

## Dragon, Karen E. (CDC/NIOSH/EID)

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**From:** Middendorf, Paul (CDC/NIOSH/OD)  
**Sent:** Monday, November 21, 2011 10:45 AM  
**To:** Dragon, Karen E. (CDC/NIOSH/EID)  
**Subject:** submission for Docket #248



Romaka-STAC  
Presentation PBA...

Karen  
This was submitted to me at the meeting on Nov 9.

Also, I am sending a submission from Lee Clarke, DC37, AFSCME, AFL-CIO by pouch mail. It includes a DVD which was played at the meeting.

*Paul*

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On behalf the WTC first responders I would like to thank the members of the WTC Health Program Scientific/Technical Advisory Committee for the opportunity to address the Committee. We are very interested in how the Committee responds to the recent request by the Congressional representatives to add cancer as a WTC-related health condition. We understand the Committee will be reviewing the certain scientific and medical evidence and plan to submit evidence supporting the inclusion of cancers over the next few months.

As an initial matter, we would like to express our concerns about the nature and extent of the data gathering as it relates to police officers having cancer. It has been 7 years since the data information gathering was funded by the federal government and our data set with respect to cancers is far from accurate or complete. We believe that it should be a priority to direct resources to the task of ensuring our cancer information is complete and accurate. Next, with respect to the standard used to determine whether cancers should be covered, we would like to emphasize Congress' intent in mandating a periodic review process to include cancer and other disease related to WTC exposures. The law requires the Program Administrator to conduct a review of available scientific and medical evidence related to WTC exposure to determine if, based on such evidence, other illnesses and particularly cancer should be included as a recognized WTC-related health condition. The mandate of the law to include periodic reviews of a link between cancer and exposure at the WTC sites suggests that there was reason to believe that exposure to the toxins at the WTC sites may lead to an increase in cancer rates. Indeed, in petitioning Congress to pass the legislation many referred to cancers being suffered by responders as the justification for passing the bill. While some in the scientific community have argued that, to scientifically prove causation as a result of exposure to toxins would require epidemiological studies of 20 to 30 years, we believe the language of Zadroga Law does not require such high burdens of proof. According to the language of the statute, the Program Administrator was required to review the scientific data regarding cancers no later than 180 days after the enactment of the legislation. This language speaks directly to the intent of Congress to have the basis for inclusion be on biological plausibility of a casual connection rather than on an exhaustive scientific process which would be completed when few if any responders would be alive to avail themselves of the treatment component of the law.

Furthermore, the New York State Legislature and Governor approved a presumptive accident disability benefit for all New York State and City workers who were exposed at the WTC sites. That Presumption already includes cancers.

Obtaining scientific proof for the inclusion of cancer and new onset diseases has been challenging to say the least due in part to a lack of oversight and accountability for those charged with conducting such studies. For some time, the Program did not accept reports of cancer. Even now, cancer is not a covered illness which is itself a deterrent to report information about cancers. Many responders with cancer have informed us that they do not wish to waste precious time participating in a monitoring and treatment program that does not treat their disease. They spend enough time in medical offices. The PBA has worked with Mt. Sinai to identify members who have been diagnosed with cancer to ensure the accuracy of their reporting. However, to our knowledge Mount Sinai has not contacted the NYPD to gain access to the NYPD database, an action that would ensure a greater level of accuracy. In addition we understand 49 deceased officers may not be included, a decision that will skew results. Mount Sinai has stated that their cancer study will be completed by the end of this year but we expect the study will represent an under report for several reasons, and therefore may reach inaccurate or misinformed conclusions.

In summary, we ask that adequate resources be dedicated to ensure the completeness and accuracy of the cancer data and ask that the work be completed expeditiously. Second, we ask that the threshold for cancer be set at a level that will err in favor of coverage.



Public Employee

# PRESS

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## Everyday heroes at GROUND ZERO



*Everyone has come together, city workers and a lot of concerned volunteers.*

Cynthia Mendez,  
Local 376  
Highway Repairer



*My truck was covered in debris. It was bananas — unbelievable.*

Farris Coley Sr.,  
Local 983  
Tow Truck Operator



*This was the worst horror I have ever seen in my life. That's combat at ground zero. Armageddon.*

Ray Simons, Local 2507  
Emergency Medical Technician (right)  
with EMT John Healy (left)



**DC 37 building survives  
Trade Center attack,  
but is inaccessible;  
most union services  
continue at other sites**

— Pgs. 6 and 7

**Health Plan Reopener Section — Pgs. 1A-8A**



# Everyday heroes

By DIANE S. WILLIAMS, GREGORY N. HEIRES  
and ALFREDO ALVARADO

**W**ith thousands still missing as terrorists erased the Twin Towers from the skyline, Sept. 11 will long be remembered as New York City's darkest day. But in the mammoth rescue and recovery drive, public employees provided a beacon of light with incredible bravery and round-the-clock work.

Together with Police and Firefighters, District Council 37 members have been at the heart of the effort.

Some are among the missing (see page 8), and thousands more in scores of municipal jobs and dozens of DC 37 locals played essential roles in the city's massive cleanup and comeback.

In the worst of times, the public service infrastructure came through for New York City.

**Alex Loutsky** (right), an Emergency Medical Technician, was across the street from the World Trade Center when the first collapse occurred.

**"I thought it was the end. It was horrible."**

Alex Loutsky figures he should be dead.

The Emergency Medical Technician was a couple of blocks from the World Trade Center when the first hijacked Boeing 767 plane hit the northern tower. He raced his ambulance to Fulton and Church Streets, across the street from the site. There, he encountered sheer chaos.

"There was a sea of people rushing out with terror on their faces," Mr. Loutsky said. "We tried to load them up six at a time. Many injured people just kept running."

Eighteen minutes later, the scene became even wilder as the second plane struck 2 World Trade Center. More panicked and injured people poured into the streets. Sirens blared. Then, suddenly, at 10:29 a.m., the first collapse occurred.

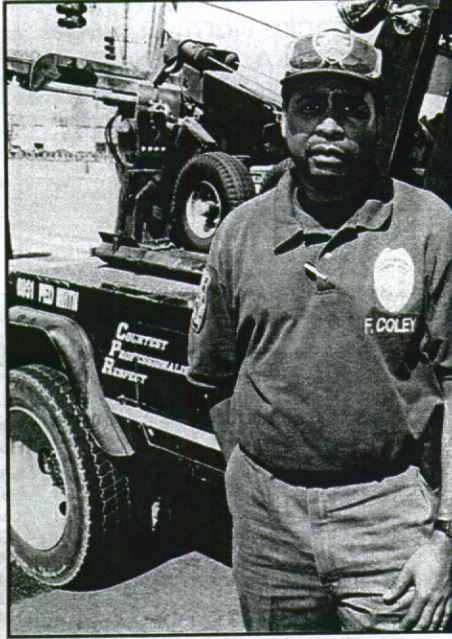
"It was horrible," Mr. Loutsky said. "You never thought it would collapse. Everyone ran. Everyone was screaming. Then it went black. You couldn't breathe at all. I didn't know if I could make it. I thought it was the end."

He grappled his way out of the darkness, went to a nearby hospital and then returned to the scene to work. "But there wasn't much to go back to," Mr. Loutsky said. "I saw a crushed ambulance and spoke to a cop. Then we heard a rumble. The second tower came down."

Mr. Loutsky and a firefighter, Alex Santoro, ducked into a candy store as "blackness overwhelmed the place," Mr. Loutsky said. "We didn't know if this was the third world war or if we were going to be bombed." When the smoke and dust settled, they left the store. On Fulton Street, which was covered with three inches of white dust, they helped injured people until they ran into a fire chief, who sent Mr. Loutsky to Battalion 4, where he was mistakenly reported missing and feared dead.

Mr. Loutsky was among the hundreds of members of Emergency Medical Service Employees Local 2507 and EMS Lieutenants & Captains Local 3621 who helped care for the injured and move them to hospitals.

"What people have gone through has been terrible," said Emergency Medical Technician Ray Simons (see front page photo), a member of Local 2507's Peer Support Team, which has provided counseling services to help its members cope with the Twin Towers incident.



Local 420's Confesor Arroyo helped Bellevue Hospital prepare for victims and Philip Holder (r.) worked with cardiac rescue teams.

**"There wasn't enough to do — not enough survivors."**

Philip Holder, a Sr. Nurse's Aide, began his day in the Operating Room at Bellevue Hospital. But when the second plane hit, hospital staff sprung into full disaster mode and prepared for hundreds of incoming patients.

"About 40 firefighters, 10 police officers and a Port Authority officer were rushed in," said Mr. Holder, a Local 420 member. "They were all in pretty bad shape."

Twice the veteran aide and licensed paramedic accompanied one of Bellevue's 20 cardiac teams to ground zero to save victims' lives. "When I saw the devastation, I knew we were in trouble," said Holder, an ex-Navy SEAL medic.

Confesor Arroyo, a Patient Care Associate and Local 420 member, helped prepare the hospital to make room for the expected victims. But Bellevue took in less than 100 WTC victims. "We wanted to do more, but there was not enough to do — not enough survivors," Mr. Arroyo said.

Tow truckers Farris Coley Sr., left, and Timothy Aiken, members of Local 983, say that the horror they witnessed will trouble them for the rest of their lives.

**"This will be etched in my brain forever."**

Some of Local 983's tow truck operators were deeply shaken by their work at ground zero.

"I was trying to retrieve trucks, but you couldn't see anything," said Timothy Aiken, a Traffic Enforcement Officer Level 3. "People were covered in smoke and soot. It was like walking into a wall of smoke."

Standing by his truck, Farris Coley Sr. witnessed people jumping to their death as fires raged through the towers.

"I looked up and I saw both buildings in flames. I saw groups of people in three jumps. They hit the ground and there were blood baths," he said.

Mr. Coley and coworkers narrowly avoided injury when the buildings collapsed. Tow truck operators spent days at ground zero clearing out crushed and abandoned fire trucks, ambulances, police cars and other vehicles.

Since the attack, Mr. Coley has had trouble sleeping. He has nightmares, flashbacks and difficulty communicating his experience to his wife and family. He plans to seek counseling to cope with his stress and trauma. "The thunderstorm two days later terrified me," Mr. Coley said. "It sounded like the building coming down."

Mr. Aiken said he was especially affected by his work at Bellevue Hospital, where he was sent Sept. 12 to ensure access for tractor-trailer trucks bringing body bags to the morgue. While there, Mr. Aiken saw the charred remains of victims of the attack. "I will never forget it as long as I live," Mr. Aiken said. "It's going to be etched in my brain forever."



# at ground zero



Helen Wilson (right) and Local 371 volunteer grief counselors helped deal with the trauma caused by the Twin Tower attack.

## "It'll take people long to cope."

Certified Social Worker Helen Wilson of SSEU Local 371 mobilized volunteers to help survivors and witnesses cope with the intense emotional fallout after the tragedy of Sept. 11. She set up shop at the local's headquarters near Union Square to provide free counseling.

"This is a real difficult process. People are going to take a long time to come to grips with what happened," she said after completing a lengthy session with a city employee who worked on Williams Street and saw people jumping from the World Trade Center. Ms. Wilson also provided a package of information on dealing with trauma and depression. "The most important thing is to talk to people who have gone through this like your neighbors or coworkers," advised Ms. Wilson. "They don't have to be mental health professionals."



911 Technicians Cheryl James and George Rivera helped handle a record number of 911 calls. "When I grasped what was going on, I didn't get emotional," Ms. James said. "I had to keep doing my job."

## "Lives depended on me. I had to be calm."

At 8:48 a.m. Sept. 11, the first of the two hijacked planes smashed into the World Trade Center. In the 13 minutes that followed, Police Communications Technicians at the 911 Emergency Call Center received a record 3,000 calls.

Local 1549's Gladys Mitchell was one of the first to respond. "I looked up and the board went red," she said. In the first few seconds, the numbers of incoming calls jumped from 10 to 400 — all from people still inside the World Trade Center and uniformed officers. E911 Techs answer calls and get information that dispatchers feed to police officers in the field.

"I had to remain calm," she said. "I knew I had a lot of lives in my hands." Two other dispatchers, including Cheryl James, seven months pregnant, were also on duty. In disaster mode they could not leave their posts. Off-duty techs were called in and some, like Shirlon Griffith, walked several miles to get to work. Around 1,200 Local 1549 members were on duty. "The calls kept coming and I continued typing," Ms. James said. "I had to keep doing my job."

For too many who called 911 that day, the Technicians were the last contact outside the WTC. Many of the firefighters, EMS workers and Police Officers who reached the center were never heard from again, said George Rivera, a Supervising PCT. "We tried to reach them on the radio," he said. "We sat with tears in our eyes."

Patrick Luc (left) and a team of Local 2627 members helped set up 300 computers and data base software at an emergency center for displaced families and other victims.

## "We worked nonstop all night."

The city's emergency Family Assistance Center on Pier 94 on the Hudson River houses more than a dozen agencies, from social service to the American Red Cross to the FBI. Families of the victims of the trade center disaster file into the site to get legal assistance, worker's compensation or simply a hot meal and a cup of coffee.

The size of two football fields, the center handles clients efficiently, thanks to computers installed by a team that included Computer Technician Patrick Luc and other members of Local 2627. In 24 hours, they set up 300 computers and installed the software that gave them access to the necessary data bases.

"We worked nonstop through the night," said Mr. Luc, whose brother lost a friend at the World Trade Center. "When you think about this tragedy, there wasn't any time to get tired." Now, three shifts of computer experts are providing technical support on the pier. Mr. Luc works the afternoon shift then returns to his regular job at Human Resources Administration.





# Remembering 9/11 Ten years after



**D**C 37 MEMBERS will always remember 9/11 as a day of tragedy and heroism.

Three members lost their lives while working at Ground Zero after terrorists crashed two jetliners into the Twin Towers, killing nearly 3,000 people. A fourth member with a second job at the World Trade Center also perished.

DC 37 members put their lives on the line to help in the search and rescue effort at Ground Zero and the subsequent cleanup. At least eight members have succumbed to illnesses caused by their exposure to the toxic cocktail of dust and smoke at the disaster site.

On that dark day, union workers at the New York Police Dept. took the desperate phone calls of people trapped in the towers. Hundreds of EMS workers raced to Ground Zero.

DC 37 members worked in the rubble in search of survivors. In emergency centers, nurses and social workers helped traumatized and injured people.

Union members have also played a key role in the recovery and rebuilding, which continues 10 years after the tragedy occurred.

For months, city engineers and other technical workers remained at Ground Zero to oversee the cleanup headed by the Dept. of Design and Construction. The union successfully fought off the Bechtel Corp.'s attempt to profit from the attack by taking over that work.

Workers at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner have helped identify many of the victims, providing closure for their families. Engineers ran the project to reopen destroyed downtown subway tunnels and stations. DDC workers expect to work an additional five years to upgrade the downtown infrastructure.

"The 9/11 experience is a testament to the dedication of public employees," DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts said. "Our members put their hearts into their work on that tragic day, and they continue to play an important role in revitalizing downtown Manhattan."



TOP: The North Tower of the World Trade Center is engulfed in flames after the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001. ABOVE: Workers on Barclay Street, where the 7 World Trade Center building collapsed. The new 52-story building, which opened in 2006, is now fully leased. DC 37's headquarters at 125 Barclay St., which closed for six months after 9/11, is about a block away from 7 WTC.

## Special 9/11 Section

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Section Editor: Gregory N. Heires  
Graphic Designer: E.J. Dobson



# How 9/11 changed our world

**I**N THE 10 YEARS since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, changes have touched virtually every American.

Rebuilding is underway in Lower Manhattan, where more than 17 million square feet of space were destroyed.

One World Trade Center has reached over 80 stories on its way to completion; and the memorial for the victims designed by Architect Michael Arad, when he was a member of Local 375, opened to the public on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But luxury buildings have proliferated, emblems in steel and glass of the gross economic inequality that has deepened over the decade to historic proportions.

The long-term damage to the local economy was less severe than many economists expected.

Nationally, the Obama administration provided stimulus money that prevented the deep recession from hurling the country into a depression. Two of the three major auto manufacturers were saved from bankruptcy and have emerged as strong players, though the United Auto Workers union agreed to major cutbacks to make this turnaround possible.

But the economy has hit a roadblock. The unemployment rate is 9.1 percent with 14 million people out of work. Three out of five people living in poverty are between the ages of 18 and 64.

Initially, the terrorist attacks brought Americans together. But a fault line has developed, dividing politi-

cal loyalties throughout the country. Conservative Tea Party theories threaten government programs and challenge the Obama administration.

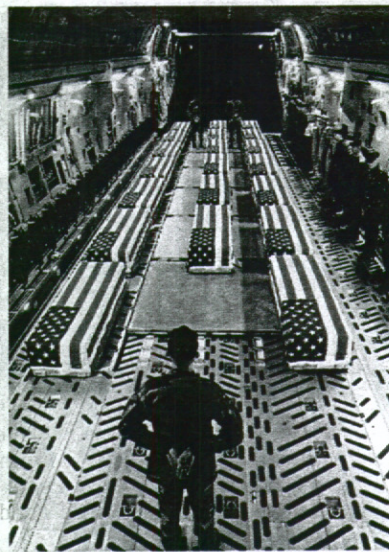
Goodwill and fellowship prevailed around the world in the wake of the attacks. But the United States now has a tarnished image abroad, a result of U.S. policies of torture and rendition, as well as the viral images of abuses at Abu Ghraib.

Within two weeks of the attacks on the United States, President George W. Bush and his administration went to war in Afghanistan and, later, in Iraq. Ten years later, the wars continue. The post-9/11 decade has included a global war against terrorism, and the national security apparatus has expanded its reach, threatening our civil liberties even as it defends us against terrorists.

The direct cost of the wars to taxpayers is already over \$1 trillion. Pulitzer Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz estimates that the long-term cost will total from \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion. As of Sept. 8, the total number of U.S. dead from the two wars was 6,227; the number of U.S. wounded was 45,899.

The escalating costs of war, tax breaks for the rich, and the lack of an industrial policy are hollowing out the nation. Meanwhile, 1 percent of the people, including a number of DC 37 military reservists, continues to carry the burdens of war, with its casualties and pain.

The 2012 presidential election will help determine the direction of a deeply divided country. — JL



Military coffins at the U.S. Air Force base in Dover, Del.

## Hate begets hate Anti-Muslim bias

BY JANE LaTOUR

**B**ETWEEN JAN. 1, 2001, AND SEPT. 10, 2001, the New York Police Department reported zero bias incidents against Muslims, Arabs, and people of South Asian origin in New York City. But following the attacks on Sept. 11, the NYPD reported 96 bias incidents in the 112 days after 9/11. In response, the New York City Commission on Human Rights developed the 9/11 Discrimination Project.

Members of DC 37 Local 154 at the CHR participated in the project. The Human Rights Specialists distributed a survey developed to document incidents and types of bias. They worked to increase and improve contacts with major Arab and South Asian community organizations and to involve them in the work of the project. They organized forums in each borough to help people understand the scope of the harassment and hate crimes against the community.

"The role of the Human Rights workers is to help protect all the members of the community and to prevent hate and misinformation," said Local 154 President Juan Fernandez. "It's one of the key things we do at the Human Rights Commission. This is at the core of what American society is perceived to be."

The report from the survey was issued in the summer of 2003. Findings showed that 69 percent of respondents perceived discrimination or bias-related harassment; 79 percent felt that their lives were negatively affected by 9/11. They felt more afraid and minimized their contact with the general public or

made their religion or ethnicity less evident. Types of discrimination/bias harassment included religious and ethnic insults (36 percent); employment discrimination (26 percent); discrimination in public accommodations (25 percent); housing discrimination (11 percent). Most of the bias incidents took place in Brooklyn, which has the oldest and largest Arab and Muslim communities in New York City.

Ten years after the attacks, unease among these communities is still prevalent. A Pew Research Center poll released last month found that 43 percent of Muslim Americans reported experiencing harassment within the last year. The national furor last year over the proposal to build the Park Place mosque and cultural center in Lower Manhattan erupted again on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.



PEP artist Gene Suchma's "Preserving the Fabric," a 4-foot by 5-foot acrylic painting, won first prize in the 2002 "Fabric of Unionism" contest of the Pennsylvania State Education Association.



# Day of death and heroism for EMS

*Emergency Medical Tech Alexander Loutsky and Lt. William Melarango were among hundreds of Emergency Medical Service workers who rushed into danger 9/11 to save lives. Two were killed, dozens were injured, and seven have since died from disease caused by the toxic air they breathed.*

## “I thought I was going to die”

**“W**E’RE AT WAR!” is how Emergency Medical Technician Alexander Loutsky responded to a woman on the street who insisted on going back into one of the Twin Towers to get her belongings.

That morning the Local 2507 member and his partner Hank Ramos — who both worked for Battalion 4 in the firehouse closest to the World Trade Center — noticed a commercial aircraft flying extremely low along the Manhattan skyline. Minutes later, they witnessed that plane crashing into the first tower.

They tuned into the radio and heard reports of a similar attack on the Pentagon. “That’s what we thought,” explained Loutsky. “We thought we were at war.”

Setting up near Fulton Street and Broadway, Loutsky and Ramos provided assistance from their ambulance to dozens of injured people who came running down the street. As more ambulances arrived, Loutsky was



Emergency Medical Technician Alexander Loutsky

responsible for providing first aid and getting the people who had serious injuries transported to a hospital for treatment. People with third-degree burns were kept together and then transferred to Cornell Medical Center, while others were sent to a trauma center.

When the second tower came crashing down, everyone — the first responders and the injured — scrambled for cover. Total blackness is how Loutsky described

the scene on the ground after the second tower collapsed. “You couldn’t hear anything, you couldn’t see anything and you couldn’t breathe,” he explained. “I thought I was going to die.”

Covered in soot from head to toe, Loutsky made his way to the nearby New York Downtown Hospital, where hospital workers scrubbed his face and gave him oxygen.

They asked him to stay put in the hospital, but Loutsky refused. “I couldn’t abandon my post,” he said. “And I had to go find my partner.”

As the dusk settled he left the hospital and walked toward Broadway and found his ambulance on fire. And he found Lt. Rene Davila. “We were so happy to see each other we started to cry,” he recalled.

After spending 16 hours in the war zone Sept. 11, EMT Alexander Loutsky finally went home to rest. Three hours later he returned to Ground Zero. He spent two weeks at the site doing rescue and recovery while he was officially off duty. —Alfredo Alvarado



Lt. William Melarango

## “Parts of buildings were falling everywhere”

**O**N the crisp morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Lt. William Melarango began his usual tour at Battalion 4, in Lower Manhattan near South Street, the fire station closest to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

After receiving the emergency call, he headed straight toward the World Trade Center. Clouds of dark smoke were coming from the North Tower, filling the sky.

Melarango stopped at Church and Fulton streets where he joined Lieutenants Bruce Medjuck and Rene Davila and Captain Janice Olszewski. They quickly set up a triage station near the Millennium Hotel.

The EMS workers unloaded oxygen tanks and supplies from a truck and passed out helmets. That triage center was one of several that Melarango helped set up with his colleagues around the disaster area that treated dozens of New Yorkers that Tuesday morning.

The second tower came crashing down shortly after. “People were running down the block, screaming and crying,” recalled Melarango. “There were parts of the building falling everywhere.”

Melarango’s crew helped clean up people with

minor injuries and then transported them out of the area to a nearby hospital. Firefighters and Police used the triage center that they set up to flush out the debris and the smoke from their eyes. They also supplied oxygen masks to help people being treated at the center to breathe.

“Fortunately, it was mainly bruises, lacerations and burns that we treated,” Melarango said.

Around noon, Melarango and Lt. Tom Eppinger helped set up another triage center at Greenwich Street, where they got assistance from doctors in the area and the crews of several EMS ambulances. They also set up a morgue with lighting provided by a film crew that showed up.

“If we needed we could have done minor surgery there,” he said. The triage team treated around 30 patients, mainly for respira-

tory and cardiac problems.

Melarango, who became an EMT in 1989 and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1995, said he was proud of the job his crew did as chaos took over the streets of Lower Manhattan that Tuesday when buildings fell down all around them.

“We did what we are supposed to do,” he explained with the typical modesty that you hear from the members of Uniformed EMS Officers Union Local 3621 and Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics and Inspectors Local 2507. “That’s our job.” —AA





# DC 37 workers on the front lines



Park Enforcement Patrol Officer Sam Hendricks

## “People were dazed, panicked and terrified”

**W**ITH mouths agape and tears streaming down their faces, horrified New Yorkers gazed in disbelief as two jets crashed into the Twin Towers Sept. 11, 2001, sending toxic smoke billowing against a cloudless azure sky.

They soon learned that terrorists had hijacked two jetliners and flew one into the North Tower and, 17 minutes later, the second into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Flames, glass shards and jet parts rained onto crowds in the streets below. The odor of jet fuel permeated lungs.

“Ten years later I can still smell the towers burning,” said Park Enforcement Patrol Capt. Tanya Prince of Local 983. “We quickly evacuated people from Battery Park City and worked closely with the National Guard to evacuate neighborhoods surrounding the World Trade Center.”

The South and North Towers collapsed within two hours, engulfing the lower tip of New York City in mushrooming plumes of dust and smoke, choking and blinding pedestrians and first responders.

Thousands fortunate enough to find their way out made haste across West Street into Battery Park City. With bridges, tunnels and highways closed and no subway or bus service into or out of Manhattan, many felt helplessly trapped.

PEP Officer Sam Hendricks said, “People were at the esplanade and on piers hoping to be rescued. We had the responsibility to lead people to safety.”

The U.S. Coast Guard and, gradually, an armada of private boats, fishing and party boats, Police and Fire boats, Staten Island ferries and tugboats sailed in. Dozens of sea craft converged on the East and Hudson rivers to take people to safety. In the weeks following the attacks, Prince clocked 16-hour tours patrolling the area and escorting people into and out of the frozen zone to collect personal items from their homes.

“For a long time I was in shock, in a state of disbelief,” she said. “People were dazed, panicked and terrified, so to keep them calm I’d talk to them and help them see they were not alone.”

Scores of DC 37 members played a vital role in the evacuation and boatlift of 350,000 to 500,000 men, women and children. According to the U.S. Coast Guard, it was the largest sea evacuation in U.S. history.

— Diane S. Williams

## “All hell broke loose”

**P**HONE calls started pouring into the New York Police Dept. right after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

The calls from people stuck in the burning Twin Towers were received by 911 operators like Local 1549 member Cheryl James, a Police Communications Technician.

The operators describe a workday of chaos and pressure. “All hell broke loose and we didn’t have time to think—the effects came into play later,” James said. “We were making notifications to the EMS, the FDNY, and the Emergency Service Unit—they have the special equipment. I called a friend to pick up my 4-year-old son and worked till 11 p.m.”

Today, the memories of the frantic calls continue to trouble Police Communications Technicians.

“We had so many calls — my screen was full,” James said. “I was talking to a Police Officer who was on a corner near the WTC. I often wonder if he went into the tower to assist — if he’s alive.”

— JL



PCT Cheryl James

## “Everything was destroyed”

**S**INCE the Twin Towers collapsed in the terrorist attack 10 years ago, upgrading the infrastructure in downtown Manhattan has cost billions of dollars.

As Engineers-in-Charge at the Dept. of Design and Construction, Kalpesh Patel and Srimi Keshava play a key role in transforming the zone into the city’s fastest-growing area — with a vibrant residential neighborhood and bustling diverse economy of nonprofits and law, media and financial firms.

After the attack, Patel and Keshava were members of the DDC team that led the cleanup at Ground Zero.

The horror of the attacks was always present, Patel recalled. All work stopped when the remains of Firefighters and Police Officers were uncovered. Workers would scramble for safety when a siren warned of a possible building collapse.

“Everything was completely destroyed,” Keshava said, referring to the two-block area around Ground Zero. Keshava and Patel spent months supervising the removal of tons of toxic debris, overseeing the trucks coming in and out and protecting the public’s purse by checking inventories. The two Local 375 members were involved in the surveying and mapping needed to rebuild the complex underground network of sewage pipes and electrical, telephone and other cables.

In 2006, when human remains were discovered in underground areas, the two returned to Ground Zero and monitored the loading and carting away of over 600 mammoth containers of debris over six months.

Today, Patel and Keshava focus on upgrading the area around Ground Zero. They look forward to the opening of the new WTC in 2013, but their job will probably go on another five years, Kasheva said.

— GNH



Engineers-in-Charge Srimi Keshava (l) and Kalpesh Patel



# front line

City employees worked and volunteered at Ground Zero after terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers. Members of 30 local unions have played a key role in the recovery and rebuilding.

## “I just had to walk away and cry”

**C**ITY Mortuary Technician Leonard Benjamin, a 24-year veteran employee and Local 420 member, worked for months at Ground Zero, the “pit,” where 2,996 people perished in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

“We were down there to help and everyone worked together — Firefighters, Police, EMS. I helped transport bodies, parts and pieces — some half, few whole — to Bellevue,” Benjamin said. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner set up a triage camp of trailers where forensic scientists and CMTs helped identify human remains. “Everyone was working hard to identify the dead and give the families closure, but it was rare that we found whole bodies.”

The 10 years since the terrorist attacks have been a long journey for most. Some victims were identified early on and others remain unidentified to this day. Recalling the experience, Benjamin said, “After three or four months we found a whole Fire Dept. company. That experience brought me to reality. As a kid I had always idolized Firefighters for their size and bravery. I saw them come around the corner carrying out the bodies, and saw them drop to their knees wailing with grief. They had found about eight members of their company. They had close ties; they were their children’s godfathers, their brothers, their best friends. It was painful.”

Benjamin said the Firefighters’ bodies were whole and still in their gear, decomposed but not yet mummified. He said, “They carried them out with much care and dignity, as if they were pallbearers. I just had to walk away and cry.” — DSW



Mortuary Technician Leonard Benjamin

## “It was really crazy”

**P**OLICE Communications Technicians continue to be shaken up about handling phone calls from the people trapped inside the Twin Towers after terrorists rammed two planes into the buildings.

“It was really crazy,” said PCT Lisa Johnson. “People were overwhelmed — yelling and screaming on the phone,” said Johnson. “We had to keep our composure.”

The Police Communications Technicians talked to Police Officers who were at Ground Zero in addition to many of the more than 2,600 people stuck inside the buildings, who later died when the Twin Towers collapsed.

“We were dispatching information to them about people calling in on cell phones who were trapped and where they were located,” Johnson said. “One caller asked a PCT to pray with her.”

Ten years later, the operators still talk to each other about the horror of that day.

“The feelings are still with us—sadness because so many people lost their lives,” Johnson said. “One co-worker’s brother was a pilot of the plane that hit the Pentagon. You can still see the sadness in her eyes.” — JL



PCT Lisa Johnson



Criminalist 1 Sarah McGarvey

PEP photo by Clarence Ellis-Rivers

## “I’m passionate about this project”

**C**RIMINALIST 1 Sarah McGarvey has devoted her career to helping the families of the victims of the 9/11 attack move beyond the dark chapter in their lives when they lost their loved ones.

A member of the World Trade Center Victim Identification Unit at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, McGarvey extracts DNA samples from bone bits found at Ground Zero so anthropologists can try to match them with material found at the site or provided by families.

“I am very passionate about this project,” said McGarvey, who has a bachelor’s degree in molecular genetics and studied forensic science in graduate school. She works with two Criminalist Level 3s, Michael Mosco and Niyrai Bradshaw, who analyze and review data from the DNA. All three are members of Civil Service Technical Guild Local 375.

Three years ago, McGarvey and a team at the Forensic Biology office, which houses the identification unit, came up with a new procedure for extracting DNA.

She cleans bits of bone pieces, grinds them into powder, incubates them and studies the material in a computerized genetic analyzer machine. The DNA information is electronically compared with DNA samples from missing victims’ toothbrushes, hairbrushes and clothes as well as other bits of bone.

The samples sometimes match DNA gathered years earlier.

Even 10 years after 9/11, the unit receives about 100 samples a week for testing. They have helped identify 60 percent of the nearly 3,000 victims of the attack.

“We have put a huge effort into identifying the victims,” said McGarvey, noting that the OCME has beefed up the staff so all the bone DNA work is done in-house. —GNH



# Workers confront mental The pain remains

By GREGORY N. HEIRES

**E**VEN AFTER 10 YEARS, tow truck driver Farris Coley Sr. sometimes sees the image of the war zone at Ground Zero, where the Twin Towers collapsed after terrorists crashed hijacked planes into the buildings.

The Dept. of Transportation sent Coley, a Traffic Enforcement Agent 3 and Local 983 member, to help clear vehicles to make way for emergency workers. Ever since his exposure to the devastation, he has suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"It's with me every day," said Coley, who witnessed people jumping from the burning buildings on Sept. 11 and worked on the cleanup for several months. His stress is compounded by what he calls the lack of recognition from the city.

Over the years, Ground Zero workers like Coley have struggled to deal with PTSD — with its flashbacks, anxiety, sleeplessness and emotional problems. At home and on the job, they can't escape the psychological repercussions of the horror they went through.

"It was like the gates of hell opened, with flames and white ashes, which made it seem like it was snowing," said former Local 376 member Ken George, who was also sent in to clear space for emergency vehicles. He then searched the rubble "pile" for victims and worked at Ground Zero until February 2002.

Illnesses caused by his work at Ground Zero forced him to retire from his Highway Repairer job, which he held for nearly 20 years.

Every day, he needs a cocktail of prescription drugs to cope with his stress, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, respiratory problems, weakened heart and the infamous "9/11 cough." Recently, he had to start using an oxygen tank to help him breathe.

Unable to sleep more than a few hours, George sometimes wakes up screaming and punching his pillow.

At times, said George's wife of 27 years, Cindi, "It's like he's dead. He's not the same person I married."

His erratic behavior and need for caring have put tremendous pressure on the couple's marriage, and the recurring nightmares and the stress of fighting his afflictions led George to attempt suicide. Fortunately, his adult son found him hanging in a doorway in time to save his life.

## Buried in wreckage

Emergency Medical Technician Joe Conzo, secretary-treasurer of Uniformed EMTs and Paramedics Local 2507, and his partner, Bill Trouccolo, were among the first rescue workers to arrive at the World Trade Center. When the first tower collapsed as they were evacuating the nearby Marriott Hotel, they were buried in the wreckage. Conzo crawled out of the debris. After calling his mother to let her know he was all right, he searched for Trouccolo, who suffered a broken leg and four broken ribs, and pulled him out of the debris.

"It was a horror that I never expected to see — people jumping out of windows and the body parts," Conzo said.

Conzo soon sought the help of a therapist,



Local 376 member Ken George at Ground Zero on 9/11

apist, who sent him to the scene of the mass killing to help him with closure.

Conzo still gets rattled when he sees low-flying planes, which trigger his memory of the hijacked airliners that hit the towers. From time to time, he breaks out crying, as he did recently while watching a documentary about 9/11.

Like many 9/11 survivors, Conzo has coping mechanisms. He finds solace in sharing his experience. Recently, he felt more upbeat after talking to the media about 9/11.

Coley also finds relief by going to the gym. He has cut his weight and reduced his belt size. And his real joy comes from coaching his son's baseball team, which he led to a championship this summer.

But despite their ability to move on, as they are reminded of the tragedy, many 9/11 workers suspect that they will never fully recover.

"I wish all of this would disappear," Coley said.



Emergency Medical Technician Joseph Conzo, left, with co-worker EMT William Trouccolo, who broke a leg and four ribs when the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapsed on Sept. 11, 2001. Conzo continues to battle post-traumatic stress disorder because of the horror of that day.



Seriously injured by falling debris, Brian Gestring, a Criminalist from the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, awaits a ferry to New Jersey, where many went after the Twin Towers collapsed on Sept. 11, 2001.



# scars, physical disabilities



Hundreds of Emergency Medical Service employees attended the funeral of Paramedic Carlos Lillo, who was killed in the 9/11 terrorist attack, at St. Cyril's Church in Deer Park, Long Island. Left, President Patrick J. Bahnken of EMTs and Paramedics Local 2507, leads a procession of pallbearers alongside a New York Fire Dept. ambulance carrying Lillo's flag-draped coffin.

## Living and dying with 9/11 diseases

By JANE LaTOUR

**T**HE SAD legacies of 9/11 include thousands of working people suffering from debilitating diseases caused by their exposure to the toxic air of Ground Zero during the response, recovery and cleanup efforts.

Many have died and the toll of death and illness is still climbing. The World Trade Center Health Program, which provides health care to eligible workers, treated 18,462 participants in 2010 and monitored 27,837.

PEP spoke to two public employees who worked in the long recovery and cleanup efforts. Both suffer from their exposure to toxins at the site — a tragic consequence of their dedicated service.

"I'll never forget it," said Thomas Bazerjian, then a Borough Supervisor in the Dept. of Transportation. Ten years ago, the Local 1157 member was at work in his office under the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn Bridge, when the attack occurred.

"The first day, we worked in the pit, loading and passing buckets of debris like an assembly line," he said. For months afterward, he supervised the night shift on the cleanup. "We were working 12-hour days, six days a week," he recalled.

Six months after that exposure, Bazerjian was diagnosed with asthma. Now, at 56, he lives with the effects — post-traumatic stress disorder, asthma and sinusitis, acid reflux disease and insomnia — and needs a constant barrage of medication.

"I go to the Mount Sinai program on Staten Island," he said. "They check my breathing and provide my medication. If you had to pay for them out-of-pocket,



Charles Kaczorowski  
Construction Proj. Mgr.



Thomas Bazerjian  
Borough Supervisor

it would be a real problem. The doctors, nurses and the social worker are all very experienced and helpful."

Bazerjian has difficult nights and a hard time going to work. "I do the best I can. My health isn't what it used to be. I used to play basketball, go to the gym and run. I can't be active anymore."

### Engulfed in flames

On the morning of 9/11, Local 375 member Charles Kaczorowski left the subway right across from the North Tower, which was engulfed in flames. A Construction Project Manager for the city's Dept. of Design and Construction, Kaczorowski spent 2,278 hours supervising the cleanup and recovery efforts at Ground Zero. "We worked 8-hour shifts around the clock," he recalled, until July 1, 2002.

In February 2002, Kaczorowski developed a cough.

He went to the Mount Sinai program and had his first pulmonary reading. Now, the Vietnam veteran, at 64, suffers from an array of illnesses: acid reflux, sinusitis, asthma, and RADS (reactive airway dysfunction syndrome). He's had two heart incidents and suffers from gall bladder, kidney and liver disease.

"It's tough getting up in the morning," he said. "I tire really quickly."

To help sufferers like Bazerjian and Kaczorowski, DC 37 was in the forefront of the fight for compensation for victims of the exposures, which culminated in January when President Obama signed the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. Kaczorowski was part of that fight and lobbied for the bill in Washington, D.C. with a DC 37 delegation. "I received Congressional recognition for doing that," he said.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health ruled in July that since cancer could not be conclusively linked to Ground Zero toxins, it would not be covered by the Zadroga Act.

A committee created under the law will review scientific evidence and make recommendations to 9/11 Health Program Administrator Dr. John Howard on covering additional conditions. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention appointed Principal Program Coordinator Guille Mejia of DC 37's Safety and Health Dept. to that committee.

Congress members Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler and Peter King, authors of the Zadroga Act, filed a petition with Dr. Howard that requires him to reconsider adding cancer coverage — a decision he will make in consultation with the committee.



# We pay tribute to 9/11 heroes

By JANE LaTOUR

**O**N SEPT. 11, 2001, AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Lee Saunders, then heading DC 37, was in Brooklyn when he got the call that planes had attacked the World Trade Center. He immediately ordered staff to evacuate union headquarters on Barclay Street, one short block north of Ground Zero.

Keynoting DC 37's memorial ceremony Sept. 12, Saunders recalled the sacrifices of the members who answered the call that day and worked throughout the coming months to help the city recover.

"It was a collective effort and a challenge like never before," he said. Though the union was displaced from its building and dispersed to sites across the city for six months, services to members continued. And the union members continued to provide essential services to the people of New York City.

"It's ironic that many of the folks who praised public-sector workers at that time are now trying to tarnish you in every way possible, as if you are not worthy of the benefits you earn," Saunders told the assembly of local leaders, members and staff. "We all need to remember the sacrifices DC 37 made that day," Saunders said.

## Recognition and remembrance

DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts began the day's ceremonies outside the union building, next to the plaque bearing the names of DC 37's 9/11 dead, under a banner extolling their service. She called for a moment of silence in their honor and noted that while the Firefighters and Police Officers have often been honored for their outstanding service, others have gone without recognition.

"We honor our members who perished and we recognize all the members who were involved on that day and in the following months," said Roberts. The outdoor banner was designed by Public Employee Press Art Director Alyce Archer, and another on the stage inside was designed by Juan Manzano of the Information Technology Dept.



DC 37 leaders outside union headquarters, where a banner commemorates members who worked and died at Ground Zero. Right, DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts with a wreath recognizing the members who died on 9/11.

PEP Photos by Clarence Ellis-Rivera

Associate Director Oliver Gray pointed out that members of 30 DC 37 locals participated in the rescue and recovery work on and after Sept. 11. Associate Director Henry Garrido introduced "We Remember," a video produced by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, DC 37's parent union, which features some of the many union members who gave selflessly to help others.

The video concludes, "As we remember and mourn the fallen, let us continue to take pride in the vital services public employees provide, day in and day out, in every region of our country." The video is available at <http://www.afscme.org/we-remember>



"I remember the lives — not the lives lost," said Patrick Bahnken, president of Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics and Fire Inspectors Local 2507. "Each of these heroes was an amazing person. The sadness I feel is that men and women are still dying from the effects of that day." For much of his career as a Paramedic, Bahnken partnered with Paramedic Carlos Lillo, who died saving lives at Ground Zero on 9/11.

Eddie Rodriguez, president of DC 37 and Local 1549, remembered the members' sacrifices on "the day I will never forget," and said, "Today, it is our job to make our world a better place."

Local 1549 Executive Vice President Alma Roper told the hushed assembly how the 911 call takers had put their hearts and souls into answering the calls of 9/11. "They rose to the challenge under a tremendous amount of stress, they made promises, they prayed with dying victims, they gave of themselves," she said.



GROUND ZERO VISIT: Lee Saunders, the secretary-treasurer of AFSCME, DC 37's parent union, who was DC 37 administrator at the time of the 9/11 attack and clean up, greets members working at the disaster site.



# Remembering 9/11 Ten years after



**D**C 37 MEMBERS will always remember 9/11 as a day of tragedy and heroism. Three members lost their lives while working at Ground Zero after terrorists crashed two jetliners into the Twin Towers, killing nearly 3,000 people. A fourth member with a second job at the World Trade Center also perished.

DC 37 members put their lives on the line to help in the search and rescue effort at Ground Zero and the subsequent cleanup. At least eight members have succumbed to illnesses caused by their exposure to the toxic cocktail of dust and smoke at the disaster site.

On that dark day, union workers at the New York Police Dept. took the desperate phone calls of people trapped in the towers. Hundreds of EMS workers raced to Ground Zero.

DC 37 members worked in the rubble in search of survivors. In emergency centers, nurses and social workers helped traumatized and injured people.

Union members have also played a key role in the recovery and rebuilding, which continues 10 years after the tragedy occurred.

For months, city engineers and other technical workers remained at Ground Zero to oversee the cleanup headed by the Dept. of Design and Construction. The union successfully fought off the Bechtel Corp.'s attempt to profit from the attack by taking over that work.

Workers at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner have helped identify many of the victims, providing closure for their families. Engineers ran the project to reopen destroyed downtown subway tunnels and stations. DDC workers expect to work an additional five years to upgrade the downtown infrastructure.

"The 9/11 experience is a testament to the dedication of public employees," DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts said. "Our members put their hearts into their work on that tragic day, and they continue to play an important role in revitalizing downtown Manhattan."



TOP: The North Tower of the World Trade Center is engulfed in flames after the terrorist attack on Sept. 11, 2001. ABOVE: Workers on Barclay Street, where the 7 World Trade Center building collapsed. The new 52-story building, which opened in 2006, is now fully leased. DC 37's headquarters at 125 Barclay St., which closed for six months after 9/11, is about a block away from 7 WTC.

PEP photo by Gregory N. Heires

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Graphic Designer: E.J. Dobson



# How 9/11 changed our world

**I**N THE 10 YEARS since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, changes have touched virtually every American.

Rebuilding is underway in Lower Manhattan, where more than 17 million square feet of space were destroyed.

One World Trade Center has reached over 80 stories on its way to completion; and the memorial for the victims designed by Architect Michael Arad, when he was a member of Local 375, opened to the public on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary. But luxury buildings have proliferated, emblems in steel and glass of the gross economic inequality that has deepened over the decade to historic proportions.

The long-term damage to the local economy was less severe than many economists expected.

Nationally, the Obama administration provided stimulus money that prevented the deep recession from hurling the country into a depression. Two of the three major auto manufacturers were saved from bankruptcy and have emerged as strong players, though the United Auto Workers union agreed to major cutbacks to make this turnaround possible.

But the economy has hit a roadblock. The unemployment rate is 9.1 percent with 14 million people out of work. Three out of five people living in poverty are between the ages of 18 and 64.

Initially, the terrorist attacks brought Americans together. But a fault line has developed, dividing politi-

cal loyalties throughout the country. Conservative Tea Party theories threaten government programs and challenge the Obama administration.

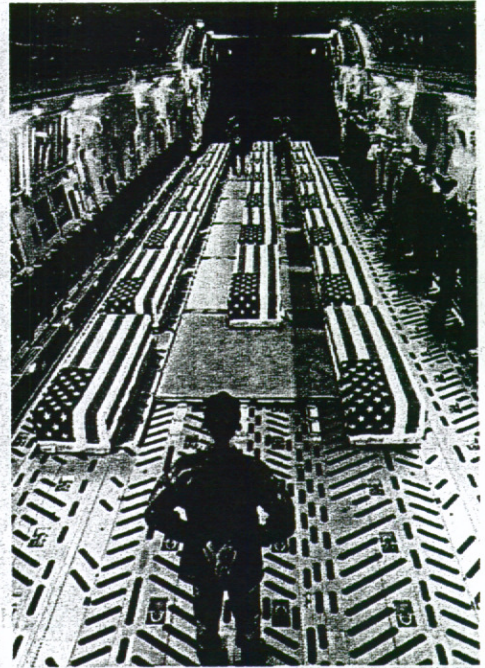
Goodwill and fellowship prevailed around the world in the wake of the attacks. But the United States now has a tarnished image abroad, a result of U.S. policies of torture and rendition, as well as the viral images of abuses at Abu Ghraib.

Within two weeks of the attacks on the United States, President George W. Bush and his administration went to war in Afghanistan and, later, in Iraq. Ten years later, the wars continue. The post-9/11 decade has included a global war against terrorism, and the national security apparatus has expanded its reach, threatening our civil liberties even as it defends us against terrorists.

The direct cost of the wars to taxpayers is already over \$1 trillion. Pulitzer Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz estimates that the long-term cost will total from \$4 trillion to \$6 trillion. As of Sept. 8, the total number of U.S. dead from the two wars was 6,227; the number of U.S. wounded was 45,899.

The escalating costs of war, tax breaks for the rich, and the lack of an industrial policy are hollowing out the nation. Meanwhile, 1 percent of the people, including a number of DC 37 military reservists, continues to carry the burdens of war, with its casualties and pain.

The 2012 presidential election will help determine the direction of a deeply divided country. — JL



Military coffins at the U.S. Air Force base in Dover, Del.

## Hate begets hate Anti-Muslim bias

BY JANE LaTOUR

**B**ETWEEN JAN. 1, 2001, AND SEPT. 10, 2001, the New York Police Department reported zero bias incidents against Muslims, Arabs, and people of South Asian origin in New York City. But following the attacks on Sept. 11, the NYPD reported 96 bias incidents in the 112 days after 9/11. In response, the New York City Commission on Human Rights developed the 9/11 Discrimination Project.

Members of DC 37 Local 154 at the CHR participated in the project. The Human Rights Specialists distributed a survey developed to document incidents and types of bias. They worked to increase and improve contacts with major Arab and South Asian community organizations and to involve them in the work of the project. They organized forums in each borough to help people understand the scope of the harassment and hate crimes against the community.

"The role of the Human Rights workers is to help protect all the members of the community and to prevent hate and misinformation," said Local 154 President Juan Fernandez. "It's one of the key things we do at the Human Rights Commission. This is at the core of what American society is perceived to be."

The report from the survey was issued in the summer of 2003. Findings showed that 69 percent of respondents perceived discrimination or bias-related harassment; 79 percent felt that their lives were negatively affected by 9/11. They felt more afraid and minimized their contact with the general public or

made their religion or ethnicity less evident. Types of discrimination/bias harassment included religious and ethnic insults (36 percent); employment discrimination (26 percent); discrimination in public accommodations (25 percent); housing discrimination (11 percent). Most of the bias incidents took place in Brooklyn, which has the oldest and largest Arab and Muslim communities in New York City.

Ten years after the attacks, unease among these communities is still prevalent. A Pew Research Center poll released last month found that 43 percent of Muslim Americans reported experiencing harassment within the last year. The national furor last year over the proposal to build the Park Place mosque and cultural center in Lower Manhattan erupted again on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of 9/11.



PEP artist Gene Suchma's "Preserving the Fabric," a 4-foot by 5-foot acrylic painting, won first prize in the 2002 "Fabric of Unionism" contest of the Pennsylvania State Education Association.



# Day of death and heroism for EMS

*Emergency Medical Tech Alexander Loutsky and Lt. William Melarango were among hundreds of Emergency Medical Service workers who rushed into danger 9/11 to save lives. Two were killed, dozens were injured, and seven have since died from disease caused by the toxic air they breathed.*

## “I thought I was going to die”

“**W**E’RE AT WAR!” is how Emergency Medical Technician Alexander Loutsky responded to a woman on the street who insisted on going back into one of the Twin Towers to get her belongings.

That morning the Local 2507 member and his partner Hank Ramos — who both worked for Battalion 4 in the firehouse closest to the World Trade Center — noticed a commercial aircraft flying extremely low along the Manhattan skyline. Minutes later, they witnessed that plane crashing into the first tower.

They tuned into the radio and heard reports of a similar attack on the Pentagon. “That’s what we thought,” explained Loutsky. “We thought we were at war.”

Setting up near Fulton Street and Broadway, Loutsky and Ramos provided assistance from their ambulance to dozens of injured people who came running down the street. As more ambulances arrived, Loutsky was



Emergency Medical Technician Alexander Loutsky

responsible for providing first aid and getting the people who had serious injuries transported to a hospital for treatment. People with third-degree burns were kept together and then transferred to Cornell Medical Center, while others were sent to a trauma center.

When the second tower came crashing down, everyone — the first responders and the injured — scrambled for cover. Total blackness is how Loutsky described

the scene on the ground after the second tower collapsed. “You couldn’t hear anything, you couldn’t see anything and you couldn’t breathe,” he explained. “I thought I was going to die.”

Covered in soot from head to toe, Loutsky made his way to the nearby New York Downtown Hospital, where hospital workers scrubbed his face and gave him oxygen.

They asked him to stay put in the hospital, but Loutsky refused. “I couldn’t abandon my post,” he said. “And I had to go find my partner.”

As the dusk settled he left the hospital and walked toward Broadway and found his ambulance on fire. And he found Lt. Rene Davila. “We were so happy to see each other we started to cry,” he recalled.

After spending 16 hours in the war zone Sept. 11, EMT Alexander Loutsky finally went home to rest. Three hours later he returned to Ground Zero. He spent two weeks at the site doing rescue and recovery while he was officially off duty. — Alfredo Alvarado



Lt. William Melarango

## “Parts of buildings were falling everywhere”

**O**N the crisp morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Lt. William Melarango began his usual tour at Battalion 4, in Lower Manhattan near South Street, the fire station closest to the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

After receiving the emergency call, he headed straight toward the World Trade Center. Clouds of dark smoke were coming from the North Tower, filling the sky.

Melarango stopped at Church and Fulton streets where he joined Lieutenants Bruce Medjuck and Rene Davila and Captain Janice Olszewski. They quickly set up a triage station near the Millennium Hotel.

The EMS workers unloaded oxygen tanks and supplies from a truck and passed out helmets. That triage center was one of several that Melarango helped set up with his colleagues around the disaster area that treated dozens of New Yorkers that Tuesday morning.

The second tower came crashing down shortly after. “People were running down the block, screaming and crying,” recalled Melarango. “There were parts of the building falling everywhere.”

Melarango’s crew helped clean up people with

minor injuries and then transported them out of the area to a nearby hospital. Firefighters and Police used the triage center that they set up to flush out the debris and the smoke from their eyes. They also supplied oxygen masks to help people being treated at the center to breathe.

“Fortunately, it was mainly bruises, lacerations and burns that we treated,” Melarango said.

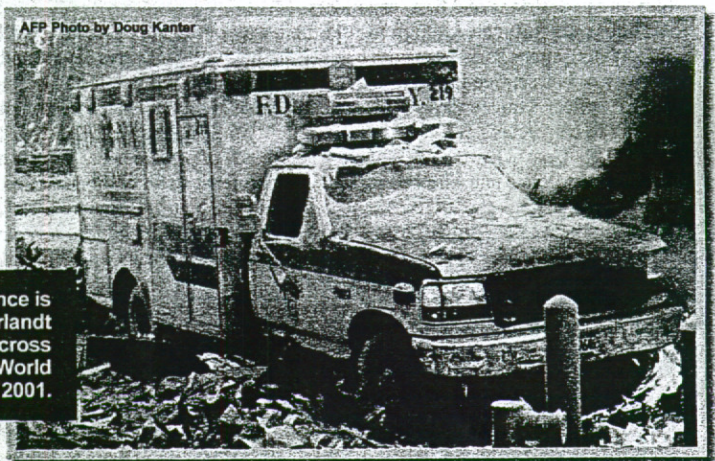
Around noon, Melarango and Lt. Tom Eppinger helped set up another triage center at Greenwich Street, where they got assistance from doctors in the area and the crews of several EMS ambulances. They also set up a morgue with lighting provided by a film crew that showed up.

“If we needed we could have done minor surgery there,” he said. The triage team treated around 30 patients, mainly for respira-

tory and cardiac problems.

Melarango, who became an EMT in 1989 and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1995, said he was proud of the job his crew did as chaos took over the streets of Lower Manhattan that Tuesday when buildings fell down all around them.

“We did what we are supposed to do,” he explained with the typical modesty that you hear from the members of Uniformed EMS Officers Union Local 3621 and Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics and Inspectors Local 2507. “That’s our job.” — AA



A damaged ambulance is parked outside the Corlandt Street subway station across the street from the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.



# DC 37 workers on the front lines



Park Enforcement Patrol Officer Sam Hendricks

## “People were dazed, panicked and terrified”

**W**ITH mouths agape and tears streaming down their faces, horrified New Yorkers gazed in disbelief as two jets crashed into the Twin Towers Sept. 11, 2001, sending toxic smoke billowing against a cloudless azure sky.

They soon learned that terrorists had hijacked two jetliners and flew one into the North Tower and, 17 minutes later, the second into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. Flames, glass shards and jet parts rained onto crowds in the streets below. The odor of jet fuel permeated lungs.

“Ten years later I can still smell the towers burning,” said Park Enforcement Patrol Capt. Tanya Prince of Local 983. “We quickly evacuated people from Battery Park City and worked closely with the National Guard to evacuate neighborhoods surrounding the World Trade Center.”

The South and North Towers collapsed within two hours, engulfing the lower tip of New York City in mushrooming plumes of dust and smoke, choking and blinding pedestrians and first responders.

Thousands fortunate enough to find their way out made haste across West Street into Battery Park City. With bridges, tunnels and highways closed and no subway or bus service into or out of Manhattan, many felt helplessly trapped.

PEP Officer Sam Hendricks said, “People were at the esplanade and on piers hoping to be rescued. We had the responsibility to lead people to safety.”

The U.S. Coast Guard and, gradually, an armada of private boats, fishing and party boats, Police and Fire boats, Staten Island ferries and tugboats sailed in. Dozens of sea craft converged on the East and Hudson rivers to take people to safety. In the weeks following the attacks, Prince clocked 16-hour tours patrolling the area and escorting people into and out of the frozen zone to collect personal items from their homes.

“For a long time I was in shock, in a state of disbelief,” she said. “People were dazed, panicked and terrified, so to keep them calm I’d talk to them and help them see they were not alone.”

Scores of DC 37 members played a vital role in the evacuation and boatlift of 350,000 to 500,000 men, women and children. According to the U.S. Coast Guard, it was the largest sea evacuation in U.S. history.

— Diane S. Williams

## “All hell broke loose”

**P**HONE calls started pouring into the New York Police Dept. right after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center.

The calls from people stuck in the burning Twin Towers were received by 911 operators like Local 1549 member Cheryl James, a Police Communications Technician.

The operators describe a workday of chaos and pressure. “All hell broke loose and we didn’t have time to think—the effects came into play later,” James said. “We were making notifications to the EMS, the FDNY, and the Emergency Service Unit—they have the special equipment. I called a friend to pick up my 4-year-old son and worked till 11 p.m.”

Today, the memories of the frantic calls continue to trouble Police Communications Technicians.

“We had so many calls — my screen was full,” James said. “I was talking to a Police Officer who was on a corner near the WTC. I often wonder if he went into the tower to assist — if he’s alive.”

— JL



PCT Cheryl James

## “Everything was destroyed”

**S**INCE the Twin Towers collapsed in the terrorist attack 10 years ago, upgrading the infrastructure in downtown Manhattan has cost billions of dollars.

As Engineers-in-Charge at the Dept. of Design and Construction, Kalpesh Patel and Srimi Keshava play a key role in transforming the zone into the city’s fastest-growing area — with a vibrant residential neighborhood and bustling diverse economy of nonprofits and law, media and financial firms.

After the attack, Patel and Keshava were members of the DDC team that led the cleanup at Ground Zero.

The horror of the attacks was always present, Patel recalled. All work stopped when the remains of Firefighters and Police Officers were uncovered. Workers would scramble for safety when a siren warned of a possible building collapse.

“Everything was completely destroyed,” Keshava said, referring to the two-block area around Ground Zero. Keshava and Patel spent months supervising the removal of tons of toxic debris, overseeing the trucks coming in and out and protecting the public’s purse by checking inventories. The two Local 375 members were involved in the surveying and mapping needed to rebuild the complex underground network of sewage pipes and electrical, telephone and other cables.

In 2006, when human remains were discovered in underground areas, the two returned to Ground Zero and monitored the loading and carting away of over 600 mammoth containers of debris over six months.

Today, Patel and Keshava focus on upgrading the area around Ground Zero. They look forward to the opening of the new WTC in 2013, but their job will probably go on another five years, Keshava said.

— GNH



Engineers-in-Charge Srimi Keshava (l.) and Kalpesh Patel

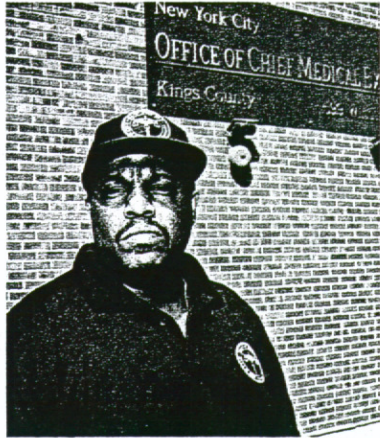


# front line

City employees worked and volunteered at Ground Zero after terrorists destroyed the Twin Towers. Members of 30 local unions have played a key role in the recovery and rebuilding.

## “I just had to walk away and cry”

**C**ITY Mortuary Technician Leonard Benjamin, a 24-year veteran employee and Local 420 member, worked for months at Ground Zero, the “pit,” where 2,996 people perished in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.



Mortuary Technician Leonard Benjamin

“We were down there to help and everyone worked together — Firefighters, Police, EMS. I helped transport bodies, parts and pieces — some half, few whole — to Bellevue,” Benjamin said. The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner set up a triage camp of trailers where forensic scientists and CMTs helped identify human remains. “Everyone was working hard to identify the dead and give the families closure, but it was rare that we found whole bodies.”

The 10 years since the terrorist attacks have been a long journey for most. Some victims were identified early on and others remain unidentified to this day. Recalling the experience, Benjamin said, “After three or four months we found a whole Fire Dept. company. That experience brought me to reality. As a kid I had always idolized firefighters for their size and bravery. I saw them come around the corner carrying out the bodies, and saw them drop to their knees wailing with grief. They had found about eight members of their company. They had close ties; they were their children’s godfathers, their brothers, their best friends. It was painful.”

Benjamin said the firefighters’ bodies were whole and still in their gear, decomposed but not yet mummified. He said, “They carried them out with much care and dignity, as if they were pallbearers. I just had to walk away and cry.” — DSW

## “It was really crazy”

**P**OLICE Communications Technicians continue to be shaken up about handling phone calls from the people trapped inside the Twin Towers after terrorists rammed two planes into the buildings.



PCT Lisa Johnson

“It was really crazy,” said PCT Lisa Johnson. “People were overwhelmed — yelling and screaming on the phone,” said Johnson. “We had to keep our composure.”

The Police Communications Technicians talked to Police Officers who were at Ground Zero in addition to many of the more than 2,600 people stuck inside the buildings, who later died when the Twin Towers collapsed.

“We were dispatching information to them about people calling in on cell phones who were trapped and where they were located,” Johnson said. “One caller asked a PCT to pray with her.”

Ten years later, the operators still talk to each other about the horror of that day. “The feelings are still with us—sadness because so many people lost their lives,” Johnson said. “One co-worker’s brother was a pilot of the plane that hit the Pentagon. You can still see the sadness in her eyes.” — JL



Criminalist 1 Sarah McGarvey

PEP photo by Clarence Elle-Rivera

## “I’m passionate about this project”

**C**RIMINALIST 1 Sarah McGarvey has devoted her career to helping the families of the victims of the 9/11 attack move beyond the dark chapter in their lives when they lost their loved ones.

A member of the World Trade Center Victim Identification Unit at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, McGarvey extracts DNA samples from bone bits found at Ground Zero so anthropologists can try to match them with material found at the site or provided by families.

“I am very passionate about this project,” said McGarvey, who has a bachelor’s degree in molecular genetics and studied forensic science in graduate school. She works with two Criminalist Level 3s, Michael Mosco and Niyrai Bradshaw, who analyze and review data from the DNA. All three are members of Civil Service Technical Guild Local 375.

Three years ago, McGarvey and a team at the Forensic Biology office, which houses the identification unit, came up with a new procedure for extracting DNA.

She cleans bits of bone pieces, grinds them into powder, incubates them and studies the material in a computerized genetic analyzer machine. The DNA information is electronically compared with DNA samples from missing victims’ toothbrushes, hairbrushes and clothes as well as other bits of bone.

The samples sometimes match DNA gathered years earlier. Even 10 years after 9/11, the unit receives about 100 samples a week for testing. They have helped identify 60 percent of the nearly 3,000 victims of the attack.

“We have put a huge effort into identifying the victims,” said McGarvey, noting that the OCME has beefed up the staff so all the bone DNA work is done in-house. — GNH



# Workers confront mental

## The pain remains

By GREGORY N. HEIRES

**E**VEN AFTER 10 YEARS, tow truck driver Farris Coley Sr. sometimes sees the image of the war zone at Ground Zero, where the Twin Towers collapsed after terrorists crashed hijacked planes into the buildings.

The Dept. of Transportation sent Coley, a Traffic Enforcement Agent 3 and Local 983 member, to help clear vehicles to make way for emergency workers. Ever since his exposure to the devastation, he has suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"It's with me every day," said Coley, who witnessed people jumping from the burning buildings on Sept. 11 and worked on the cleanup for several months. His stress is compounded by what he calls the lack of recognition from the city.

Over the years, Ground Zero workers like Coley have struggled to deal with PTSD — with its flashbacks, anxiety, sleeplessness and emotional problems. At home and on the job, they can't escape the psychological repercussions of the horror they went through.

"It was like the gates of hell opened, with flames and white ashes, which made it seem like it was snowing," said former Local 376 member Ken George, who was also sent in to clear space for emergency vehicles. He then searched the rubble "pile" for victims and worked at Ground Zero until February 2002.

Illnesses caused by his work at Ground Zero forced him to retire from his Highway Repairer job, which he held for nearly 20 years.

Every day, he needs a cocktail of prescription drugs to cope with his stress, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, respiratory problems, weakened heart and the infamous "9/11 cough." Recently, he had to start using an oxygen tank to help him breathe.

Unable to sleep more than a few hours, George sometimes wakes up screaming and punching his pillow.

At times, said George's wife of 27 years, Cindi, "It's like he's dead. He's not the same person I married."

His erratic behavior and need for caring have put tremendous pressure on the couple's marriage, and the recurring nightmares and the stress of fighting his afflictions led George to attempt suicide. Fortunately, his adult son found him hanging in a doorway in time to save his life.

### Buried in wreckage

Emergency Medical Technician Joe Conzo, secretary-treasurer of Uniformed EMTs and Paramedics Local 2507, and his partner, Bill Trouccolo, were among the first rescue workers to arrive at the World Trade Center. When the first tower collapsed as they were evacuating the nearby Marriott Hotel, they were buried in the wreckage. Conzo crawled out of the debris. After calling his mother to let her know he was all right, he searched for Trouccolo, who suffered a broken leg and four broken ribs, and pulled him out of the debris.

"It was a horror that I never expected to see — people jumping out of windows and the body parts," Conzo said.

Conzo soon sought the help of a ther-



Local 376 member Ken George at Ground Zero on 9/11

apist, who sent him to the scene of the mass killing to help him with closure.

Conzo still gets rattled when he sees low-flying planes, which trigger his memory of the hijacked airliners that hit the towers. From time to time, he breaks out crying, as he did recently while watching a documentary about 9/11.

Like many 9/11 survivors, Conzo has coping mechanisms. He finds solace in sharing his experience. Recently, he felt more upbeat after talking to the media about 9/11.

Coley also finds relief by going to the gym. He has cut his weight and reduced his belt size. And his real joy comes from coaching his son's baseball team, which he led to a championship this summer.

But despite their ability to move on, as they are reminded of the tragedy, many 9/11 workers suspect that they will never fully recover.

"I wish all of this would disappear," Coley said.



Seriously injured by falling debris, Brian Gestring, a Criminalist from the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, awaits a ferry to New Jersey, where many went after the Twin Towers collapsed on Sept. 11, 2001.



Emergency Medical Technician Joseph Conzo, left, with co-worker EMT William Trouccolo, who broke a leg and four ribs when the South Tower of the World Trade Center collapsed on Sept. 11, 2001. Conzo continues to battle post-traumatic stress disorder because of the horror of that day.



# scars, physical disabilities



Hundreds of Emergency Medical Service employees attended the funeral of Paramedic Carlos Lillo, who was killed in the 9/11 terrorist attack, at St. Cyril's Church in Deer Park, Long Island. Left, President Patrick J. Bahnken of EMTs and Paramedics Local 2507, leads a procession of pallbearers alongside a New York Fire Dept. ambulance carrying Lillo's flag-draped coffin.

## Living and dying with 9/11 diseases

By JANE LaTOUR

**T**HE SAD legacies of 9/11 include thousands of working people suffering from debilitating diseases caused by their exposure to the toxic air of Ground Zero during the response, recovery and cleanup efforts.

Many have died and the toll of death and illness is still climbing. The World Trade Center Health Program, which provides health care to eligible workers, treated 18,462 participants in 2010 and monitored 27,837.

PEP spoke to two public employees who worked in the long recovery and cleanup efforts. Both suffer from their exposure to toxins at the site — a tragic consequence of their dedicated service.

"I'll never forget it," said Thomas Bazerjian, then a Borough Supervisor in the Dept. of Transportation. Ten years ago, the Local 1157 member was at work in his office under the Manhattan end of the Brooklyn Bridge, when the attack occurred.

"The first day, we worked in the pit, loading and passing buckets of debris like an assembly line," he said. For months afterward, he supervised the night shift on the cleanup. "We were working 12-hour days, six days a week," he recalled.

Six months after that exposure, Bazerjian was diagnosed with asthma. Now, at 56, he lives with the effects — post-traumatic stress disorder, asthma and sinusitis, acid reflux disease and insomnia — and needs a constant barrage of medication.

"I go to the Mount Sinai program on Staten Island," he said. "They check my breathing and provide my medication. If you had to pay for them out-of-pocket,



**Charles Kaczorowski**  
Construction Proj. Mgr.



**Thomas Bazerjian**  
Borough Supervisor

it would be a real problem. The doctors, nurses and the social worker are all very experienced and helpful."

Bazerjian has difficult nights and a hard time going to work. "I do the best I can. My health isn't what it used to be. I used to play basketball, go to the gym and run. I can't be active anymore."

### Engulfed in flames

On the morning of 9/11, Local 375 member Charles Kaczorowski left the subway right across from the North Tower, which was engulfed in flames. A Construction Project Manager for the city's Dept. of Design and Construction, Kaczorowski spent 2,278 hours supervising the cleanup and recovery efforts at Ground Zero. "We worked 8-hour shifts around the clock," he recalled, until July 1, 2002.

In February 2002, Kaczorowski developed a cough.

He went to the Mount Sinai program and had his first pulmonary reading. Now, the Vietnam veteran, at 64, suffers from an array of illnesses: acid reflux, sinusitis, asthma, and RADS (reactive airway dysfunction syndrome). He's had two heart incidents and suffers from gall bladder, kidney and liver disease.

"It's tough getting up in the morning," he said. "I tire really quickly."

To help sufferers like Bazerjian and Kaczorowski, DC 37 was in the forefront of the fight for compensation for victims of the exposures, which culminated in January when President Obama signed the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. Kaczorowski was part of that fight and lobbied for the bill in Washington, D.C. with a DC 37 delegation. "I received Congressional recognition for doing that," he said.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health ruled in July that since cancer could not be conclusively linked to Ground Zero toxins, it would not be covered by the Zadroga Act.

A committee created under the law will review scientific evidence and make recommendations to 9/11 Health Program Administrator Dr. John Howard on covering additional conditions. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention appointed Principal Program Coordinator Guille Mejia of DC 37's Safety and Health Dept. to that committee.

Congress members Carolyn Maloney, Jerrold Nadler and Peter King, authors of the Zadroga Act, filed a petition with Dr. Howard that requires him to reconsider adding cancer coverage — a decision he will make in consultation with the committee.



# We pay tribute to 9/11 heroes

By JANE LaTOUR

**O**N SEPT. 11, 2001, AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer Lee Saunders, then heading DC 37, was in Brooklyn when he got the call that planes had attacked the World Trade Center. He immediately ordered staff to evacuate union headquarters on Barclay Street, one short block north of Ground Zero.

Keynoting DC 37's memorial ceremony Sept. 12, Saunders recalled the sacrifices of the members who answered the call that day and worked throughout the coming months to help the city recover.

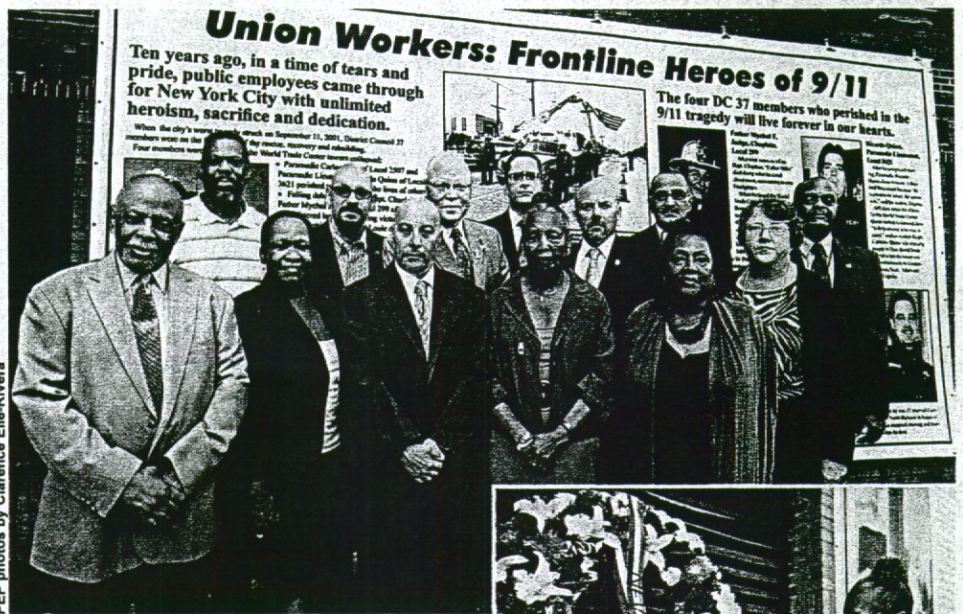
"It was a collective effort and a challenge like never before," he said. Though the union was displaced from its building and dispersed to sites across the city for six months, services to members continued. And the union members continued to provide essential services to the people of New York City.

"It's ironic that many of the folks who praised public-sector workers at that time are now trying to tarnish you in every way possible, as if you are not worthy of the benefits you earn," Saunders told the assembly of local leaders, members and staff. "We all need to remember the sacrifices DC 37 made that day," Saunders said.

## Recognition and remembrance

DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts began the day's ceremonies outside the union building, next to the plaque bearing the names of DC 37's 9/11 dead, under a banner extolling their service. She called for a moment of silence in their honor and noted that while the Firefighters and Police Officers have often been honored for their outstanding service, others have gone without recognition.

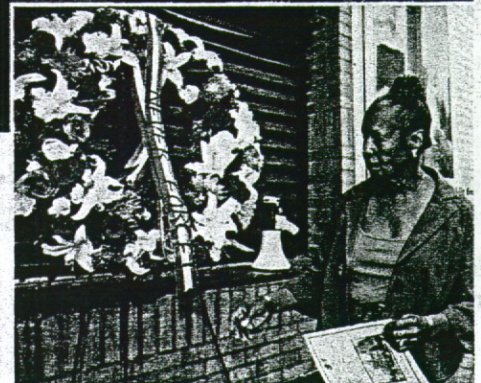
"We honor our members who perished and we recognize all the members who were involved on that day and in the following months," said Roberts. The outdoor banner was designed by Public Employee Press Art Director Alyce Archer, and another on the stage inside was designed by Juan Manzano of the Information Technology Dept.



DC 37 leaders outside union headquarters, where a banner commemorates members who worked and died at Ground Zero. Right, DC 37 Executive Director Lillian Roberts with a wreath recognizing the members who died on 9/11.

Associate Director Oliver Gray pointed out that members of 30 DC 37 locals participated in the rescue and recovery work on and after Sept. 11. Associate Director Henry Garrido introduced "We Remember," a video produced by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, DC 37's parent union, which features some of the many union members who gave selflessly to help others.

The video concludes, "As we remember and mourn the fallen, let us continue to take pride in the vital services public employees provide, day in and day out, in every region of our country." The video is available at <http://www.afscme.org/we-remember>



"I remember the lives — not the lives lost," said Patrick Bahnken, president of Uniformed EMTs, Paramedics and Fire Inspectors Local 2507. "Each of these heroes was an amazing person. The sadness I feel is that men and women are still dying from the effects of that day." For much of his career as a Paramedic, Bahnken partnered with Paramedic Carlos Lillo, who died saving lives at Ground Zero on 9/11.

Eddie Rodriguez, president of DC 37 and Local 1549, remembered the members' sacrifices on "the day I will never forget," and said, "Today, it is our job to make our world a better place."

Local 1549 Executive Vice President Alma Roper told the hushed assembly how the 911 call takers had put their hearts and souls into answering the calls of 9/11. "They rose to the challenge under a tremendous amount of stress, they made promises, they prayed with dying victims, they gave of themselves," she said.



**GROUND ZERO VISIT:** Lee Saunders, the secretary-treasurer of AFSCME, DC 37's parent union, who was DC 37 administrator at the time of the 9/11 attack and clean up, greets members working at the disaster site.