

# A healing walk

*Walking through a labyrinth can heal both mind and spirit*



**Marianne Fulfaro feels the power of the Peace Labyrinth she helped design and fund for Sayville's Common Ground in Rotary Park.**

SCN/Finnegan

**By LIZ FINNEGAN**

**SAYVILLE** — At the Common Ground—the verdant oasis between Gillette and Candee Avenues in Rotary Park—there is a labyrinth sculpture on the ground that beckons to all who pass through. The Peace Labyrinth is said to bring tranquility and perhaps even mystical insight to those who venture along its path.

Marianne Fulfaro pulls out weeds while picking up cigarette butts and other debris on the labyrinth, and shakes her head. “If everyone would just pick up three weeds we can keep it clean,” she said.

The sculpture and the park itself have special significance to the lifelong Sayville resident who passes it nearly every day.

It wasn't always a pleasant site, though.

“The kids used to come here to drink,” she said, while explaining how the small patch of town-owned parkland was long neglected and abused. “Now the kids respect the park and the labyrinth, too,” she added. “It exudes peace.”

The park's renaissance began after 9-11 as a way to honor those lost in the terrorist attacks. After garnering the support of the community and local elected officials, work on it began. A memorial rock was placed near the entrance to the park and stone pavers on the walkway were added, some of which are engraved with the

names of 9-11 victims.

“Everything here is donated,” Fulfaro said, including the gazebo at its center, she added, where concerts are held during the summer months.

In fact, she funded the labyrinth and helped to design it as well by laying out the stones in a welcoming, open-arm pattern before it could be built by Bayport landscape designer, Tom Malone.

The labyrinth was a gift to the community that evolved after Fulfaro survived a serious illness. “[An illness] sets you on a different path,” she said. “You have to do something with that second chance.”

She began taking Reiki (healing touch) classes and now instructs others in the art, living her life by the creed “do as much good as you can,” she noted.

The Common Ground labyrinth is one of approximately 15 others on Long Island, including one at a monastery in Mt Sinai, at St. John's Episcopal Church in Oakdale, and St. Ann's in Sayville.

The origin of the sculpture dates back roughly 3,000 years, and has since appeared in nearly every country and culture. It could be made from pavers, wood chips and even seashells. However, the one unifying factor is that all are said to exude a metaphysical-like energy.

The mysterious, maze-like twists and turns, with only one way in and out, takes the traveler in surprising directions. “Just like life,” Fulfaro said.

It takes approximately 15-20 minutes to complete the walk, but people usually do it at their pace. Fulfaro said that nearly all come through it with a more positive outlook on life.

“If you have a problem,” she noted, “present it to the labyrinth. There's no decision, just follow the path. Your left and right brain begin to work together. Somewhere around the middle that gut feeling comes out. Somewhere at the end, the answer comes,” she added.

Fulfaro takes pride in the Common Ground and the amazing, healing walk, which she hopes more people will begin to use. While using it though, the retired educator hopes they remember one of life's more important lessons.

“Life sends you in a direction,” she said, “and you have to follow through with it.”

Group walks on the Peace Labyrinth will take place under a full moon this summer, weather permitting. They are planned for Friday, June 25; Monday, July 26; and Tuesday, August 24. For more information on Common Ground events, log onto the Web site [www.thecommonground.com](http://www.thecommonground.com). ■