the network of Friends groups grows and strengthens.

Some of the tools PTNY

to Commissioner Harvey, is to make sure the park's public use facilities fit the grandeur of Niagara Falls. The revitalization effort is outlined in a Landscape Improvements Plan and focuses on those areas most heavily visited by tourists. This effort includes restoration of scenic overlooks, renovation of the Cave of the Winds complex, new trolleys, and design work for the rehabilitation of the pedestrian bridge over the falls. A new park-wide signage and wayfinding system will also be developed.

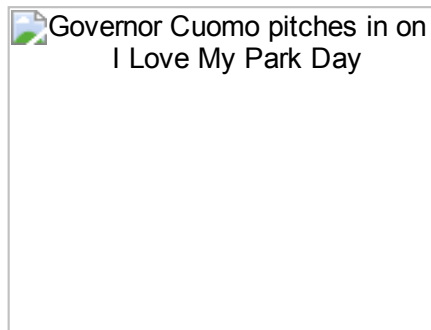
The funding comes from Governor Cuomo's New York Works Fund. [See the full list of improvements planned](#) for 48 state parks and historic sites as part of this Fund.

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## First-ever I Love My Park Day a huge success

We are still riding high here at Parks & Trails New York (PTNY) from the success of the inaugural [I Love My Park Day](#). Thousands of volunteers - including Governor Cuomo - joined together to celebrate and improve park lands and beaches, plant trees and gardens, restore trails and wildlife habitat, and carry out site-improvement projects at 40 state parks and historic sites.



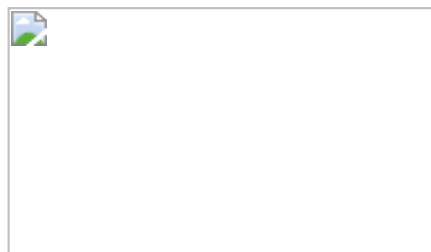
*Governor Cuomo pitches in on I Love My Park Day.*

Spearheaded by PTNY, I Love My Park Day and the efforts of Friends groups and park staff and the Governor's participation put our state parks system, its needs, and the strong public support for parks in the public's eye. New and veteran volunteers came out to give back to the parks they use and enjoy all year and create a community of park lovers. Many Friends groups enjoyed the best turnout ever for a volunteer event and have already engaged those volunteers as new members of their organizations.

There were so many great stories from I Love My Park Day:

### **Business partnerships:**

Volunteers from the Oneonta Home Depot pitched in at [Max V. Shaul State Park](#). Not only did Home Depot provide people power, but the store also sent a truckload of donations to help make the day a success. Thanks to the donation of building materials, plants and flowers, and the use of power equipment,



*I Love My Park Day volunteers at Max V. Shaul State Park*

offers include spearheading I Love My Park Day, publishing the *You Gotta Have Friends* eNewsletter, and providing capacity grants and an online [Friends Resource Kit](#). PTNY also gives a voice to Friends groups at the Capitol.

[Become a non-profit organization member of PTNY today!](#)

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### **Connect (virtually) with State Parks**

Park lovers can now get tips on news and happenings in the state park system from the agency itself. State Parks launched its new email newsletter in March. [Sign up for Park Connect today.](#)

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### **Upcoming grant opportunity**

NYS is now accepting grant funding applications through the [Consolidated Funding Application \(CFA\)](#), an effort to streamline and expedite the NYS grant application process. Up to \$750 million will be made available to implement the priorities of 10 Regional Economic Development Councils.

Find out more about the process and get answers to frequently asked questions on the CFA website or by attending one of the [workshops](#) being held across the state in June.

**Application deadline is July 16.**

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volunteers were able to build a raised flower bed around the entrance sign and flower boxes around the park. They also helped with tasks like digging the holes for new benches on the ball field. ([See tips for soliciting donations from businesses.](#))

**New connections:** The [Friends of the Old Croton Aqueduct](#) made numerous new connections with other organizations in the process of planning their vine-cutting project. The Friends are already planning a similar event in the fall of this year and will run it along with the other organizations that participated in I Love My Park Day.

**Engaging youth:** More than 150 Boy Scouts came out to [Grafton Lakes State Park](#) and helped make progress on new trail construction, clearing away large boulders, and trimming low-hanging tree branches. SUNY Plattsburgh students helped out at [Point Au Roche State Park](#) and are ready to put in more time during this fall semester.

**Enhancing visibility:** At [Gantry Plaza State Park](#), the press came, took photos, and plan to spread the word about the [Friends of Gantry](#). A City Councilman came to show his support, and the volunteers included a group of employees from Morgan Stanley.

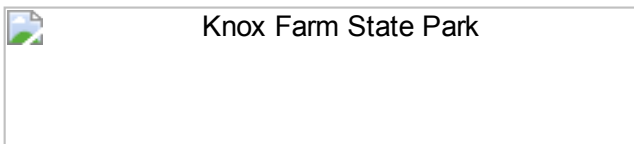
Thank you to Governor Cuomo, our sponsors, and our partners at State Parks for making this event a tremendous success. **We are eagerly looking forward to next year's event - Saturday, May 4, 2013. Please save the date!**

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## Knox Farm named one of Seven to Save

[Knox Farm State Park](#) has been designated as one of New York State's Seven to Save Endangered Properties by the [Preservation League of New York State](#). The park's collection of 21 buildings and structures built between the 1860s and 1940s are at risk due to the need for funding for short-term repairs and long-term stewardship. Both the League and the [Friends of Knox Farm State Park](#) believe these buildings offer great opportunity for adaptive reuse (see [Update from Albany](#) for a bill currently before the Legislature that would allow the state to lease some of the buildings at the park).



*Knox Farm State Park*

A Seven to Save designation from the League delivers technical assistance, fosters increased media coverage and public awareness, and opens the door to grant assistance for endangered properties. [Learn more.](#)

## Parkway removal gains traction

Local stakeholders, including the [Niagara Heritage Partnership](#), have been pushing for a full removal of the southern portion of the Robert Moses Parkway as a critical economic development project for Niagara Falls, creating pedestrian access between the City's downtown and the waterfront park, and encouraging new private investment in downtown Niagara Falls.

After six years and a boost from Senator Schumer, State Parks announced that it will release a new plan this June to fully remove the southern portion of the 50-year-old parkway and replace it with an at-grade road that will provide new waterfront access for downtown Niagara Falls.

The project, expected to cost \$15 million, would link downtown Niagara Falls with [Niagara Falls State Park](#). State Parks plans to make the initial design for the project available during a public meeting in early June. [Learn more.](#)

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## Comments on master plans sought

Voice your thoughts about the future of [John Boyd Thacher](#) and [Thompson's Lake State Parks](#). Written comments will be accepted until June 16. [Read more.](#)

## New Nature Center at Moreau Lake State Park

An Earth Day celebration at [Moreau Lake State Park](#) in the southern Adirondacks included the [grand opening](#) of a newly expanded Nature Center. PTNY

Executive Director Robin Dropkin was on hand for the ribbon cutting ceremony. The Nature Center expansion includes a new 810-square-foot classroom space that can accommodate up to 100 people. It also houses an extensive taxidermy collection of animals native to the park. The Nature Center typically welcomes dozens of school field trips each year, and this new addition was designed to handle school groups more efficiently. Fourth-graders from South Glens Falls Elementary School were on a field trip for the event, touring the new facility and getting a lesson from park educators.

As part of the New York Works program, Moreau Lake State Park will also be receiving over \$1.25 million in infrastructure improvements, including new restrooms and parking areas.



*Commissioner Harvey with Saratoga-Capital Regional Director Alane Ball Chinian and Heather Mabee, Chair of the Saratoga-Capital Park Commission, at the grand opening of the expanded Nature Center at Moreau Lake State Park.*

## Keeping the momentum

There has been a lot of good news for parks this year and we've certainly come a long way since 88 parks and historic sites were threatened with closure in 2010. Still, not all the news is rosy. Many parks and historic sites continue to face tough choices concerning services, programming, and maintenance with limited budgets.

In the Finger Lakes, for example, the swimming pool at [Stony Brook State Park](#) will be closed for the third year in a row and pools in [Seneca Lake](#), [Long Point](#) and [Buttermilk Falls](#) State Parks have reduced hours from daily to weekends. Fewer people will have fewer opportunities to seek relief from the heat and enjoy these and other treasured recreational resources.

Statewide, State Parks' budget has been reduced nearly 24% over the last few years - more than many agencies - and it is

[Hamlin Beach State Park](#) has also begun a master planning process. Comments will be accepted until June 29. [Read more.](#)

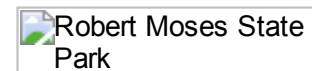
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## Smoke-free ban suspended

Just one month after instituting a smoking prohibition at pools and playgrounds at state parks and historic sites, the state suspended the ban in response to a challenge from smokers' rights groups. Instead, the non-smoking measures will be voluntary for at least two months while a full rule-making process, including public comment, is concluded.

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## Erosion forces closure at Robert Moses



Long Island beach-goers will feel the effects of erosion this summer season. Erosion has led to a significant lack of sand at [Robert Moses State Park's](#) Field 5, leaving little room for visitors to set up an umbrella or throw down a towel. As a result, half of the parking at Field 5 will be closed. Up to 5,000 people a day may be turned away from this popular family destination.

Park staff have forestalled the need for closure for the last two years by dumping thousands of cubic yards of new sand on

operating today with 1500 fewer staff than it was in 2008. The agency's operations budget has been on a downward slide for more than 15 years and parks are being starved as a result, with reduced hours, days, and seasons, fewer programs and workers, and less maintenance, not to mention fewer resources dedicated to natural resource protection and the visitor experience.

So while we have much to celebrate, let's aspire even higher. At PTNY, we will be doing all we can in Albany and across New York to keep the good news growing for parks.

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## Update from Albany

### Longer building leases proposed at Knox Farm

Legislation was just introduced that would authorize State Parks to enter into agreements with private individuals who are willing to invest private funds to rehabilitate and maintain vacant and at-risk buildings in [Knox Farm State Park](#). S.6719-A (Little) / [A.10546 \(Markey\)](#) would add this property to approximately 50 other properties previously designated by the Legislature as requiring longer term leases in order to attract private funds for repair and rehabilitation efforts.

Given the State's continued fiscal constraints, long-term leases in exchange for private funding to rehabilitate deteriorating structures is an appropriate step to take at this point and will hopefully save some important and historic properties.

[Read PTNY's memo of support on the bill.](#)

### EPF enhancement bill on the move

State leaders held the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) steady at \$134 million in this year's budget. PTNY has been working with its partners in the [Friends of the Environment Coalition](#) on a measure that would help grow the EPF as the economy improves. [S. 5403-A \(Grisanti\)](#) / [A. 7137-A \(Latimer\)](#) would phase revenue from the Bottle Bill into the EPF over four years, dedicating revenues generated by the state's bottle deposit law, which keeps communities cleaner and encourages recycling, to programs that protect our air, land and water. NYS collects more than \$100 million from unclaimed bottle deposits on an annual basis. Importantly, this new revenue would supplement the EPF's current source of funding, not replace it.

The EPF supports a wide variety of programs that generate revenue and create jobs in many sectors throughout NYS, including outdoor tourism and agriculture. A recent [analysis](#) by The Trust for Public Land found that for every \$1 of EPF funds invested in land and water protection, \$7 in economic benefits through natural goods and services is returned to the state of New York.

PTNY is urging the Legislature and Governor to pass the bill in

the beach. But the park is out of sand, and it would take work by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to fix the problem. A lack of funds in this year's federal budget for such projects means the earliest it could be done is fiscal year 2013.

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### Tightrope walk set for June 15

 Nik Wallenda

After much back and forth and international negotiations, Nik Wallenda is set to [walk](#) across the Niagara River gorge while balancing on a two-inch-diameter steel cable on June 15. Wallenda, who set Guinness World Records for high-wire walking and bicycling, is expected to walk the Falls just after 10:00 p.m. It is expected to take about 35 minutes for him to traverse the nearly 1,800 feet across the Niagara gorge. The 4,000 free tickets to the event available from State Parks were sold out in a matter of minutes.

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### State Assembly recognizes State Council of Parks Chair

 State Council of Parks Chair Dr. Lucy Waletzky Rockefeller is recognized on the floor of the NYS Assembly.

[Friends of Letchworth State Park](#) President [Carol Rathbun](#) snapped this photo of State Council of Parks Chair Dr. Lucy Waletzky Rockefeller on the floor of the NYS Assembly. Dr. Waletzky, chair of the [State Council of Parks](#), was

this session. The Assembly unanimously passed the bill in May; now it's up to the Senate. **You can help:** contact your state [Senator](#) and urge him/her to vote for S. 5403-A when it comes to the floor for a vote.

## Pennies for Parks

PTNY's 2006 report, [Parks at a Turning Point](#), documented how years of neglect had contributed to the crumbling infrastructure of the NYS Park System. The challenges from such neglect have only grown; State Parks now estimates more than \$1 billion dollars is needed in infrastructure repair and restoration, nearly half of which is health and safety related. While the \$89 million included in the 2012-13 state budget begins to address some of these chronic infrastructure problems, a long-term funding source is needed to rebuild state parks.

The "Pennies for Parks" program would create a fund for capital expenditures at state parks and historic sites. [S. 6580 \(Grisanti\) / A. 10343 \(Cahill\)](#) would establish an avoidable five-cent fee on single-use, carry-out bags distributed by retailers to shoppers statewide. Generated revenue would provide a dedicated funding source for NYS parks and historic sites. Even with the reduced bag usage projected in response to the fee, an estimated \$35 million a year would be raised for each penny charged.

PTNY strongly supports this bill, as it will generate much needed funding to restore and rebuild infrastructure at the state's aging and deteriorating state park system, as well as reduce usage of disposable carry-out bags. [Read PTNY's memo in support of Pennies for Parks.](#)

## Federal funding update

The U.S. Senate approved a Transportation Bill amendment that would dedicate \$1.4 billion to the [Land and Water Conservation Fund \(LWCF\)](#) over the next two years (along with funding for Gulf Coast restoration). The House and Senate are currently negotiating whether this provision will survive in the final bill; PTNY has been working to make sure it does.

LWCF provides critical funding to states for state and local park needs. Please consider signing your organization on to [this statement](#) to show Congress how important it is to your local community that LWCF be included in the final Transportation Bill this year.

**To sign, please email your organization's name to:**  
[gjones@outdoorsamerica.org](mailto:gjones@outdoorsamerica.org).

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## News from Friends groups

*If you have news to share in the next issue of You Gotta Have Friends, [let us know](#).*

recognized on Park Advocacy Day in March by Assemblyman Kevin Cahill and the entire Assembly for her efforts on behalf of New York's state parks. Kudos!

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## Kings Park demo update

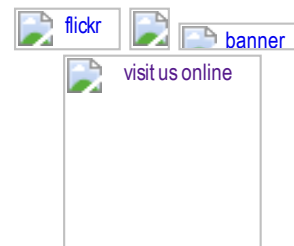
The demolition of 15 deteriorated buildings at the former Kings Park Psychiatric Hospital is now scheduled to start in July; work was originally due to begin in May. Once the buildings are removed, the grounds - now part of [Nissequogue River State Park](#) - will be restored. State Parks still expects to meet the November 2013 completion date.

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## Two new Friends groups launched

Not only did I Love My Park Day raise the visibility of the entire state park system, it also served as a springboard for two newly formed park Friends groups: [East River State Park](#) in Brooklyn and [Hempstead Lake State Park](#) on Long Island. These parks will now enjoy the support of more formal groups of local volunteers.

When Jackie Meyer moved to Williamsburg from the East Village three and a half years ago, she fell in love with East River State Park. She began thinking about forming the group over a year ago. The [Friends of East River State Park](#) now has over a dozen active members and, two weeks before I Love My Park Day, it secured the [Natural Heritage Trust](#) as its fiscal agent. The May 5th event was the group's coming-out party and included a flag dedication ceremony. For more information, email Jackie Meyer at [friends.eastriverstatepark@aol.com](mailto:friends.eastriverstatepark@aol.com).



Friends of East River State Park volunteers on I Love My Park Day

*Friends of East River State Park volunteers on I Love My Park Day*



Hempstead Lake State Park Alliance

When Hempstead Lake State Park was put on the proposed list of state parks to close in 2010, the need for an organization to support the park became clear. The [Hempstead Lake State Park Alliance](#) (HLSPA) formed in February of 2012 and participated in the inaugural I Love My Park Day.

PTNY welcomes these two new organizations to the community of park Friends groups!

## Happy Anniversary, Schodack Island!

[Schodack Island State Park](#), just across the Hudson River and south of Albany, will celebrate its 10th Anniversary on Saturday, June 16th. The [Friends of Schodack Island](#) have been working with park staff for several months to plan for a huge party. A rededication of the park at 2:00 pm will kick off the event, and will be followed by live music, food vendors, entertainment, games, and displays related to park history, natural history and outdoor recreation. A fireworks display over the Hudson River at 9:15 pm will conclude the festivities. The gates will remain open for admission until 8:00 pm or until the park reaches capacity, so come early. For more information, contact the park at 518-732-0187.



Schodack Island State Park Alliance

*Schodack Island State Park*

## Friends of Taconic State Park furnace cover project advances



The [Friends of Taconic State Park](#) passed another important milestone in its efforts to install a protective cover for the historic Copake Iron Works furnace. Two substantial pieces of the furnace cover were moved from the off-site construction area to the park earlier this spring. Ed Herrington, Inc., a local building supplies and

service company, contributed drivers, trucks, and equipment to move the trusses, each weighing about a ton and a half and measuring around 40 feet long. Although additional construction work remains to be done, the completion of this section of the cover is a significant milestone.

## Friends of Thacher awarded national grant

Congrats to the [Friends of Thacher and Thompson's Lake State Parks](#), who recently won a \$5,000 [Every Day Capacity Grant](#) from the [National Environmental Education Foundation](#). The Friends will use the funds to develop a strategic plan for their organization.

The Every Day Grants provide Friends groups with grant funds of up to \$5,000 to help the groups build their capacity to serve public lands. The next round of Every Day Grants will be open in the Fall. Visit the [website](#) for updates.

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## New York State's linear parks

New York is fortunate to enjoy more than 200 state parks and historic sites - places such as Niagara Falls, Jones Beach, Saratoga Spa, Oriskany Battlefield and Old Fort Niagara. All are owned and managed by the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

Lesser known, but no less majestic, historic, or enjoyable, are 10 linear parks - long-distance multi-use trails - also owned and managed by OPRHP, often in conjunction with a not-for-profit trail Friends group and/or a local government.



Old Croton Aqueduct

*Old Croton Aqueduct*

Three of these trails are full-fledged state parks: the 26-mile [Old Croton Aqueduct State Historic Park](#) and the [Walkway Over the](#)



[Hudson State Historic Park](#) in the Hudson Valley and the 36-mile [Old Erie Canal State Historic Park](#) (part of the 365-mile Erie Canalway Trail) in central New York. Not exactly state parks but part of the OPRHP "family" are

- the 90-mile [Genesee Valley Greenway](#) in western New York;
- the 6-mile [Catharine Valley Trail](#) and the soon-to-open 8-mile [Black Diamond Trail](#) in the Finger Lakes;
- the 15-mile [Harlem Valley Rail Trail](#) in the Hudson Valley;
- the 7-mile Bethpage Bikeway on Long Island;
- 30 miles of Erie Canalway Trail in Montgomery County in the Mohawk Valley; and
- the 4-mile D&H Rail Trail in Granville, Washington County on the Vermont border.

With PTNY's [Trail Finder](#) you can download maps and more to help you enjoy each of these state-owned linear parks.

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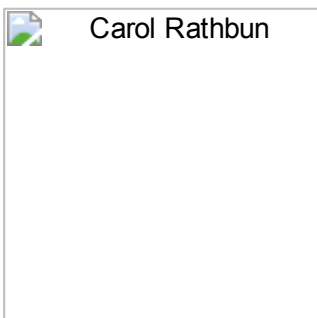
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## That's What Friends Are For

### Volunteer Profile: Carol Rathbun

*Volunteers are essential to our state parks and historic sites. That's What Friends Are For, in which we profile a dedicated Friends group volunteer, is a new regular feature in You Gotta Have Friends.*

Sometimes a connection to a special place spans a lifetime. For Carol Rathbun, her love of [Letchworth State Park](#) has been a constant throughout her life.



Carol Rathbun

"The park has always been a very special place for me," says Carol, a lifelong resident of the area. "I played there as a child; created many wonderful, happy memories growing up with family and friends; worked at the Upper/Middle Falls concession stand in college; and during recent summers worked at the Gift Shop, Footbridge Nature Shoppe, and Campstore for eight seasons. As I've grown, so has my love and appreciation of the park."

When Carol retired after more than 30 years as an elementary and literacy teacher, it was only natural that she would devote her newfound free time to the park she loves so much. Although she set a goal of becoming more involved with the [Friends of Letchworth State Park](#), what she didn't expect was to be elected as president of the group after only three meetings.

[Keep reading about Carol Rathbun and the Friends of Letchworth State Park.](#)

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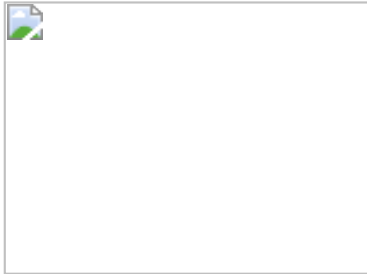
## You Gotta Have Tips: Soliciting donations for your cleanup event

You Gotta Have Tips *is a new regular feature of You Gotta Have Friends in which we provide capacity-building and technical-assistance tips.*

Does your Friends group hold cleanup or park and trail maintenance events? Maybe you hold a regular workday each month; maybe you hold a cleanup day in the Spring and a trail maintenance day in the Fall.

However you organize these events, there are several reasons why your organization may want

to seek outside support for your cleanup event. In addition to needing supplies and publicity, a cleanup event - such as I Love My Park Day - also offers your organization an opportunity to raise its profile in the community by providing businesses and other partners a tangible event to support.



[Keep reading about soliciting volunteers and donations from businesses.](#)

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Earthshare logo

*Parks & Trails New York is a member of Earth Share New York, an alliance of leading nonprofit environmental organizations. For more information about workplace giving to Parks & Trails New York and Earth Share, check out [www.earthshareny.org](http://www.earthshareny.org).*

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