

Sustainable Southeast Queens

Balancing social, economic and environmental justice to promote the current and future health of our communities.



A publication of the Eastern Queens Alliance, Inc.

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Diamond Back Terrapins: Become a volunteer and help save our turtles at Idlewild Park.

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Upset about Noisy Low Flying Aircraft? Be A Squeaky Wheel!

By: Barbara E. Brown, Chairperson



If you live in Southeast Queens, particularly if you live in the neighborhoods of Brookville, Rosedale, Laurelton Springfield Gardens and as far north as Cambria Heights, you are very likely under the flight paths of departing and arriving aircraft on Runways 41/22 and 4R/22L of JFK International Airport. That means you experience all of the noise and air pollution attendant with aircraft flying overhead. Many of our communities are in a 65+ DNL contour (a yearly average decibel Level) This is definitely above the noise standard. It is very much above a healthy noise level. This is compounded by the fact that the actual decibel level is way above 65 for individual flights. If you use a noise monitor, you'll see that the decibel levels in many locations is above 75Dbs, often way above 85Dbs. This is hazardous to your health! **Yes, noise is hazardous to your health!**

Southeast Queens communities are the most impacted by JFK Airport. The runways are closer to our communities than any other community around the airport. That means the departing and arriving flights are lowest over our Southeast Queens communities. This is patently clear when you look at the maps or if you have the opportunity to go boating out in Jamaica Bay. It is also true that **the largest number of residential areas impacted by JFK airport are in Southeast Queens.**

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About the Eastern Queens Alliance, Inc.

The Eastern Queens Alliance (EQA) is a coalition of civic associations that joined forces in 1989 to address problems, issues and concerns that defied boundaries and plagued all or most of our communities. We know that it is working together that we have the strength to confront the issues, negotiate viable solutions, and whenever necessary, agitate to bring pressure to bear to achieve our goals. We are a proactive organization, striving to be ever vigilant to prevent problems before they become entrenched. In doing so, we collectively enlist the aid of elected officials, as well as all of the government and private agencies who are charged with the responsibility and/or have the resources to assist us.

**Eastern Queens Alliance,
Inc.**



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Upset about Noisy Low Flying Aircraft? Be A Squeaky Wheel!

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Just look at the maps! At a recent TAC (Technical Advisory Committee) meeting of the JFK Part 150 Study, it was stated by one of the presenters that there was not a lot that could be done for Southeast Queens because of the proximity of the runways to Southeast Queens. Yet, if you recall, the PANYNJ made a decision to move the end of Runway 4L/22R closer to our communities and the Courts upheld the FAA approval of their decision; our communities be damned! Street lights were lowered; almost 400 trees were cut down in Idlewild to make way for the planes. And the planes now roar lower over our homes lower than ever. Would it have mattered if our communities were not minority?

It would seem that our communities have a real environmental *injustice* issue on our hands. While the airport and the communities grew, and developed together over the years, making decisions that knowingly exacerbates the harmful environmental impacts on our communities, is environmental injustice. The term **Environmental injustice**, expressed often in the form of **environmental racism**, occurs when local governments or companies build environmentally detrimental infrastructures in minority communities. Lengthening the runway is a perfect example of this. It is environmentally detrimental to the people in Southeast Queens and even to Idlewild Park Preserve, the only environmental buffer between our communities and that airport. Airplanes are not only flying closer together and more frequently because of NextGen, but are flying lower over our communities because of that decision to extend the runway.

So, what are you doing about it? What can you do about it? We as a community need to push against this type of racism, this type of discrimination. We need to press the issues. We need to be out there making our voices heard consistently. No one can do it for you. We need to report aircraft noise at every turn. We need to regularly file noise complaints with the PANYNJ. Others who are less impacted do! We need to attend all meetings about JFK Airport, raise questions, make complaints and let our voices be heard. Failure to do so is interpreted as a lack of concern. **Failure to advocate for yourself, your family and your community is interpreted as acquiescence! Don't be complicit in the very acts that victimize you! If you are not a part of the solution, you are definitely a part of your own problem.** The term "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" is true. Those who constantly raise their voices get the attention of the "Powers that be". **Those who are silent are ignored.**

The JFK Airport Committee has held five meetings so far. Have you attended any of them? Make it your business to attend any and all JFK Airport-related meetings! Make it your business to attend the New York Community Aviation Roundtable meetings. Join EQA's JFK Stakeholders Networking Team.

For information, call: 347 824-2301



Eastern Queens
Alliance, Inc. 
United, Mobilized...
When Working Together Is Better



EARTH DAY!!

Can You Make a Difference in Your Community to Help Save Our Earth?

By: Sharon Ecke

Earth Day is an annual event, celebrated on April 22nd to encourage and support environmental protection. The organizers, now known as Earth Day Network (EDN), first celebrated Earth Day in 1970 (YES, 1970!) and have since gained global support and recognition. To be specific, Earth Day Network has inspired and mobilized over ONE BILLION people, representing over 192 countries with diverse backgrounds and experiences, all working toward a goal of

to name a few. Each of those Acts are designed to ensure YOU have air and water free from harmful and in some instances deadly toxins.

It means YOU can go for a swim at local beaches because the waters are free of pollutants. On warm sunny days, YOU can enjoy outdoor sports with family and friends, take a jog through your park, participate in bird watching in Prospect Park or better yet – stop by one of the best kept secrets in Southeast Queens, Idlewild Park. It is a 225 acres natural

programs and events.

EQA wants YOU to come out, learn about the park, the wetlands and to become a part of the Earth Day Network movement creating a legacy your family will cherish for generations to come. I guarantee it will be an unforgettable adventure you and the kids will never forget!

* The Forever Wild Program is an initiative of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation to protect and preserve the most ecologically valuable lands within the five boroughs.

" Look deep into nature and then you will understand everything better." Albert Einstein

educating, creating and/or changing public policy focused on saving the environment and endangered species.

Okay, so what does that mean to and for you.....?

To start, Earth Day efforts were critical in the creation and passage of the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Endangered Species Act to

forever Wild* site home to many rare species like the snowy egret, ospreys, diamond-back terrapin and fiddler crabs. If YOU have no idea what those are then the wonderful staff at the Eastern Queens Alliance (EQA) trailer are more than happy to give you a tour of the grounds and provide information about upcoming educational





COMMUNITY DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: Planning for Today, Tomorrow and Beyond

Are you ready for a disaster?

Disasters such as wildfires, tropical storms, hurricanes, earthquakes and epidemics pose temporary and long-term threats to public health. Most disasters strike with little or no warning and kill or maim indiscriminately. On the eve of October 29th, 2012 Hurricane Sandy tore through New York City causing significant loss and devastation to many communities especially South East Queens. Reminders of the terrible destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy underscores the need to strengthen the emergency response capacity of our community and for more robust community planning.

Preparedness can be defined as the knowledge, capabilities and actions of governments, organizations, community groups, and individuals " to effectively anticipate, respond to, and recover from, the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events or conditions". Thus, a successful disaster-preparedness program requires national, regional and local participation. Active contribution at each level is essential for effective risk communications, organizational partnerships and community engagement.

Human-induced changes in earth's atmosphere and oceans have made our planet a dangerous place by contributing to more frequent and more severe natural disasters. In view of the increase in both the frequency and destructiveness of natural disasters Eastern Queens Alliance, Inc has proposed the South-East Queens Disaster Recovery Plan. The objective of the Plan would be to strengthen long term disaster recovery and build capacity for the Community to respond effectively to future disasters. This plan consists of two phases and would facilitate community-level coordination between City agencies and community organizations namely New York OEM, nonprofit organizations, community emergency response teams (CERT), government agencies and community based organizations (CBOs).

The first step in phase one (1) involves the establishment of a COAD (Community Organizations Active In Disasters). They would act as advisory committee to oversee development and implementation

of the SE Queens disaster recovery plan. Additionally, they would create a registry of all local CBO's and coordinate activities. The COAD would build upon established community groups to provide training for disaster recovery assistance, facilitate communication & shared resources. The second step in phase one (1) would be to develop the South-East Queens disaster recovery plan. Recommendations of the South-East Queens Disaster Recovery Plan would be implemented in phase two (2).

What does it mean to you that our community should always have a disaster plan which can respond to all our area's needs during an emergency? For our plan to be successful, our entire community needs to be educated, informed and organized. At Eastern Queens Alliance. Inc we are committed to serving the needs of our communities and to ensure the successful implementation of the South-East Queens Disaster Recovery Plan. To learn more please join us at our annual community meetings or visit our website.

By: Lorraine Singh

Step into Spring - Household Cleaning Products and Your Health

Cleaning is crucial to creating a healthy environment in our homes but is it possible that cleaning your house is doing more harm than good? Household cleaning products often include harmful chemicals which can present a danger to our health. They consist of a complex mixture of toxic compounds whose health and environmental effects are either not known or known to be unsafe. To date under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act, manufactures of household cleaning products are NOT required to list all the ingredients in their products. As a result, people are cleaning their homes with products that contain ingredients harmful to their health and their environment.

When cleaning products are used, the chemicals become a part of our indoor air quality and remain suspended as vapors for days. Due to inadequate ventilation, indoor air pollution is created in our homes. These toxic vapors are inhaled through the lungs and aggravate existing respiratory problems such as asthma. A large group of chemicals known as Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are found in many cleaning products and when released into the atmosphere they contribute to short term and long term health effects. Symptoms of short term exposure include eye, nose & throat irritation, headaches, nausea vomiting,

dizziness and worsening of asthma symptoms. Long term exposure is associated with cancer, liver & kidney damage, central nervous system damage. Some products containing VOCs and other toxic substances include aerosol spray products, air fresheners, chlorine bleach, detergent & dishwashing liquid, rug & upholstery cleaners, furniture & floor polish, oven cleaners.

How can you prevent harm from cleaning and household products?

Fortunately, you can limit your exposure to risks associated with household cleaning supplies. Consider these few suggestions:

- Read all labels on cleaning supplies and household products carefully before you buy them and follow all safety precautions. Screen ingredients listed on the labels and choose products that do not contain or have reduced amounts of VOCs. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has a list of products that meet its *Safer Choice* requirements for cleaning that meet the 'Safe Choice Standard' at:

<https://www.epa.gov/saferchoice/products>



- Increase ventilation during and after cleaning by opening windows and doors.

- Use home-made cleaning solutions from kitchen materials such as vinegar, baking soda, lemon juice.

- Do not mix cleaners.

What cleaning products do you use in your home? Do they pose health risks? Becoming aware of potentially harmful substances can help keep you and your family healthy.



By:

Lorraine Singh

The Wonders of Owning an Aquarium

By: Brandon Anavitate



Owning an aquarium can be a useful source of entertainment and educational. However, it is important to do your research before setting up an aquarium. Lack of proper research often results in major obstacles that will cost you time and money. I can relate to this based on personal experience from purchasing an aquarium one month ago. As a beginner hobbyist, I had an idea about what type of fish I wanted and the set-up I wanted to have. However, failure to do the right research did not allow me an easy start to my aquarium.



I was able to purchase a ten-gallon tank for an affordable price with a half dozen neon tetras, a very small fish that schools. I also bought an amazon sword, an aquatic plant, as a way to potentially making maintenance of my tank easier. I was given two goldfish from my work colleague however they were the start to my problems with owning an aquarium.

After doing some research I learned that the goldfish I adopted could grow up to a foot long, that is roughly the size of half of my tank! This was a major problem since I had two goldfish. Unknowingly, I bought two Chinese algae eaters which made matters worse. Although the Chinese algae eaters helps keep your tank clean, they can also grow up to a foot long. Quite a dilemma, wouldn't you say?



Simply put I didn't do the necessary research and as a result my tank size was not large enough to accommodate the potential growth of all four fishes. Luckily, the rate of growth for the fish is dependent on the size of the tank, but it became obvious that my tank was not going to be a permanent home. I then set out to obtain a spare aquarium which helped relieve a great amount of stress on my tank

Apart from the issues encountered, owning my

aquarium has been a great pass time. The plant I bought for my tank is a natural hiding spot for my fishes and even helps keep the tank a little cleaner. My tank currently has one algae eater and although shy by nature, I have not seen any sign of algae growing in my tank. My neon tetras are an entertaining group of fish when they school. Those fish need at least three fishes in the tank to school. With a personal touch, an aquarium can be a wonderful hobby, providing hours of restful, beautiful entertainment.

If you are interested in having a pet but do not have the time to invest in a cat or dog, I strongly suggest owning an aquarium. If the right research is done, your only concerns would be feeding and maintenance. The maintenance can be done within a half hour and feeding can be done within a minute. However, I emphasize the need for research since it can guide you into creating the perfect conditions for your aquarium habitat.



Mosquitoes in the Summer Months

By: Bobbetta Davis



With summer right around the corner that means mosquitoes will soon be in full effect. Mosquitoes have long been a nuisance during the warmer months – and it's not just because of their bites. Mosquitoes are disease vectors. This means they can carry live viruses and pass them on to unsuspecting hosts, like people. These viruses include West Nile, Dengue, Yellow Fever and more recently, Zika.

West Nile Virus was first discovered in the United States in 1999. Pesticides have been sprayed in many Queens parks every summer since then. Last year, special care was given to keep the pests away from the community. Some areas of Southeast Queens were sprayed multiple times a month during the Summer of 2016, to combat the rising number of Zika cases. With all steps taken to keep mosquitos out of cities, it may be beneficial to ask what all of us can do to stop the spread of vector-borne viruses.

Let's start with the mosquito life cycle. Adult mosquitoes lay their eggs on a substrate submerged in water, or sometimes in the water so they form a raft that floats on the water.

Upon hatching, the baby mosquitoes, or larvae, spend all their time in the water. They eat things, usually dead plants, that fall into the water. A few days later, the mosquitoes enter the pupation stage of their life cycle. They don't do much at this stage and they do not eat. Mosquitoes emerge as adults after a day or two of pupation and leave the water. Male mosquitoes drink nectar from plants, while female mosquitoes are the ones that drink blood from animals including humans.

Because mosquitoes rely so heavily on water during the first stages of their cycle, it is important to not provide them with open water. It does not take much water to hatch hundreds of mosquito eggs. Things like trash cans,

lids or old car tires with water in them make excellent breeding grounds for mosquitoes. It is best to pour all water out of open containers near you house, especially after rain.

Other ways to protect against mosquito bites includes wearing bug spray and reapplying as needed, sleeping with a mosquito net around the bed, and growing plants that are natural mosquito repellents such as citronella grass, ginger, lavender.



A Special Thanks to our EQA Environmental Educators!



Bobbetta Davis
Title: Environmental Educator/Environmental Justice Intern
Career Goal: Ecologist



Brandon Anavitate
Title: Environmental Educator
Career Goal: Biology Field Educator

UPCOMING EVENTS

- *June 8th, 2017 --- 4:00pm -5:30pm, Idlewild Park. Wine & Cheese Reception for Educators*
- *June 17th,2017---11:00am - 6:00pm, Idlewild Park Picnic Area Family Fun Day*
- *June 28th,2017--7:00pm - 9:00pm, Community Room, Green Acres Mall JFK Airport Community Meeting*

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