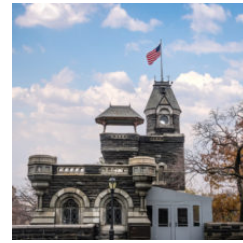




**KAREN
LEFRAK ON
HER NEW
KID'S BOOK**



**WHERE'S
YOUR
JANUARY
AVENUE?**



**GLOBES,
KOREAN
AND OTHER
WEEKEND
IDEAS**

ON THE AVENUE

Sip, Eat, Repeat in Central Park

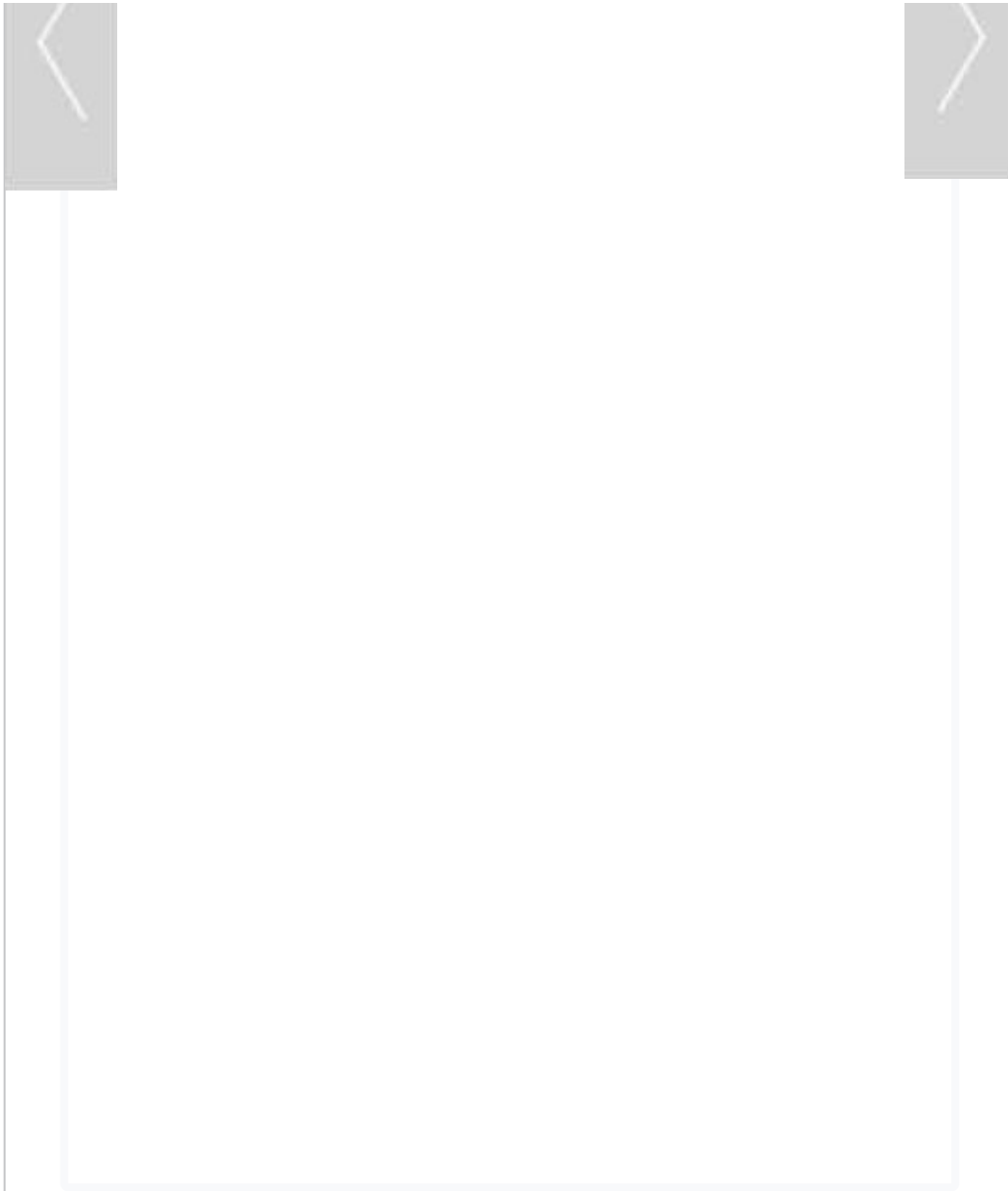
by *KELLY LAFFEY*

Photographed by ZACH HILTY/BFA.COM

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 14, 2017



Norman Selby, Jonathon Korngold, Kristy Korngold, Laurie Mandelbaum, Jay Mandelbaum, Doug Blonsky, Kelly Coffey, Gillian Minitzer and Melissa Vail



The hills were alive with the sound of ~~music~~ glasses clinking as the Central Park Conservancy hosted its annual Taste of Summer benefit on June 7. The event raised over \$800,000 to protect and maintain New York City’s backyard.

“Most people don’t realize that the majority of the money [to operate Central Park] is raised privately,” said **Gillian Minitzer**, co-chair of the event. Guests mingled around the Bethesda Terrace, enjoying food from such iconic New York restaurants as

Park after decades of decline. Today, the nonprofit manages the Park under a contract with the City of New York, and the Conservancy provides 75% of Central Park's \$67 million annual operating budget.

“We’ve raised and invested almost a billion dollars in the Park,” said **Doug Blonsky**, the outgoing President and CEO of the Central Park Conservancy. “It went from being one of the worst parks in the world and one of the most dangerous to the most beautiful and most used.”

In an open letter sent to Central Park Conservancy newsletter recipients on the morning of the Taste event, Blonsky announced that he’s stepping down from his post to transition to an advisory role on the Board of Trustees. When asked about his favorite Central Park memory, he noted, “I’ve been here for 32 years. That’s tough.” But he quickly pointed to his wife **Mai Allan** as the reason, noting, “She’s sitting right over there. I met my wife in Central Park.”

Initially opened in 1857, the park has been a National Historic Landmark since 1962. It encompasses 843 acres, and it now welcomes upward of 40 million people annually.

The Park offers a respite from city life, and attendees at the event reflected on where they’d most like to have a picnic.

“Shakespeare Garden; and on the west side around 100th Street, there’s a little area called the pool. And the Harlem Meer is good too,” said Blonsky, who has seen every inch of the park about 100 times.

Dr. Donna and John Raggio had a different idea. “We have a bench in the Ramble,” said Dr. Donna. “Belvedere Castle,” said John. “Guess we’re eating separately,” Dr. Donna joked.



months, they eventually settled on a grassy spot just to the east of the Terrace.

“I would choose the North Meadow, which we used to call the dust bowl, but it’s not a dust ball anymore,” said **Suzie Aijala**, adding that it’s important to support the park because “[it’s] our front yard, our backyard and our childrens’ playground.”

“The Conservatory Garden,” said Minitzer.

“My bench on the Literary Walk,” said **Anne Harrison**, former president of the Central Park Women’s Committee.

“Where in Central Park would I have a picnic? That’s like eating lunch at your desk,” joked one Central Park employee, before correcting himself and suggesting the East Meadow, as it offers a tranquil, pastoral setting.

Ellen Morton suggested Sheep Meadow because you can see expanses of the city from the lawn.

But **Judy Hart Angelo** offered perhaps the most insider answer—in the northwest corner of the park, there is a waterfall that feeds into a small stream. Much debate and Google mapping ensued to determine its exact location. But that’s for park-goers to explore.

This year’s Taste of Summer event chairmen also included **Kelly and Joe Coffey, Kristy and Jonathan Korngold, Carol Sutton Lewis and William M. Lewis, Jr., Laurie and Jay Mandelbaum, Sylvester Minitzer, and Melissa Vail and Norman C. Selby**. They were joined by **Chef David Burke, Chef Todd English, Patti Fast, Michael J. Fox and Tracy Pollan, Anne Harrison, Laura and Chris Heintz, Kim and Sean Klimczak, Elyse and Michael Newhouse, Liz and Jeff Peek, NYC Parks Commissioner Mitchell J. Silver,**



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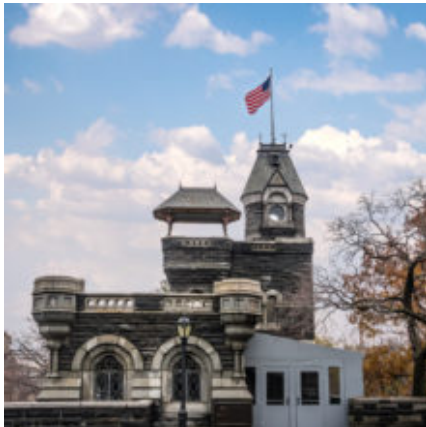


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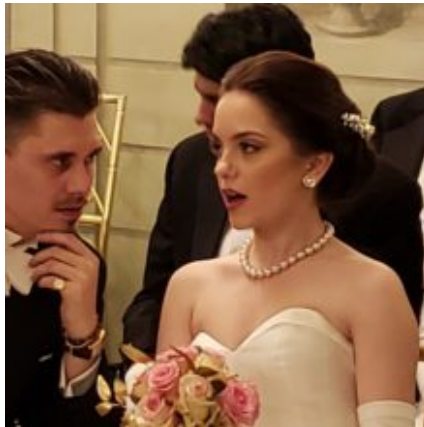
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**GLOBES, KOREAN
AND OTHER
WEEKEND IDEAS**

Our editors' picks for where to go and what to see

LISTS



**DEB BALL
CELEBRATES 64TH
BIRTHDAY**

And yes, we still need it

ON THE AVENUE



REVIEW: 2018'S BEST PARTIES

Reflecting back on the year before ringing in 2019

by *AVENUE INSIDER*

ON THE LIST

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