

Supporters dance away Election Day jitters

By GIA MILLER

At 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Election Day, more than 100 Hillary Clinton supporters gathered at Chappaqua station to honor their hometown candidate. Some dined at the train station, while others took pictures with "Flat Hillary," a life-size cardboard cutout.

Suddenly, a group of approximately 50 women and children, all in pantsuits, began to come together and dance to Justin Timberlake's summer hit "Can't Stop the Feeling." It quickly became clear to onlookers that they were witnessing a flash mob in support of the presidential candidate who hails from northern Westchester.

Spectators took out their mobile phones to record the performance, capturing the dancers of all ages — young children to seniors — shimmy and twirl around the grass. Many in the audience clapped, moved to the beat and sang along.

Many flash mobs are composed of professional dancers, but this performance was a true community effort, led by Katonah resident Maria Colaco. A former professional dancer who owned a modern dance company in Manhattan for 11 years, Ms. Colaco has created dance performances for stage and street. Ms. Colaco also honed her skills as an event organizer and coordinated rehearsals for people with varying levels of dance experience. For this event, she organized, choreographed and led the entire initiative in just one week.

"When I learned that an event was scheduled to happen in Chappaqua on Election Day and they hoped to create a flash mob, I reached out to Dawn Evans Greenberg, the event's creator," Ms. Colaco remembered. "I asked her who was doing the flash mob and she said 'You are.' I started a Facebook group called B.Y.O.P.S., which stands for Bring Your Own Pantsuit, and everything came together organically."

Ms. Greenberg, a Chappaqua resident and the founder of the Facebook group Chappaqua Friends of Hill and Tim, wanted to make sure that Election



JOSEPH ZUCKER PHOTO

Flash mob dancers gather for a final rehearsal before their Tuesday performance.

Day would be remembered in Ms. Clinton's town. Ms. Greenberg played a significant role in the election. Her Facebook group organized numerous "Get Out the Vote" initiatives and ran Westchester's satellite offices during the primaries.

"I was afraid Election Day would come and go without being marked by something official," said Ms. Greenberg. "We began to put together an event at Chappaqua Station and we were inspired by the pantsuit flash mob in Union Square. Our campaign contact encouraged us to create our own, and Maria said she could do it. We knew she had plenty of experience and were confident that she could pull it off in a short amount of time."

Hoping to get at least 10 people interested, Ms. Colaco spread the word among her friends and Hillary-based Facebook groups. She then began looking for a rehearsal space. Although local businesses offered their spaces, they all required a rental fee, according

to Ms. Colaco. When Laura Schaeffer of Chappaqua's Scattered Books offered her Literary Lounge free of charge, Ms. Colaco accepted.

By Tuesday, Election Day, Ms. Colaco had held two rehearsals, teaching more than 60 people the routine's dance moves. Videos were posted to the Facebook group for those who could not make it to rehearsals.

In addition to bringing several local communities together, Ms. Colaco provided numerous people with an outlet for their election anxiety and a way to show their support for a woman they believed would become the first female president of the United States.

"I've been a Hillary supporter for a long time, actually since Bill Clinton was president," said Golden's Bridge resident and former Broadway dancer Anne-Marie Gerard Galler, one of the dancers. She recalled how the then-senator's office helped resolve an insurance company issue she was having involving a medical bill payment, and "I've been with her ever since."

By Election Day, more than 130 people, mostly from the towns of Chappaqua, Bedford and Mount Kisco, had joined Ms. Colaco's Facebook group, expressing excitement over the upcoming performance.

"Movement and dance are very important," explained Ms. Colaco. "It's our social statement and serves as a way to contribute. And, it's a gift to have this amazing release and dance in pantsuits!"

The video of the performance went viral, and even appeared in Election Day coverage on NBC.

"It was a beautiful day, and a great way to spend time with my community," Katonah resident Sara Weale recalled. "I grew up in Chappaqua so it was very special for me to be there today. My great, great grandmother was a suffragette so I wore her shoe buckle, which I turned into a pin. My grandmother not only voted with me today, but she also danced with me."

"The outcome was beyond anything we expected," said Ms. Colaco. "The energy was really amazing, and people were releasing all of their election anxiety but also celebrating our hometown girl, Hillary Clinton."