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# Communities to Commemorate, Remember on 20th Anniversary of 9/11

By Martin Wilbur

Area residents will have their choice of 9/11 ceremonies to attend on Saturday, with some communities planning changes in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

The ceremony in New Castle has been moved from its usual early evening time slot at Gedney Park on Route 133 to 9:30 a.m. The proceedings will observe moments of silence at 9:59 a.m. and 10:28 a.m., the moments that the south and north towers of the World Trade Center collapsed in downtown Manhattan, said Michael Wolfensohn, who helped organize the 20th anniversary ceremony for the town.

By Tuesday, there will be 2,977 American flags measuring 11 by 18 inches each that will be placed in an area near the 9/11 Memorial at Gedney Park.

There will be remarks from various dignitaries.

"It's a solemn day to commemorate those we lost and also it's a day to commemorate and honor those who had demonstrated incredible courage in the face of fear," said Acting Supervisor Jeremy Saland.

Westchester County will hold its annual ceremony at Kensico Dam Plaza at 3:30 p.m. It will also unveil a new memorial to first responders and others who have died from illnesses related to working at Ground Zero. It will be located near the 9/11 memorial The Rising at the park.

In White Plains, the city's September

11th Remembrance Ceremony will begin at 9 a.m.

at Liberty Park on Lake Street, the site of the city's permanent memorial.

White Plains will join with 60 communities across America thanks to the White Plains Youth Bureau's Social Justice for Youth Community Youth Court. The youth court program was named an official partner for the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 Day of National Service and Remembrance.

The Community Youth Court program received the special 9/11 Flag of Honor, which includes the names of all 2,983 victims who lost their lives on Sept. 11, 2001, and Feb. 26, 1993, at the trade center. The flag visited the 9/11 Memorial and Museum in New York City on June 27, 2021, and was on the ground where the Twin Towers once stood and where the 9/11 Memorial now has been erected. The City of White Plains will display this flag during the ceremony and later in the City Hall Rotunda.

White Plains will also honor the six White Plains residents who died on Sept. 11, 2001, as we do each year.

All 60 partner communities will honor 50 victims each by reading a short bio and sharing where they are remembered at the 9/11 Memorial in New York City. This will be the largest national coordinated 9/11 Day Project in America.

Here are a list of other area 9/11 ceremonies taking place this weekend.

**Carmel:** Putnam Heroes Memorial Candlelight Vigil, Cornerstone Park 7 p.m.



Ceremonies will be held throughout Westchester and Putnam counties this weekend, 20 years after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

Cortlandt/Croton/Buchanan Tri-Municipal Ceremony: Croton Landing, 1 p.m.

Mohegan Lake Illumination Ceremony: Granite Knolls Park, 2975 Stony St., Mohegan Lake, 8 p.m.

**Mount Kisco:** 9/11 monument near the Mount Kisco Public Library, 6:15 p.m. Followed by refreshments and live entertainment at the Main Street firehouse. Mount Pleasant/Pleasantville: 20th anniversary September 11 Remembrance, Mount Pleasant Community Center, 125 Lozza Drive, Valhalla on Friday, Sept. 10 at 5 p.m.

**North Castle:** Wampus Brook Park gazebo, Maple Avenue, Armonk, 11 a.m.

Somers: Bailey Park, 10 a.m.

**Yorktown:** Shrub Oak Memorial Pavilion at Hart Library, 4:30 p.m.

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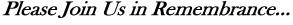


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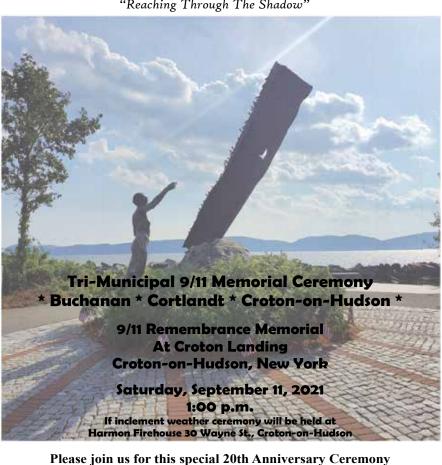
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# Ground Zero Workers' Attorney Still in Awe of 9/11 Responders' Dedication

By Martin Wilbur

Like millions of Americans, when the 20th anniversary of the September 11 terrorist attacks dawns this Saturday morning, William Groner will remember the hundreds of firefighters and police officers who raced into the burning towers to save lives.

The more than 400 emergency service workers died at the World Trade Center along with their colleagues who survived the collapse of the twin towers have rightfully been lionized in their response on the day of the catastrophe.

But Groner will also think about the thousands of workers, from firefighters to building cleaners, who selflessly engaged in a nearly nine-month recovery and cleanup at and near Ground Zero and the personal costs it inflicted on many of them.

Groner, a co-founder and managing partner of the law firm Worby, Groner & Edelman, negotiated the more than \$800 million settlement for over 10,000 clients in a mass tort litigation suit after hundreds of them fell ill. Many suffered from unusual blood cancers after inhaling the toxins without proper respiratory protection.

"It was important to tell the actual story of the actual responders, not on 9/11 but of 9/12 forward, because starting 9/12 there was a nine-month recovery-rescue operation and what they went through and what happened to them, medically, politically, scientifically and then the litigation were really just incredible stories," Groner said.

"It's never really been told before and I think it was important," he continued. "A lot of the people around me thought it was important that story be made a part of the historical record."

Two years ago, Groner, a Bedford resident, wrote a book on the nearly decade-long litigation, "9/12: The Epic Battle of the Ground Zero Responders." The book will soon be available in paperback and the story will be made into a 10-episode television

He will also be part of a program this Sunday at 2 p.m. at The Bedford Playhouse where the issues surrounding the case will be discussed.

The thrust of the lawsuit, divided into two separate actions, those who responded to the clean-up and recovery and about 1,000 workers who cleaned surrounding buildings near Ground Zero, focused on the often-nonexistent protection. It was determined that only about 39 percent of the workers had the proper respiratory equipment.

"Under the law, the owner of the site and all the contractors have a responsibility that the workers have the proper safety equipment and that absolutely didn't happen, and it wasn't even close to what should have happened," Groner said.

In 2003, his first client in the case, from Rockland County, retained his firm. In 2004, the firm, which partnered with another firm, filed its first papers. Within two years of the first worker stepping forward, there were close to 9,000 clients.

Despite what appears 20 years later as an obvious conclusion, the outcome was far from certain. Groner explained that since it wasn't a class action suit but about 10,500 individual lawsuits, his legal team had to prove exactly

what each plaintiff inhaled, and how the different toxins affected their health.

"It was almost impossible to understand individually, maybe generally speaking, but not individually," Groner said. "Then you had to prove that these toxins caused the particular injury and science wasn't even close to understanding it."

The pushback wasn't so much from the public or even Congress, but New York City. Congress approved \$1 billion in federal funding for the city to help the responders who were falling ill, but then-Mayor Michael Bloomberg used about \$200 million of the money on the city's legal defense.

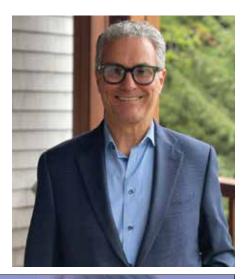
Then there was the unwitting lack of cooperation from the medical community,

Groner said. They are extremely cautious about scientific conclusions, and since many of the blood cancers have a latency period of up to 10 years, it wasn't completely understood at the time. But Groner suspected his clients had a case because by 2005; 121 of them had various blood cancers, and the illnesses were

The director for the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health compared the

Continued from page 11

William Groner, who represented more than 10,000 Ground Zero workers in a mass tort litigation suit, will speak this Sunday at The Bedford Playhouse. His book, "9/12: The Epic Battle of the Ground Zero Responders," details the challenges that faced his clients and their stories.





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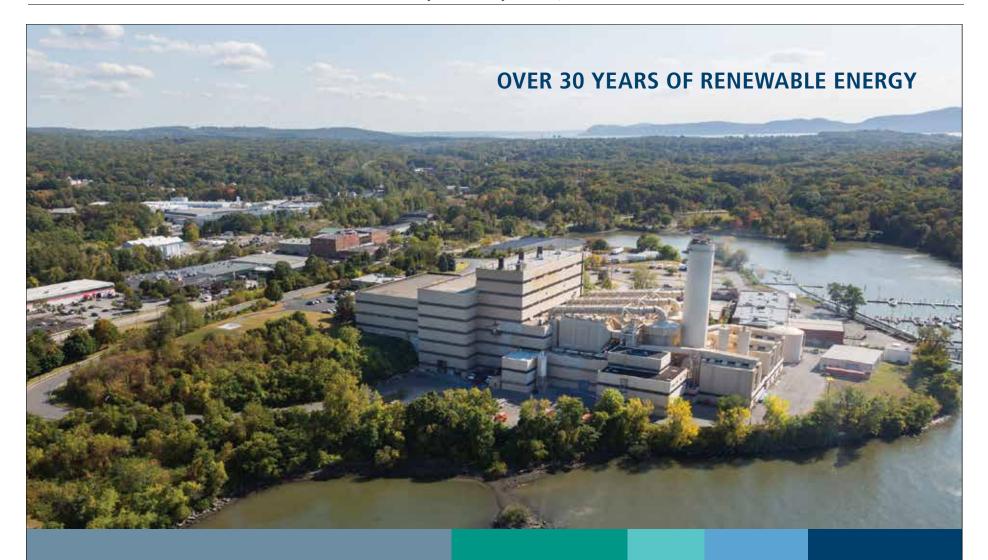
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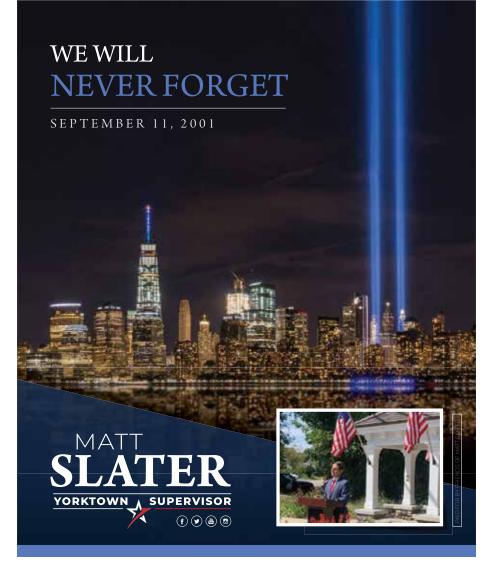






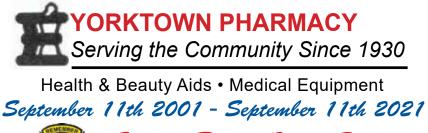














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# Westchester to Honor 9/11 Victims With Weekend of Volunteer Opportunities

This article has been reprinted from the Aug. 17 issue to emphasize on the importance of commemorating the 20th anniversary of 9/11

### By Martin Wilbur

It may be 20 years since the September 11 terrorist attacks, but Westchester County once again is making certain that the nearly 3,000 victims from that day, including more than 100 county residents, will always be honored.

For the 11th year since the catastrophe, the county and Volunteer New York! are partnering to offer the 9/11: Serve + Remember opportunities, this time a full weekend where local residents can participate in community service projects to remember those who perished.

"The most important thing is to remember what the 9/11 Day of Service is all about," said Jeannette Gisbert, executive director of Volunteer New York! "It's really about, if you speak to the family members, they want people to remember not the tragedy but how people ran to Ground Zero to help each other. That's what they want to remember as their legacy, so that's what we're trying to do here, give people an opportunity to engage in community through volunteerism."

The nonprofit organization, along with the Westchester Parks Foundation and County Executive George Latimer, recently announced the events that are scheduled for the upcoming weekend.

Volunteers are encouraged to participate in a live webinar on Thursday, Sept. 9 at 7 p.m. Volunteer New York! Community Outreach Manager Charles Curtis will present a program called "Volunteering With Equity in Mind." He will share tips on how to advocate for those in the community and bridge the gap between those who serve and are served.

## Ground Zero Workers' Attorney Still in Awe of 9/11 Responders' Dedication

 $continued\ from\ page\ 5$ 

health disaster to Chernobyl and that they may never know the true impact, Groner recalled. In 2012 and 2013, that director commissioned a study, which concluded that there were more than 70 cancers linked to Ground Zero dust.

Groner, who later founded an alternative dispute resolution firm, said regulations were skirted in the haste to clean up and get back to normal. But so much was done wrong, he said, it was difficult to find what was done correctly.

"I think it's generally felt that there was a rush to open up Wall Street and there was a rush to show the world the resilience of New York City and there's no debate to me that there was also an ego component involved," Groner said.

All this time later, Groner said he's still in awe of the responders and workers who despite putting themselves in danger went out to the site and made sure the city and the nation could recover.

"What I saw in the responders, I saw greatness," he said.

On Saturday, Sept. 11, there will be two two-hour park cleanup efforts at Tibbetts Brook Park in Yonkers and Croton Point Park in Croton-on-Hudson. The two sessions at each location will run from 9 to 11 a.m. and 12 to 2 p.m.

Gisbert said the park cleanups are new for this year's commemoration for people who may be uncomfortable volunteering indoors because of the pandemic.

On Sunday, Sept. 12, there will be two volunteer hubs, one at Westchester Community College in Valhalla and the other at Iona College in New Rochelle. Volunteers can choose between making fleece blankets for children in local hospitals, creating literacy kits for elementary school students or making cards for deployed service members.

Those interested in participating can register in advance for either location for a 90-minute morning session starting at 10 a.m. or a two-hour afternoon effort beginning at noon.

Latimer said that for all the challenges the country is facing, the spirit of helping others is an example of what communities around the country can offer.

"When we think of America, that is the best of America, an America that sacrifices for each other, an America that doesn't put its own individual desires first...and they sacrifice their lives so other people can live," Latimer said.

On Saturday, Sept. 11 at 3:30 p.m., Westchester will hold its annual 9/11 ceremony at Kensico Dam Plaza. It will also

unveil a new memorial to first responders and others who have died from illnesses related to working at Ground Zero. It will be located near the 9/11 memorial The Rising at the park.

Gisbert said more than 33,000 families and groups in Westchester, Putnam and Rockland counties have volunteered more than 400,000 hours of service for Volunteer New York! Their efforts benefitted over 300 nonprofits.

In the previous 9/11: Serve + Remember events, more than 10,000 volunteers have joined in the effort over the past decade, she said.

Anyone interested in volunteering, may register in advance by calling 914-948-4452 or visit volunteernewyork.org/service.



