

Monday, August 10, 2026

THE SUFFOLK COUNTY NEWS

Islanders look to beautify their neighborhoods with local campaign



From left, David Wheeler, Robyn Silvestri, Cynthia Seibold, Maureen Early, Timothy McArthur, and Theresa Block took part in the panel discussion hosted by Save the Great South Bay on July 24.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TIMOTHY MCARTHUR



Posted Thursday, August 6, 2026 12:00 am

Isabella Davis, Yennifer Soriano, and Allie Harrison

From its wooded areas to its beautiful seashores, it's safe to say nature on Long Island is wonderfully diverse – and worth protecting. From Memorial Day to Labor Day this year, organizations across Long Island are coming together to create the “Keep Long Island Beautiful” campaign.

Save the Great South Bay, Balloon Mission, Reworld Waste Management, and Long Island South Shore Waterkeepers are the sponsors, and Beautify L.I. hosts the campaign's website.

Beautify L.I. is a nonprofit organization founded by Timothy McArthur, who grew up in Islip. After he moved away, he said, he noticed how clean other areas were compared to his hometown. He established Beautify L.I. in 2022 to help rectify the problem.

“I started to think I could help raise awareness,” he said.

Beautify L.I. interviewed people and organizations, and while it was forming, the “Keep Long Island Beautiful” campaign was beginning to take shape as well.

This led McArthur to connect with the executive directors of Save The Great South Bay, Balloon Mission, and Reworld Waste Management.

When asked what the overall goal of Beautify L.I. was, he spoke about a new social aspect for Long Island. “Its goal is to create social transformation in a way that will help us keep Long Island beautiful,” he said.

Beautify L.I. displays campaign events on its website, including volunteer opportunities for residents of various Long Island communities.

McArthur said that he created this website so people can learn how to get involved in volunteer work. “We want to drive people there,” he said, offering examples such as beach cleanups, Creek Defender events, or balloon-recycling campaigns.

Save the Great South Bay, another nonprofit group, is dedicated to reviving Long Island’s Great South Bay. The organization hosted a panel discussion in Oakdale on July 24, where it and several other groups shared ideas to protect the environment.

Cynthia Seibold, founder and executive director of Balloon Mission, brought up the idea of the “Keep Long Island Beautiful” campaign to Robyn Silvestri, the executive director of Save the Great South Bay. At the panel event, organizers tallied how many cleanups had been done for “Keep America Beautiful.” Keep America Beautiful itself is a national nonprofit. Working with volunteers, agencies, and corporate and local partners, the group’s goal is to reduce litter and increase recycling, according to its website.

Balloon Mission is an organization focused on one aspect of litter on Long Island and throughout the country. Seibold, a resident of North Merrick, said more than one million balloons are intentionally released each year. Additionally, balloons typically have warning labels for being choking hazards for young children. “If they’re a choking hazard for children, they’re a choking hazard for animals,” Seibold said.

To combat the harm of balloons in the environment, Balloon Mission collects balloons after events in a “pop and drop” system. The balloons from Long Island go to Reworld Waste Management, where they can be used to generate energy. In other parts of the country, Balloon Mission has partnered with TerraCycle, a company that recycles the used balloons.

Isabella Davis, Sacred Heart Academy, Yennifer Soriano, Hempstead High School, and Allie Harrison, Ward Melville High School, are part of Stony Brook University’s Robert W. Greene Summer Institute for high school journalists. The Institute has been training the next generation of professional journalists since 2009.

--

Maggie Smith, Account Executive
ZE Creative

