

2015-K1410

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Alley Pond Environmental Center on June 20, 2016

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize those individuals and organizations within the great State of New York that are dedicated to the vital work of environmental protection; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Alley Pond Environmental Center, to be celebrated at its Green Gala on Monday, June 20, 2016, at Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Flushing, New York; and

WHEREAS, This year's distinguished honorees include: Kevin P. Lynch, Veteran Labor Organizer and Official, Green Leadership Award; and Irene V. Scheid, Executive Director of the Alley Pond Environmental Center, Environmental Education Award; and

WHEREAS, The Alley Pond Environmental Center (APEC), a nonprofit environmental education organization, is dedicated to educating children and adults in the New York metropolitan area, protecting and preserving Alley Pond Park, open spaces and waterbodies, and advocating for sustainable environmental policies and practices; and

WHEREAS, Just a few steps from the bustling traffic of Northern Boulevard, the Alley Pond Environmental Center is a gem of the natural world in the middle of northeastern Queens; this vital organization is situated within Alley Pond Park, where over 635 acres of forests, meadows, ponds, and fresh and salt water marshes are home to more than 300 species of birds and other wildlife; and

WHEREAS, Visitors both young and old of the Alley Pond Environmental Center can walk its wetland and forest trails, observe the animals and plants, listen to the quiet, enjoy the changing seasons, and understand

our essential connection to wild nature, even in this busiest of cities;

and

WHEREAS, The Alley Pond Environmental Center was not always the protected natural environment it is today; in previous decades, wetlands were considered to be wastelands and many were filled in to make way for road construction, farming, flood control and other activities; and

WHEREAS, The acres of salt marsh where APEC is now located became dumping grounds for debris from the construction of the Cross Island Parkway in the 1930s and the Long Island Expressway in the 1950s; into the early 1970s, this neglected area remained in horrific condition, subjected to a constant bombardment of dumping; and

WHEREAS, By the early 1970s, a new understanding of the importance of wetlands was developing, and a group of determined educators and activists envisioned the damaged landscape bordering the Cross Island Parkway as a wildlife refuge and living lab for environmental education; and

WHEREAS, As a direct result of grassroots organizing and a partnership with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, the Alley Pond Environmental Center was established within Alley Pond Park in 1972; just two years later, the Parks Department created the Wetlands Reclamation Project and began rehabilitating the natural wetlands of the park; and

WHEREAS, In 1976, APEC moved to its present location in the park, on Northern Boulevard, into a building that was formerly used as a furniture store; the tremendous efforts of the founders was rewarded in 1979, when APEC was designated a National Environmental Study Area; and

WHEREAS, The spirit and dedication of APEC's supporters through the years have been instrumental to its growth into a beloved community resource and regional education center; and

WHEREAS, In the years since its inception, the Alley Pond Environmental Center and its programming has grown by leaps and bounds; from a few classes each week in a small, stone park building, APEC now hosts

more than 60,000 visitors each year; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, school programs serve students from the five boroughs of New York City as well as Nassau and Suffolk counties, and public programs are available for visitors of all ages; and

WHEREAS, It is incumbent upon all citizens to recognize and applaud the efforts of organizations and individuals such as the Alley Pond Environmental Center who work tirelessly on behalf of protecting our natural surroundings for the benefit of present and future generations of New Yorkers; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Alley Pond Environmental Center on June 20, 2016; and be it further

RESOLVED, That copies of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to the Alley Pond Environmental Center, Kevin P. Lynch and Irene V. Scheid.