

ISLANDWIDE

INTRODUCING Teddy Roosevelt

Group pushes public education about 26th president's life, legacy

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Theodore Roosevelt's influence on Long Island and the country fills textbooks and museums, but a 2-year-old group of history buffs who say many people still know little about the nation's 26th president plan to make more people aware of his legacy.

The Theodore Roosevelt Legacy Partnership, formed in 2016, last month held its first major fundraiser — to help pay for a conference on Roosevelt next year that will be geared toward the general public rather than academics and experts.

"Theodore Roosevelt was one of the most influential figures not only in American history, but in world history," said former Rep. Steve Israel, a member of the partnership board. "And not enough Long Islanders... realize that. This is a figure who connected Long Island to Washington [D.C.] and the whole world. I'm not sure the majority of Long Islanders understand that legacy."

During the 16 years he represented Long Island in Congress, Israel worked at a desk under a portrait of Roosevelt rowing in Oyster Bay near the former president's home at Sagamore Hill in Cove Neck — an image that Israel said provided inspiration.

The Oct. 24, 2019, conference at Hofstra University — co-sponsored by Hofstra and Sagamore Hill National Historic Site — will charge a nominal fee and cater to students as well as adults, partnership board president William Reed said.

The conference will show how "people are continuing his legacy, right here and right now" through, for example, conservation efforts on Long Island, Reed said.

Since its inception, the part-



William Reed leads a tour of Theodore Roosevelt's home at Sagamore Hill in Oyster Bay.

nership has co-sponsored naturalization ceremonies at Sagamore Hill as well as a photography walk at the historic site where Roosevelt lived from 1885 to his death in 1919.

Reed leads tours at Sagamore Hill, and on a recent morning, Bill Kaufman of Locust Valley was among the participants.

Kaufman, 65, cited the importance of the public knowing more about how their lives are influenced by reforms instituted during Roosevelt's presidency, including the introduction of regulations on and inspections of food and pharmaceuticals, putting 230 million acres of land under federal protection, and antitrust measures.

"There were so many things you take for granted, and you don't know where they came from, their genesis," Kaufman said.

Reed said he sees parallels between Roosevelt's time and today. "When you look at the era he lived in, it's almost similar to the era we're in now. It was the gilded age," with huge differences between the wealth of the rich and everyone else, Reed said.

And, just as today, debates over conservation versus development rage, Reed said. Roosevelt fought efforts to open the Grand Canyon to mining and, unable to persuade Congress to declare it a national monument, just as other presidents have done for other land in recent decades.

"The issues he was facing are still issues we have right now," Reed said. "And maybe looking back at him, we can learn something from him and become better because of it."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT ON LONG ISLAND

■ Roosevelt, who was born in Manhattan, was a New York State assemblyman, New York City police commissioner, New York governor and United States vice president before he became president in 1901 after the assassination of President William McKinley.

■ Sagamore Hill was known as the summer White House when Roosevelt was president, from 1901 to 1909. Foreign dignitaries traveled there to meet with Roosevelt, and talks that helped lead to the end of the Russo-Japanese War — for which Roosevelt won the Nobel Peace Prize — occurred there.

■ Roosevelt lived at Sagamore Hill from 1885 to 1919. He died there on Jan. 6, 1919, at the age of 60.

Around LI

Russell Gardens mayor to resign

Russell Gardens Mayor Steven Kirschner announced Thursday that he plans to vacate his seat in January because he is moving to New York City.

The announcement signals the end of a career in elected office that spans decades.

Kirschner joined the board in 1989 as a trustee and served as deputy mayor. He was mayor from 2003 to 2009, then left the village board until his re-election as mayor in 2013.

"I've given a lot of time to this village, not just living here, but working here," said Kirschner, whose term ends in March.

Deputy Mayor David Miller will serve as interim mayor once Kirschner leaves and added that he intends to run for mayor in March. The mayor's term is for two years.

— KRISTOPHER J. BROOKS

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