

Oyster Festival: A Community Phenomenon

By Silvana LaFerlita Gullo

I've never seen a more stellar example of a community coming together to support its non-profits than the Oyster Festival. You might wonder how we manage to successfully operate a booth at one of Long Island's largest and best known events? Lots of hearts, minds and bodies joining forces for a common cause – Supporting Seniors.

Community Partners: The Rotary Club, elected officials, merchants, law enforcement and residents all play major roles in the Festival's success. Rotarians manage everything from ordering tents, to ensuring that Health Department rules are strictly enforced. To encourage a great turn-out, local officials, the Rotary and the community coordinate hourly trains, buses and parking. Mill Max, churches and residents share their space to welcome visitors. To create an added-value, merchants host a street-fair complete with music, entertainment and bargains galore. Law enforcement keeps everyone safe and comfortable as hundreds of thousands of dollars exchange hands in booths throughout each day. This event takes a great effort on behalf of our community partners and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Running the Center's Booth is a labor of love which takes a special kind of team work, lots of volunteer commitments, countless staff hours and an extra large dose of Chef Anthony's *magic*. The project begins in early summer with soup orders. Blount Corporation, a company out of Massachusetts, supplies the delicious Clam Chowder generously donating ten cases of soup and a discount on the 255 cases purchased. Many thanks to volunteer Bob Rose for saving us the expense of purchasing new equipment, by inspecting and repairing ours. On the Friday before the event, volunteers help our staff load the truck and set up the booth. They arrive early on Saturday morning to prepare for the day. Soup stirrers, servers, counter help, cashiers and line monitors greet guests with smiles, and our staff volunteer days of their time to help the event run smoothly. Work ends on Monday when the truck is unloaded and equipment is put away. A labor of love indeed – with 5,752 cups of soup sold, generating record revenue for the Center.

The Oyster Festival is a tradition that thousands of visitors look forward to each year. We are proud to be one of the many non-profit organizations that benefit from the generosity, commitment and dedication of so many.

Silvana LaFerlita Gullo, Executive Director