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FOREST WALKS
AND OTHER
EVENTS THAT'LL
GET YOU CLOSE
TO NATURE

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SPRING AWAKENINGS

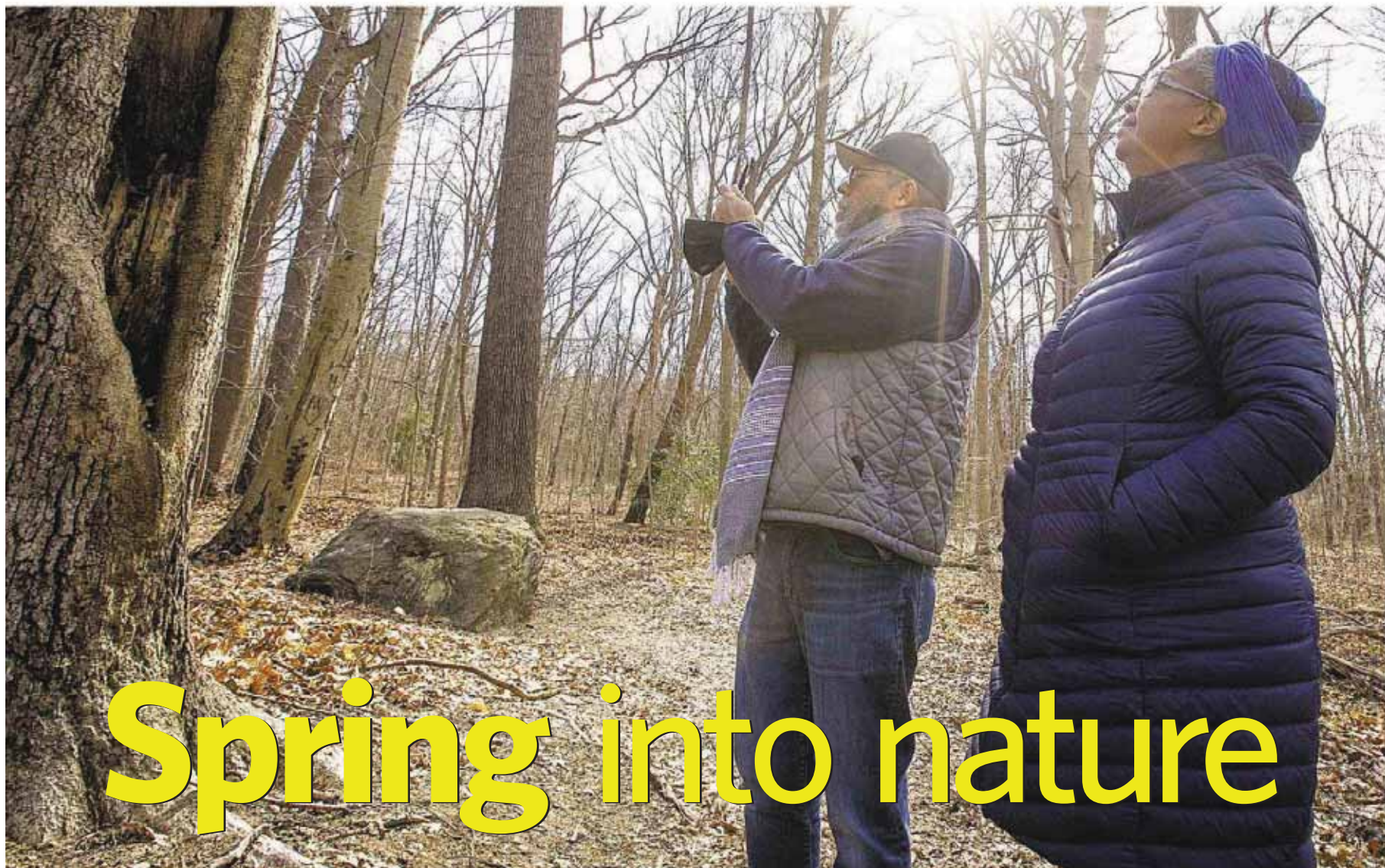


LINDA ROSER



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Spring into nature

Jaime and Bernice Theresa Acevedo, of Queens, stop to photograph an interesting tree during a guided forest bathing walk at the Sands Point Preserve in Sands Point.

Long Island gardens and parks that are ideal for seasonal outdoor walks

BY ARLENE GROSS
 Special to Newsday

A self-described lover of nature, Nancy Lizza says forest bathing walks, a walk in the woods, where you're calmly taking in trees and observing nature, makes her feel happier and healthier.

"They really have this whole way of slowing you down, so that you actually take it in," says Lizza, 64, who works in sales and lives in Centerport. "It's not like you're just going on a hike or you're just going on a walk in the woods. You're really experiencing nature."

Lizza has done a half-dozen walks led by Linda Lombardo, a certified forest therapy guide who'll lead a series of forest bathing walks this

spring at Sands Point Preserve.

Based on the Japanese tradition of shinrin-yoku, a forest bathing walk entails spending time in nature to foster deep connections between walkers and their surroundings.

For Lombardo, the walk is an opportunity to be truly present.

"The walk itself becomes this liminal space, which is the in-between place," says Lombardo, who over the years has led more than 200 walks. "You're being in the present moment. There's no destination. You're just there."

On the way out of the woods, Lombardo explains, there's a process of "incorporation," where anything you might have gleaned on the walk, you can take with you, incorporate it into your day to day.

Lombardo's forest bathing walks

are geared for individuals, couples or friends.

"Everybody gets to participate on their own level," she says.

At the beginning of a walk, Lombardo explains exactly what people can expect over the next two hours.

"I try to dispel any rumors about what they might be going to do," she says. "I did have somebody come with a towel. I guess they thought we were really going bathing, because the beach is there."

FOREST BATHING WALK AT SANDS POINTS PRESERVE

The walk takes people from Castle Gould to the pond, along the trails, sometimes to the beach, taking a tea break along the way. At various points, the group gathers in a circle and people are invited to share their experience, before heading off to another part of the woods.

Though many trees are still bare this time of year, there's still a lot to explore and get curious about, like the textures and colors of bark, unique shapes of

branches, birds' nests amid the branches and the ground and sky through the trees, notes Lombardo.

"Use your senses," she says. "Notice textures, colors, smells and just connect with that tree."

WHEN 10 a.m. to noon April 22 and May 20 (open to families only)

COST \$30; \$5 for children; registration required

INFO 127 Middle Neck Rd., Sands Point; 516-571-7901, sandspointpreserveconservancy.org

SPRING TREE I.D. WALKS AT OLD WESTBURY GARDENS

At the end of April, Carey Russell, a naturalist, photographer, filmmaker and educator, will lead spring tree I.D. walks at Old Westbury Gardens.

"As the gardens begin to wake up in April, the spring tree I.D. walk, which is returning in its second year, is a really nice way to highlight some of the earliest bloomers on our grounds," says Lisa Reichenberger, director of education for Old Westbury Gardens.

Russell will teach the basics of tree