

# New Sunners Playground Opens To Smiling Faces and Remembrances

By Craig McGuire

On an overcast June morning, community activists, residents, and children gathered with city officials to celebrate the life of one man and the legacy he left for the children of Flatlands, the "William H. Sunners Playground."

A resident at 1269 East 49th Street for over 50 years, the late William Sunners was a community leader and role model in Flatlands.

The park now named in his honor is bounded by Kings Highway, Avenue H and East 49th Street, and contains new recreational equipment, benches, swings, fencing, and a water fountain.

"I remember something special about each event I attend," said New York City Parks Commissioner Henry Stern, "and for this one, I will remember the remarkable man honored, and the compactness, yet beauty of the park."

Sunners, a former New York City high school teacher, was known as the "King of 25 words or less" for his unprecedented ability to win such contests. In fact, he authored 100 books on how to win prizes.

He also coined phrases, including "Winners never quit, and quitters never win," and wrote numerous crossword puzzles.

Five decades ago, Sunners lobbied New York

Janice Robertson believed the five-year campaign to name the park for Sunners, which had the blessing of Community Board 18 and former City Councilwoman Susan Alter, was the least she could do to remember Sunners.

"We can live a better life by embracing and helping each other," said Robertson. "If we could do it here on a small scale, imagine what we can accomplish by working together."

## Great Man Is Remembered

Sunners's widow  
Rebecca was on hand to cut

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**Five decades ago, Sunners lobbied New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia for creation of the small Kings Highway park, which eventually opened in 1941. It remained nameless until the dedication for Sunners.**

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the ceremonial ribbon officially opening the park. "He would have been thrilled that this wonderful park was named after him," she said. "He loved children very much."

"He was a wonderful man, always helping people," she remembered.

"We have to do for ourselves when others won't do for us," said Henry. "And in this period of fiscal constraints it is high time we do more for ourselves."

"Maybe, just maybe, the mayor is doing us a favor by budget cutting, because we now have to come together to work," said Henry.

"Through the involvement of William Sunners and Janice Robertson, a lot of racial tensions have broken down," Henry continued. "This work should be an example to emulate."

Pledging his support for the establishment of similar projects, Henry said, "We need more of these parks. This is not only a monument to the man, but what we can accomplish."

"We are strongly encouraged by your comments, Councilman," said Stern, "and hope you carry them into the City Council with you."

In the summer of 1992, Community Board 18 voted unanimously to recommend the renaming of the park.

CB 18 District Manager Dorothy Turano said, "This park is the result of the unwavering commitment of community members."

"This park was always one of our top priorities, and will always remain a permanent fixture in the landscape of this community," said Turano. "We can always be proud of the man



Rebecca Sunners, Commissioner Stern and Marilyn Cranin display park plaque.

