

Canine companions cut dog-park ribbon

By JOHN CALLEGARI

Legislator John Kennedy's election campaign is going to the dogs—literally.

The Long Island Dog Owners Group (LI-DOG) and Legislator Kennedy hosted the opening day celebration for the new dog park at Blydenburgh County Park on Friday afternoon, September 7.

Over 30 dogs, along with their owners, came out to enjoy the park's opening that was founded through the collaborative efforts of Legislator Kennedy and Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy.

"This is money well-spent," Legislator Kennedy said. "This dog park has opened up [Blydenburgh] County Park for even more healthy recreational activities, and given our four-legged friends a place to run free."

The dog park features over an acre of fenced in property for dogs to run free on while interacting with other dogs, leash-free. The area is divided up into two areas, one for smaller dogs and the other for larger dogs with more ground. Benches and garbage receptacles are also available on the premises for the dogs' owners, while the dogs themselves are provided with water from two fountains.

During the public address portion of the opening ceremony, Legislator Kennedy was joined at the podium by Ginny Munger-Kahn, president of LI-



IT'S A DOG'S LIFE: LI-DOG President Ginny Munger-Kahn (left), LI-DOG member Ed McMullin (center) and County Legislator John Kennedy (right) cut the ribbon to dedicate the new dog park in Blydenburgh State Park in Hauppauge September 7.

DOG.

"A lot of leading communities have recognized the need for dog parks," Ms. Munger-Kahn said. "This dog park is the second one in Suffolk County and we're grateful that County Executive Levy has promised to establish five more in Suffolk County in the near future."

Ms. Munger-Kahn said that it is estimated that half of the American

population owns dogs, which would equate to roughly 600,000 Suffolk County residents.

"It's ironic," Legislator Kennedy said. "You look at New York City and Nassau County which have several dog parks already, but then you come out to Suffolk County with so much more parkland and yet there are no dog parks."

Legislator Kennedy was first

approached about the need for a dog park in the Spring of 2005 by a member of LI-DOG who knew of his history with pets.

"I had an akita named Rudy for many years," Legislator Kennedy said. "He was the only mammal who truly understood me. My wife and I have had many pets over the years, including our four kids, and that's why I was approached for help getting the dog parks. I was unaware of LI-DOG beforehand, but my hat goes off to them for their dedication in having dog parks established here in Suffolk County."

Legislator Kennedy drew up the bill for the dog park legislation in August of 2005 and had it passed in October of that year. He then picked out the field at Blydenburgh that would be used. Construction began in the fall of 2006. By November of last year it was gated and fenced and just needed to be cleared. It was finished in early August and will be open everyday from now on during normal park hours.

"I love the way it turned out," Legislator Kennedy said. "We had a real meeting of the minds here and I think those who built it did a wonderful job. It will serve as a great footprint for future Suffolk County dog parks. All of the hard parts are done now and LI-DOG will have a number of new parks opened soon. This is the kind of thing I'm very pleased to be associated with."