

the

Grapevine



September 11, 2021
Special Edition



LIFE ENRICHMENT THROUGH RECREATION AND PARKS

WESTCHESTER RECREATION
AND PARK SOCIETY, INC.

P.O. Box 152 • Valhalla, New York 10595

WRAPS Presidents Message—by Dave Goldberg

It is hard to believe it has been 20 years since America was attacked on September 11th. Most of us know exactly where we were when the planes hit, and even today, when the sky is that same clear blue, I still feel a foreboding as it reminds me of the horrors of that day.



I am amazed at how many of our municipal partners that have memorials to honor those who lost their lives on that tragic day. The memorials show just how many communities were impacted by the loss of so many vibrant lives. This edition of the Grapevine is dedicated to those who lost their lives, and those who lost loved ones but still kept the strength and resolve to forge ahead every day. Many of the 9/11 victims had children who are now contributing members of society. May we celebrate them and their achievements as a testament to the strength of our Nation.

God Bless.

David Goldberg,
WRAPS President

WRAPS Remembers September 11, 2001 20 Years Later By Matt Arone

This September will be the 20th anniversary of the deadliest terrorist attacks on US soil in the country's history. On September 11, 2001, an Islamic extremist group called al-Qaeda hijacked airplanes and targeted Washington D.C. and New York City. Over 2,980 people were killed that day between the devastation at the Pentagon, Pennsylvania and Manhattan. That day obviously has affected many families, changed the way we all live our lives and will always be remembered by those of us who were alive during that time.

For this edition of The Grapevine, we thought we'd look back 20 years and see how some of our current recreation professionals recall that tragic day. It will be interesting to see where some of our members were, what they were doing and what memories linger. My memories take me back to when I was working for the Village of Irvington and arriving to work after listening to the car radio and hearing a plane had hit one of the towers at the World Trade Center. I turned on Fox News television and watched the second tower struck by a plane live. I immediately drove down to Scenic Hudson Park where some people had started to gather and we could actually see the towers bellowing smoke over the Hudson River. It looked like two smokestacks. I'll never forget it when the first tower collapsed and then our view on that clear day was shielded due to all the gray. Another very sad note from that moment is that one of the girls who I remember was watching from that park that day would lose her father on the plane that would strike the Pentagon at 9:37am.

City of Rye Recreation Superintendent Sally Rogol was "42 years young" and was registering residents for the Halloween Window Painting event. She was a Rec Supervisor back then when her boss came in and told everybody to turn on the television to see the horrible news. Sally was in disbelief and shock. She wondered about if she knew anybody in the towers or about all the folks that might have missed the train or didn't go into work that day. "I remember 9/11 vividly as we all sat in the office in disbelief watching probably the first of the 24-hour broadcasts of the event. Everything seemed to go still...phones at work didn't ring. Those who walked into the building to register froze in their tracks and immediately stood in silence watching with us..."

Mt. Pleasant Recreation Supervisor Liz Linsalato was just a freshman in high school back then. She remembers being sad, confused and feeling unsafe. "We had just started first period when we heard the assistant principal run down the hall saying, 'A plane just hit one of the towers of the World Trade Center.' A few minutes later, we heard her say, 'A second plane just hit the second tower of the World Trade Center.' At the time, I didn't really understand what that meant until one of the teachers said 'terrorist attack.' Then I understood." Liz has strong feeling to this day. "When I see news reports and videos from that day, I still feel the raw emotion." There are two phrases that really stand out to Liz still. "United We Stand" and "Never Forget."

Pleasantville Recreation Superintendent Mike Newman was a 17-year-old high school Junior at Somers. “The school PA come on and said ‘A plane just hit The World Trade Center.’ That was it. In my head, I was like ‘ok, some small plane hit the building.’ Boy, was I wrong. I remember friends calling parents that worked in the city to see if they were ok. I felt safe where I was, but I do remember a fear of ‘what’s next and where?’ The news did not help with that fear.” Mike added he has some memories of the days after as well. “As a die-hard baseball and New York Mets fan, I remember that first game back at Shea Stadium with Mike Piazza hitting a home run that lifted a city.” Mike remember the World Series that year too. “president Bush throwing out the first pitch at Yankee Stadium in Game 3. Two incredible moments.”

Eastchester Recreation Leader Jamie Corradina was just a Kindergarten kid in Dobbs Ferry at the time, but she still has some memories from that day and time. “I remember being outside on the playground when the news hit and everyone being brought back into our classrooms early. We were so young, we didn’t know what happened, but teachers and staff seemed frantic and worried. Because of our age, teachers didn’t talk to us about what was going on, but it felt like something was wrong. I wasn’t old enough to understand much about what happened that day, but I remember being confused. I remember everyone feeling a sense of sadness, but none of the kids understanding why.” Jamie has some pride in her community since that day. “One thing I have felt since that day is a sense of pride in being a New Yorker. I felt like everyone became neighbors and friends overnight. The community became closer. Somehow, the immense tragedy lead to the community growing together.”

White Plains Commissioner Wayne Bass has an emotional story from that day he especially wanted to share.

“Many of you may know my brother, Brent. He is a former Deputy Commissioner of Recreation and Parks in Greenburgh and Mt. Vernon. On Saturday, September 9, 2001, he married his sweetheart Sylvia in a fabulous wedding at the Inner Harbor in Baltimore, Maryland and for all we knew, he was on his way to Aruba for his honeymoon on Sunday morning. In my family, before my Mom Edna (who also worked for Greenburgh Recreation) passed away, it was common for our family and friends to meet at her house every Sunday for dinner, tell old stories, laugh and just have a general good time. Weren’t we all surprised when Brent showed up that evening! We joked, ‘Where’s Sylvia? Did y’all get divorced already? What did you do to her? How come you are not in Aruba?’ Brent explained that he had arrived at the airport and couldn’t find his passport and had missed his flight. He re-booked for Monday morning; a 7am flight. ‘Wayne can you give us a ride to the airport?’ So 3:30am I’m off to pick Brent and Sylvia up to get them to the airport by 5am. At the time, I lived in Co-Op City in the Bronx with my roommate and good friend Steve. I drop Brent and Sylvia off at the airport and headed home to catch some sleep before I had to go to work in Greenburgh at 11am.

I was knocked out in a deep slumber when the first tower was hit. Steve knocks on my door and says the World Trade Center is on fire. I grumbled, ‘I’m sleeping’ and pulled the cover over my head. Ten minutes later, ‘Yo Fish, a plane crashed into the World Trade Center!’ Rubbing my eyes, I flick on CNN and wonder what the heck is going on. I sit up straight now. Reports are of people jumping out of windows and then the building collapses!

CNN reports other planes in Pennsylvania and DC have been hijacked! All of a sudden, it clicks in.....’Oh my God! Brent and Sylvia!’ I told Steve that I just came from the airport I dropped Brent and Sylvia off this morning. I start praying, ‘Dear Lord....’ My mind is racing, and I ask myself should I call my mother. What should I do? This can’t be happening? This can’t be happening....where’s your faith? Don’t panic....there is nothing you can do, whatever is done is done, you are not in control. *(Continued on next page)*

I try to call my mom, but I can't get through. I rush to Elmsford to tell Mom the story and now she is worried as we watch it all on CNN. At 11am, I find my way to work and share the story with my guys Joe Lucasey and Gerry Byrne, and we catch up on the news at Veteran Park in Greenburgh. The plane was out of Boston. Thank God. It was now clear that the other planes weren't from New York airports. I'm relieved. Brent is probably in Aruba drinking Pina Colada's wondering what the fuss is all about. Later that evening, Brent finally gets through to my Mom at around 6pm. He was in the air at the time of the attack and his plane was brought down as a precautionary measure in San Juan, Puerto Rico where he spent several days before being allowed to continue on to Aruba. All praises to God, I am so thankful that Brent and Sylvia are okay. My deepest condolences and sympathies will always be with those families who tragically lost their loved ones in this tragedy. I thank God that I have my brother, his wife and their children in my life."

For those of us that were already working in the field, our respective communities were affected, especially if resident lives were lost. Sally Rogol remembers what Rye did. "A gazebo was placed near city hall remembering the 15 (Rye) residents lost. A plaque was placed on the wall of the fire house. Of those 15, I had a connection to at least five. I knew a few other residents who were directly impacted as they had adult children who lived in that area of New York City and feared for their lives in the interim as they could not get hold of them." The community involvement for Sally still continues today. "Each year on 9/11, we still gather at the fire house for a reading of the names. At the gazebo, families gather in memory of those who perished. I always choose to work the 9/11 ceremony. As an adult, this is the most impactful event in history that I lived through. It, by far, was the worst tragedy of my adult life."

I myself remember the beautiful memorial that was placed at Scenic Hudson Park in Irvington. It is a small replica of the Twin Towers made of marble and it sits at the south end of the park where we all stood that day watching in disbelief. Less than a year later, I had moved onto the Village of Ardsley to head-up their recreation department and we had a ceremony and a ribbon cutting at the new Firefighters Park which is dedicated to the memory of William Pohlman who was a resident and volunteer firefighter who died at his office at the World Trade Center on 9/11.

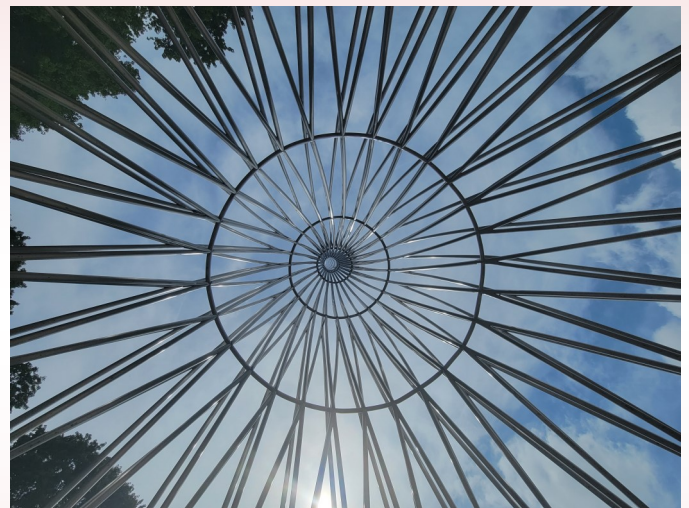
As you can see, the memories and emotions are still evident even two decades after that fateful September date. All of us have just had to endure another devastating time as we battled through a global pandemic in 2020. As difficult and tragic as times can be, it is important that we feel a sense of community because that unites us. Recreation is a vital part of community whether it's senior citizen activities, after school programming for kids or a special place in a local park where people can go to gather. So just like we all just did during the past year, please continue to work hard to maintain a sense of community because it can provide us all with a feeling of safety and security.

NEVER FORGET

Eastchesters 9/11 Memorial



Westchester County 9/11 Memorial



The Rising, a memorial by architect Frederick Schwartz, sits in Kensico Dam Park in Valhalla, N.Y., against the backdrop of the Kensico Dam. The memorial honors the men and women from Westchester County who were victims of the 9/11 attacks.

Forming an unbroken circle, the 123 individual strands, one for each victim, emerge from a circular footprint. "The Rising" includes a quote about each person, engraved along the outside of the memorial's circular base, as chosen by their families.

A new memorial section is being added this year (2021) which will be dedicated to those first responders who lost their lives from 9/11 related illnesses.

Peekskill 9/11 Memorial

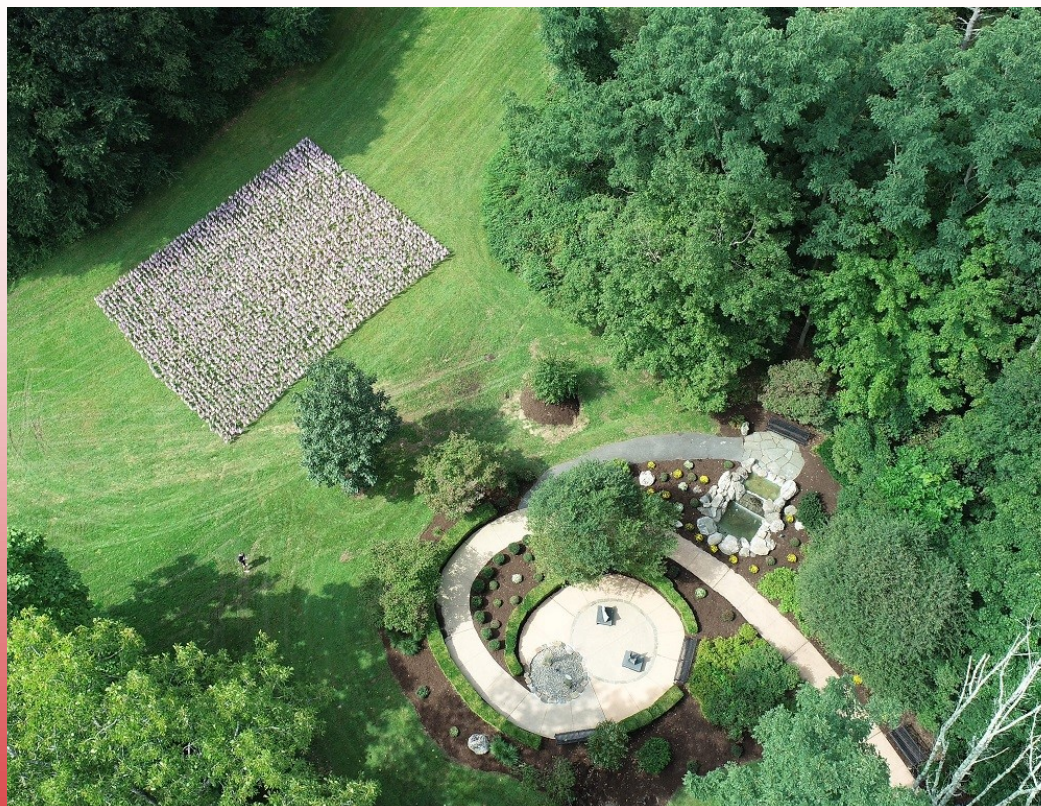


Photos are of the 9/11 Memorial at the Riverfront Green in Peekskill. As you will see in the photos, it is in honor of 2 Peekskill Residents. First is Sam Oitice, a Peekskill resident who was a NYFD fireman and died at the Trade Center. The 2nd is Charlie Wassil, a Peekskill Police Officer who responded to the Trade Towers in the aftermath and developed a lung condition and past away. We also have a piece of the Trade Tower on site as well. The Fire Dept. holds a ceremony each year to honor those who gave all. The bell is from a 1918 fire in Peekskill that claimed the lives of seven fireman.

New Castle 9/11 Memorial



Local Boy Scout troops put out 2,977 flags (below) representing all of those who were lost that day. The memorial includes a waterfall, 2 pieces of steel from the World Trade Centers and 2 lighted bubbling towers.



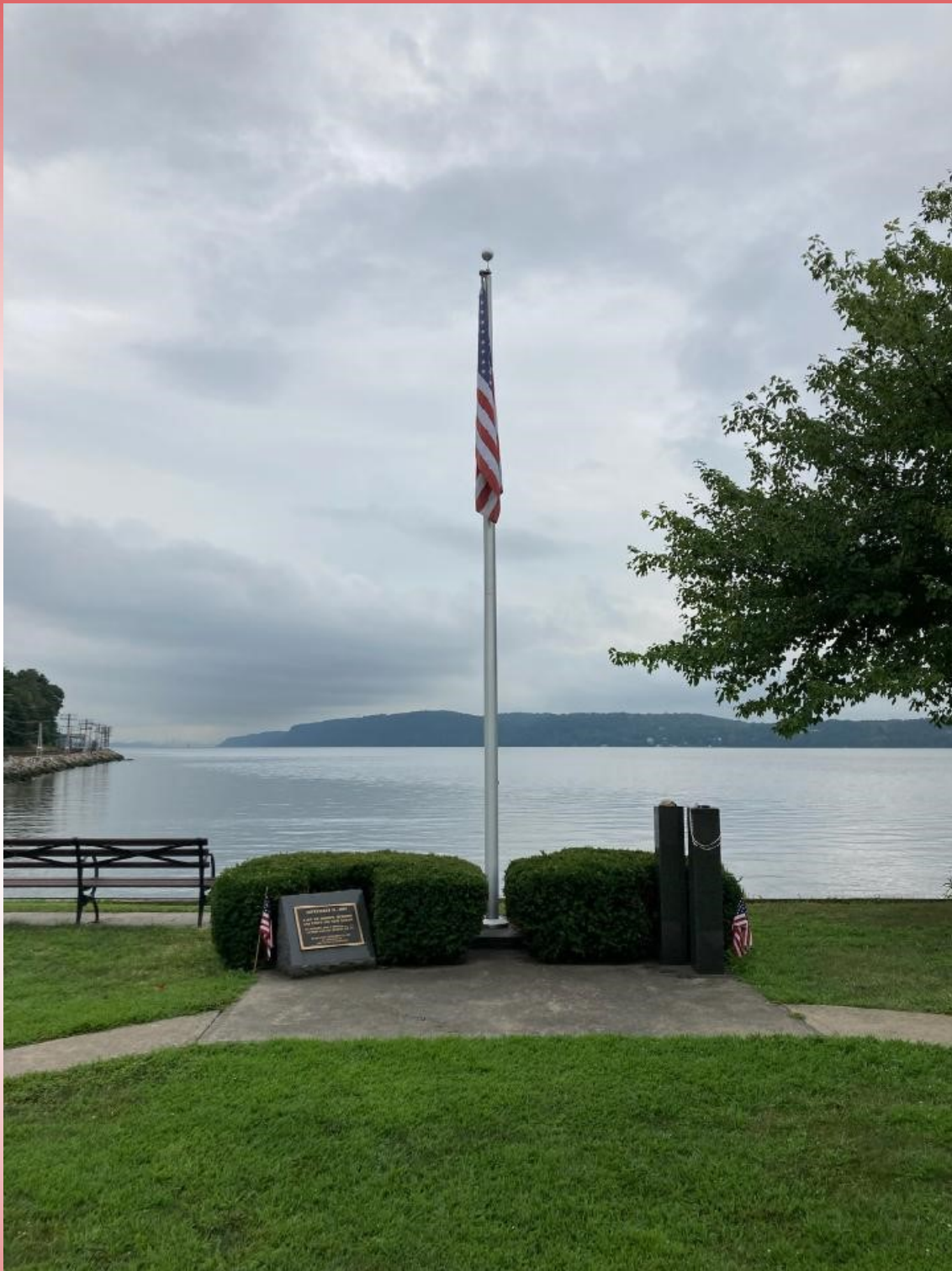
White Plains 9/11 Memorial



White Plains Memorial located at Liberty Park



Irvington 9/11 Memorial



Monument at Scenic Hudson Park

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More listed at wrapsny.com



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Email Kyle Thornton at kthornton@mountkisco.ny.gov



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Copy and paste the above address for our WRAPS Facebook Page! Be sure to like the page to keep up to date on what's happening within WRAPS.

CALL FOR GRAPEVINE ARTICLES!

The next issue of the Grapevine is scheduled to be posted online in November 2021!

Anyone interested in submitting materials must do so by **Wednesday, November 3rd 2021**

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