



Lessing's Hospitality Group participates in Island Harvest's "Giving Garden" in Brentwood.

## Embracing Earth Day

By: Adina Genn © April 22, 2019

Beach clean ups. Planting community gardens. Year-round green initiatives. These programs are recognized especially on Earth Day as collectively we raise our ecological awareness.

Earth Day got its start back in 1970. It was the year that President Richard Nixon established the Environmental Protection Agency, proposing in his State of the Union Address, that the nation "begin to make reparations for the damage we have done to our air, to our land, and to our water." And on April 22 that year, millions protested against industrial development's toll on the Earth, from smog, polluted waters and worse.

Today, Earth Day is recognized globally, with more than 192 countries taking part with civic action, according to Earth Day Network.

And Long Island organizations are doing their part.

Take Canon U.S.A.

The company "is very mindful about the environment – not because it's cool, but because it's the right thing to do," Chris Sedlacek, senior director and general manager at Canon U.S.A., told LIBN. "We started our environmental awareness efforts back in 1990 when no one else was talking about recycling and environmental conservation."

The company's DNA, Sedlacek said, goes back to "Kyosei," a Japanese term defined as "all people, regardless of race, religion, or culture, harmoniously living and working together into the future."

On Earth Day, the company devotes two hours to learn about the company's environmental programs and local partnerships. Guests at Canon's Earth Day celebration include Volunteers for Wildlife, providing insight into the ecosystem; PSEG Long Island, which will offer information to save energy at home and work; and Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation, whose partnership with Canon enables the public to view ongoing rehabilitation of rescued seals.



Canon U.S.A.'s Chairman and CEO Joe Adachi takes part in Earth Day.

## **Plantings**

At Lessing's Hospitality Group, a Great River-based food service and hospitality group, employees and their families are participating in Island Harvest Food Bank's 1.8-acre "Giving Garden" in Brentwood. It's part of the team's "Do Good" campaign, which on April 1 featured a day of planting seeds for produce that will ultimately support 300,000 Long Islanders who are coping with hunger and food insecurity. The initiative comprises a campaign on Facebook to encourage others to donate to Island Harvest. And on Earth Day, Lessing's will match 100 percent of the donations up to \$5,000. Lessing's also raises money for Autism research and for the social services agency, Family League Service. Other initiatives include beach cleanups, which last year resulted in collecting more than 400 pounds of trash at Gilgo Beach in Babylon.

"Hospitality and giving back go hand in hand," Mark Lessing, Lessing's executive vice president, said in a statement about the initiative. "Whether it be supporting a local cause close to our hearts or to our employees, cleaning the beaches, or helping those in need, it is what gives us a purpose."

Meanwhile, in Melville, Henry Schein is leveraging its long-term partnership with UPS on Earth Day to ensure that shipping operations throughout the day are carbon neutral, according to the company. By purchasing carbon offsets through UPS, the firm plans to contribute to programs that support reforestation, wastewater treatment, and methane and landfill gas destruction.

"Earth Day serves as a reminder of Henry Schein's long-standing commitment to the principles of environmental stewardship, which are critical to fulfilling our responsibilities as a corporate citizen," said Michael Hughes, vice president of Henry Schein's North America and Australia/New Zealand supply chain.

"Minimizing our consumption of resources and reducing negative environmental impacts helps contribute to the sustainability and success of our business, and protects and preserves our environment now and in the future," he added.

Henry Schein partners with the Huntington-Oyster Bay Audubon Society for cleanup events at Target Rock Beach in Huntington. Last year, the team collected 540 pounds of batteries for recycling purposes at its headquarters.

And each year Canon launches its "Clean Earth Crew" for a cleanup or planting, something that usually brings in 150 to 200 employees along with the firm's chairman and CEO, Joe Adachi. The day starts with breakfast and ends with a barbeque.

## **Beyond Earth Day**

Of course, caring for the planet isn't only centered on Earth Day. For example, in 2018, Lessing's went strawless at all 10 of its restaurants to help protect sea life, and switched to biodegradable take-out containers.

And at Henry Schein, two buildings that make up its headquarters have LEED Silver Certification. Canon's Melville headquarters holds LEED Gold Certification. These certifications are given to sites built according to specific sustainability protocols.

At Plainview-based Rechler Equity Partners, the company takes specific measures to ensure its developments meet environmental expectations. For example, the installation of a wastewater treatment that removes nitrogen from the water will benefit two of their projects around the Shinnecock Canal in Hampton Bays. These projects include the Canoe Place Inn and townhomes, called the Hampton Boathouse.

"It's critical that Long Island is kept pristinely and that the quality of life remains good where people want to live," Rechler said.

To these leaders, taking care of the earth is good business.

"Good corporate citizens want to drive a profit and achieve business goals," Sedlacek said. "But at the same time, it's equally important that we are good to the environment – we live and breathe that philosophy."