

## LIFE WITH LITTLE ONES

## SHORE FAMILY FUN

## A salute to summer in Tappen Park

Dozens gather to hear poem called 'The Emperor of Ice Cream,' then parade and read their own works and rhymes

**STAPLETON** — Wallace Stevens' 1922 poem, "The Emperor of Ice Cream," was reprised by Staten Island OutLOUD, as a performance parade, Saturday at Tappen Park in Stapleton.

Over 150 participants of every age (from babies to grandmas and grandpas) came out to celebrate the onset of summer at this most colorful and fun-filled event.

Beth Gorrie, the volunteer executive director of Staten Island OutLOUD, a community dialogue and performance project, was proud of the huge turnout and excited to see her idea become a reality.

"For some time now, I've wanted to do something with this poem, but couldn't put my finger on a good way to present it. Then, while having coffee with two of our most enthusiastic volunteers, Victoria Hallerman and Doris Nielsen, the idea clicked! 'Let's do this as a NOLA-style jazz parade!' And from that idea, our plan just fell into place.

"We hit upon a way to make it work for a family-friendly event that our diverse audience could enjoy from several different viewpoints. Plus, doesn't 'The Emperor of Ice Cream' just sing out "SUMMER!" to you?" said Ms. Gorrie.

The jazz poetry parade,

complete with a New Orleans-style procession that helped bring the poem to life, was staged in the beautifully restored Tappen Park, and as a way to kick off the summer season.

"It really does not get enough community use, and this park was a perfect place to highlight this very complicated 20th century poem, because Tappen Park has a very 19th century, town square feel to it," continued Ms. Gorrie.



SHERRINA NAVANI

She said several research studies show that "exposing our children to the gift of poetry — and to all types of good literature — strengthens their writing and critical reading skills. It enhances their ability to think "outside the box," to consider ideas in the broadest possible way, and to apply ideas to a variety of context. That improves their problem-solving abilities, builds leadership skills, and helps equip them for a life of active and engaged citizenship," she said.

To date, Staten Island OutLOUD has brought together about 17,000 participants with nearly 500 free events (in 20 languages) in community settings around Staten Island. It tries to promote cross-cultural understanding by presenting global literature that participants read aloud with one another, while listening to each other's viewpoints.

Some events are large, staged spoken-word performances, but most gath-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SARAH YUSTER

The Imperial Ice Cream Family attended the Emperor of Ice Cream Jazz-Poetry Parade in Tappen Park, Stapleton. They are Empress Michele Evans-Arrindell, right; her husband, the Emperor Daryll Arrindell and their son, the Crown Prince Alexander Arrindell. The little girl is unidentified.

erings are intimate participatory readings. Staten Island OutLOUD also offers free creative writing workshops for young Staten Islanders (16 and younger) where youth can explore their writing talents, as well as enjoy opportunities for performing their work in front of friendly

audiences.

To learn more visit [www.statenislandoutloud.org](http://www.statenislandoutloud.org) or call 718-907-0709.

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