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FEATURED

## 'Brooklyn kid' revives old town spirit

By Andrew Crowley | [acrowley@reporter-times.com](mailto:acrowley@reporter-times.com) Oct 11, 2018

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Attendees of the first Brooklyn Reunion, held in June 2016 posed for a group photo. The third annual reunion will be held this Saturday.

### **BROOKLYN**

Candice Foxworthy-Smiths never expected her Brooklyn Reunion group to take off the way it did.

What started off as a relatively small group of friends — 74 in Foxworthy-Smiths' social circle — has grown to include 496 people. The ages of the group range from young to old, including one member of the reunion group who is turning 93 in several weeks.

"It's a plethora of Brooklyn history, pictures, newspaper articles, Brooklyn school pics (and) pictures that date back from decades ago," Foxworthy-Smiths said. "I'm so very, very proud of what we have become."

The group was born out of tragedy. Two of Foxworthy-Smits' close friends died unexpectedly within months of each other. She started the group as a way for people from Brooklyn to reach out to one another and reconnect. Initially, it was Foxworthy-Smits' group of friends and their younger and older siblings.

The first year of the group's existence, they held a reunion in June. But the hot, humid weather wasn't ideal for the reunion as many members of the group are elderly, so they decided to hold the event a little earlier the next year to avoid the heat.

"It was even hotter, so we didn't have as many come that year, and so we thought, 'You know, October is going to be perfect,'" Foxworthy-Smits said. "So this year we're having it in October, and we have a lot of things going on this year that I'm really excited about."

For this year's reunion, the group will be collection donations for the Brooklyn Food Bank.

"Our hometown food bank needs a lot of help. And every year, we try to focus on that food bank with donations," Foxworthy-Smits "So this year, we decided, let's make a couple of contests out of it. So we have like a free-throw contest, a cornhole contest."

There is an entry fee for those contests and that money will go to the Brooklyn Food Bank. To incentivize people to take part in the contests, Foxworthy-Smits has reached out to friends and acquaintances to get prizes, including a Hollywood actor.

Josh Taylor, who was on "Beverly Hills 90210" and is now on "Days of Our Lives," approached the soap opera's publicity department about helping out his friend. They responded by sending Foxworthy-Smits three scripts autographed by the entire cast, as well as pictures and gift bags.

"My friends at the Pacers were so taken by this story that they sent an autographed basketball and autographed hats gift bags," Foxworthy-Smits said.

Kristi Lee, another friend of Foxworthy-Smits, will provide items autographed by members of the Bob & Tom Show. Additionally Sallie Mae, the employer of Foxworthy-Smits, and Centerbrook Drive-In are also donating to the cause.

"For whatever reason, our story really touched the hearts of people," Foxworthy-Smits said.

Along with the contests, there will be a DJ, crafts, activities for children and relay races. One of the relay races for the kids will have them wearing the size 18 to 20 shoes that belonged to Foxworthy-Smits' ex-husband.

The group will also be burying a time capsule that will be filled with a variety of photos, newspaper articles and other mementos of the past.

Foxworthy-Smits said the experience of running the group and holding the reunions has been humbling.

"I just wanted all of us to remember what we came from. I wanted to us to remember what it meant to grow up being a Brooklyn kid. And I just wanted for all of us to remember that. It has become something so much more than any of us ever knew," Foxworthy-Smits said. "We didn't know who was going to care for the history of our town. We had forgotten stories. We had forgotten so much, what it meant to be a Brooklyn kid."

"It was a very big reminder to us and we talk about it all the time that we got so much from being a Brooklyn kid. Brooklyn taught us so much about life, the true meaning of love and friendship, overcoming adversity, strength and courage, hard work."

She grew up an only child, but never felt that way because of all the friends she had — people who, though they weren't related by blood, felt like her brothers and sisters.

Brooklyn has also become a second home for her children; they regularly visited their mother's hometown to see their maternal grandmother and trick-or-treated there with their friends.

Foxworthy-Smiths said that the town of Brooklyn has given so much to them, they view their reunion group as a way of giving back. The first year of the reunion, they donated an acrylic sign to Brooklyn Kids Park. The goal for this year is to fill up the shelter house at the park with food and other donations for the Brooklyn Food Bank.

"We're bound and determined that our group is going to fill up that shelter house," Foxworthy-Smiths said.

The Brooklyn Reunion will take place from noon to 6 p.m. on Saturday at Brooklyn Kids Park.

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