

NYSUT UNITED

A UNION OF PROFESSIONALS

www.nysut.org | September 2011

TEN YEARS REMEMBERING 9/11



ONE MEMBER'S
PERSONAL
JOURNEY



- **TEACHER EVALUATION DONE RIGHT**
- **DEBT-CEILING DEAL DIMINISHES THE AMERICAN DREAM**

NEW YORK STATE UNITED TEACHERS

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Richard C. Iannuzzi

An American tragedy ... An American dream

On Sept. 11, 2001, I was teaching fourth grade. A colleague entered my room and whispered that a plane struck one of the World Trade Center towers. The gravity of the event didn't register and we went on with the lesson. As the morning wore on and a second plane struck, the reality began to set in. Distraught parents drifted in to take their children home, and we took turns huddling around a TV monitoring the tragedy.

The building principal, young and new to her post, asked me to address an assembly of remaining students. I tried to reassure them as we gauged how many students lived with family members who worked in the city, and then we let walkers and bus riders leave. For the next several hours, teachers, support professionals and administrators walked through the community together, making sure none of our students were wandering the streets or waiting for someone to come home who might not return.

Sept. 11, 2001, touched all of us. The pages of *NYSUT United*, as well as our Facebook page, are filled with members' reminiscences of that day. Some will make you cry while others might make you smile. They will all make you ponder how the events of that day and the days that followed define us today.

One of my most vivid memories of that tragic day was watching with

“Today we face the American dream shaken again. Not by a terrorist attack or a foreign invader, but by economic stratification and hardship.”

awe and admiration the response of firefighters, police, health care professionals, municipal workers and other emergency personnel. Many of them lost their lives or jeopardized their health to help and support others.

NYSUT members who served as military reservists were called into action. Educators had to make sense of it all for their students while grappling with their own sense of horror and loss. Trade unionists and other workers labored in the rubble at Ground Zero, in Pennsylvania and at the Pentagon to recover and to rebuild.

What did we call these women and men? We called them heroes. And that's exactly what they were, even as they shunned the title. They dedicated themselves to selflessness and to pulling our nation out of its most des-



STEVE WHITNEY

perate and frightening time.

What I remember most about that day was the simple way we shared roles and responsibilities; how we valued one another's thoughts without regard for title or position; and how we remained focused on the goal of seeing each child home safely — as the first responders focused on rescue and recovery.

The American dream was shaken, and all we could think of was keeping it together.

Today we face the American dream shaken again. Not by a terrorist attack or a foreign invader, but by economic stratification and hardship. Political discord is the norm. Finger-pointing and scapegoating trump collaboration and equitable sacrifice. Middle class workers, public employees and union members are vilified for what they have instead of appreciated for their labor, while the wealth divide grows ever wider with no compromise in sight.

Sisters and brothers, it is for us as workers and unionists to seize the opportunity offered in remembering Sept. 11. We must redouble our efforts to protect the American dream for the middle class and to increase the opportunities for others to achieve that dream. In this way, we will truly honor those lost and those who sacrificed for others — and for the American dream.

Dear Reader: My hope is to reference the American dream in each issue of NYSUT United this publishing cycle, for it is that dream that defines our mission and the fruits of our labor.

Dick

Note: Your comments on this column or any issue you wish to share directly with me are welcomed. Email your thoughts to dialogue@nysutmail.org.



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Photo of Marie Triller by Michael Oakes



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There's a difference in your mail!

NYSUT promotes greening activities in its offices as well as in locals it represents. A new initiative in this effort is to reduce duplicate publications mailed to the same household.

Starting with this issue of *NYSUT United*, you will notice that only one magazine will arrive at your home. This small effort will save paper, printing and mailing costs.

Should you still desire to re-

ceive extra copies, reach out to the Member Records Department and reactivate your mailing options. To do so, please email memberec@nysutmail.org with the word "Re-activate" in the subject line and provide your name and mailing address, or call 800-342-9810 ext. 6234. Leave a message with your name and address and *NYSUT United* will be reactivated.

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MARIE TRILLER

Ground Zero, 2002

Sept. 11, 2001 We will never forget

Here's a sampling of comments from our Facebook page.

Add your thoughts: www.facebook.com/NYSUTUnited

I was in my [guidance] office at school. My mom called me to tell me what was happening. Our union rep came in and told us a private plane must have hit the towers, but he hadn't seen the news the way my mother had. We went into emergency mode, covering classrooms for teachers so they could try to find out about their loved ones in the towers, dismissing students to their parents. I now think of the world in terms of before and after 9/11 ...

RICKI BUTLER

... When I put the news on in my social studies classroom the students thought that we were watching scenes from a make-believe disaster movie. It took quite some time for them to absorb the shock that this was real. Later that day, a number of students realized that they had relatives working in or near the twin towers. This was only the beginning of the roller coaster ride that became the aftermath of 9/11

and the start of "Project Liberty" in the Central Islip school district.

WENDY KAPLAN

I was in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas getting ready to present an educational workshop for teachers on the "Integration of Video Across the Curriculum." I was stranded and was unable to return to New York City until Sept. 16. Knowing I was from New York City, and very scared, the educators in McAllen took me into their hearts and homes. They could not do enough for me. We forged friendships that have lasted to this day.

As a result, when AFT needed organizers to help recruit members, I volunteered to return to that spot of America that had invaded my heart and held my hand at such a difficult moment in our nation's history.

I have established many friendships with fellow teachers in that part of Texas (we have mini reunions at TEACH & AFT conventions), have continued to return, on a yearly basis, to organize and have even organized in other states for AFT. It is my way of "giving back" for all that the UFT, NYSUT and AFT have done for me professionally.

JOSIE AVELLANET LEVINE

I was visiting a school and the TV was on in one of the classrooms. I saw the second plane hit and actually felt my soul stir. That is a feeling I have only known perhaps two or three times before. My sister and brother live in New York ... My brother watched in disbelief from his office building — those jumping to their deaths. My sister was pulled into a building by a friend. I just remember how absolutely beautiful the sky was that day ... And how quiet it all was. That event changed me forever. ...

CATHERINE GUAY-PERISON

... I watched the TV in horror while at work as the second plane crashed into the tower. The BOCES I still work at is literally next to the Air National Guard base in Central New York. The only thing that separates us is a fence.

The whole building shook as all the F-16s stationed there went screaming into the air to protect our nuclear power plant. We used to be able to walk on the base for exercise before Sept. 11. The gate has been permanently locked ever since that morning.

MARIA BARIS

My graduate class was cancelled due to the day's events and I was

able to be my sister's birthing coach and witness my niece being born. She was born on 9/11/01 and weighed 9 pounds, 1 ounce. She will be 10 this year and she is the most selfless young girl I have ever met. So sweet and always thinking of others. And such a great cousin and mentor to my 2- and 3-year-old children.

KRISTINA JACOBS LOOP

I was working in a dead-end job at the time. Had my B.A., but hadn't done anything with it. It made me realize how important it is to do something meaningful every day, to be happy with what you are doing in life. Just over a year later, I left my job and was in graduate school. I'm going into my seventh year of teaching.

HEATHER FRAME ROBERTSON



We devoted our letters page to comments in remembrance of the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorists attacks. Letters to the editor will return in the next issue. Letters may be submitted to united@nysutmail.org.

Ten years

later

Tragedy still defines us

In recalling the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, many union members noted how the world welcomed and praised the public servants who responded to the attacks, got children home safely and more. The dedication of public employees was heralded by the media and politicians in the days, weeks and months since.

Below, some of the members directly impacted by that day share their stories and note that much has changed. They question why public service workers are now disparaged by media and elected officials, and their hard-won benefits are under attack. Tell us what you think, especially your views on solutions. Write to us at united@nysut-mail.org.

By **BETSY SANDBERG**
bsandber@nysutmail.org

Dorothy McGrew was on a bus coming down 7th Avenue when all traffic stopped.

A UFT paraprofessional in the travel-training program, McGrew was paired with a special education student learning to navigate New York City.

“Soon it was like watching a science fiction movie,” she recalled. The streets started filling with people, then smoke,

Ground Zero, 2004

MARIE TRILLER

then ash. She had to get the student to safety without the help of buses, taxis or subways. They walked for hours until the student got home.

“Then I couldn’t get home to New Jersey and thankfully I was able to stay with a co-worker,” said McGrew, adding her memories are as clear “as if it was yesterday.”

As the nation prepares to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and the crash of United Airlines flight 93 in Pennsylvania, many join McGrew in remembering.

Barbara Maertz heard the news on her car radio as she was driving to the SUNY Farmingdale campus to set up for a United University Professions membership picnic.

“Our first thought was perhaps we should cancel, but then as we saw students, faculty and administration coming together, we opened it up to everyone. Several of our members, administrators and students had loved ones in the towers. Out of all the horror of that day, it became a beautiful and spiritual thing, being together,” Maertz said.

AFT President Randi Weingarten was president of the United Federation of Teachers at the time of the attacks. She recalled being in Brooklyn and then spending the rest of the day working out a dismissal plan with administration.

She calls the day a miracle because “8,000 children, some as young as 4, some with handicaps, most known to their teachers only a few days, were moved through conditions comparable only to the height of war, without a single child hurt or lost!”

Following the Sept. 11 attacks, NYSUT-represented nurses and health care professionals provided

care and counseling to survivors and those working at Ground Zero. UUP member Henry Dondero provided peace of mind to about 600 families. The associate professor of dental hygiene at SUNY Farmingdale worked the morgue with other dentists and technicians helping to identify the deceased.

“I would work the weekends because I didn’t have a private practice,” Dondero said. He worked every weekend until June.

Anthony Georgakis was among union reservists activated for duty at Ground Zero after the attack. A social studies teacher then, he recalls the intense emotions of being so close to the 16-acre World Trade Center Complex of seven buildings. The attacks laid the massive towers (standing 1,368 and 1,362 feet high) to rubble and dust.

Georgakis, now retired from the Chautauqua Lake TA, said there were many gestures of kindness: people bringing food, care packages and even insoles for the boots of the Guard members living in tents in Battery Park. “One of the nicest things was a fitness center allowed us to use their showers,” he said.

“Ten years ago, we felt valued for the job we did,” said Roberta Grabler of the UFT. “Public employees are the backbone of this nation. They make this country work; now all we hear is the incorrect information that public pensions are bankrupting states.”

A librarian at PS 1 at the time, Grabler remembers how faculty and students watched the tragedy unfold from school windows, how all staff and parents worked together to ease the impact on students when the school was among those too near Ground Zero to reopen for several days. She noted how unions did much to help the healing. The

statewide union created a “9/11” fund with a \$100,000 donation to provide school supplies to hard-hit areas and help union members who suffered losses. NYSUT members raised an additional \$400,000 and every penny was disbursed. “Those were anxious days,” Grabler said. “But we all worked together and we all turned to each other for help.”

Minna Barrett, a psychology professor and Red Cross mental health volunteer, knows about anxious days. In 2001, she was at the Albany airport renting a car to drive back to Long Island.

“We heard about the first attack and it didn’t take long for flights to get canceled,” said Barrett, a member of UUP at SUNY Old Westbury. By the time her group made it to the Throgs Neck bridge, guards were stationed with machine guns.

There were four pleas for help on her answering machine when she got home from those who knew she could access the missing person system. She went to Manhattan and was immediately enlisted to supervise mental health workers. “They wanted me because I could work nights and still teach class during the day.” Barrett never imagined she would remain so involved.

In addition to bereaved children and family members, Barrett provided mental health services to nearly

500 first responders. The damage ranged from the physical (workers with respiratory distress) — to the neurological (patients with memory loss, trouble organizing thoughts) — to the emotional aspects of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She still sees about 12 patients regularly and continues to take referrals.

PTSD can be extremely difficult to manage and treat as many patients continue to be overwhelmed by what they witnessed and uncomfortable admitting it.

“Sept. 11 was a major event that started with an attack, led to a collapse of two buildings and a recovery effort that took months,” she said. Her strategies include getting patients to understand the physiological reasons for the anxiety they experience and to learn self-care techniques to manage distress.

Barrett’s passion about public education and public service has run deep for almost six decades. She mourns what she sees as a demonizing of public service.

“I see it as dismantling of the public common,” she said. “It’s hard to understand the choices people make and why so many in this country want to identify with wealth and celebrity rather than with honor and integrity.”

For more on Sept. 11



For other remembrances and more in-depth reporting on the anniversary of the Sept. 11 attacks, visit www.nysut.org, www.uft.org, www.uupinfo.org and www.psc-cuny.org. For an online clip of members’ work during and after the attacks as well as AFT President Randi Weingar-

ten’s recollections, visit <http://go.aft.org/911video>.

The video includes the poignant story of how UFT members Margaret Espinosa and Julia Martinez, both School-Related Professionals, rescued wheelchair-bound students Becky Zeng and Stephanie Sealy.

Making school a safer place

By **CATHERINE HENIHAN**

Sept. 11, 2001

*Murry Bergtraum High School
New York City, Lower Manhattan*

I walked toward school as the sun was coming up over the East River, the World Trade Center at my back. As a laboratory specialist in the science department of a high school, I was on the early shift to prepare for the laboratory exercises and science demonstrations.

First period classes were in full swing when the principal announced that a plane had hit one of the World Trade Center towers. Our first thought: What a horrible accident.

Shortly after the start of second period I was standing with one of my student interns when our building shook. Our eyes locked. We knew then that something was terribly wrong. The principal announced that students should follow the announcements to exit the building. I placed my intern with an exiting class and returned to the lab to await instructions. They never came.

A science staffer came back to the preparation room for personal effects accompanied by a police officer who told us we should have already evacuated. He told us we had to leave lower Manhattan but we might not be able to use the Brooklyn Bridge. I lived in Brooklyn; the

bridge was my way home. As we left the school we could clearly see the damage, fire and smoke.

We joined the crowds walking over the Brooklyn Bridge. One woman passed us running barefoot and carrying her high-heeled shoes. That reminded me that I forgot to change into my jogging shoes when I left the school. I looked back once at the towers. I started to cry at the thought of someone doing such a terrible thing to us. U.S. Air Force fighter jets flew overhead. Some people ran for cover.

When I arrived home my husband, who was out of town, called and told me both towers had fallen. My husband is a retired member of the New York City Fire Department. He said he thought perhaps more than 100 fire fighters lost their lives. This was too upsetting and I chided him for even thinking that. We found out later of course the number was more than three times what he initially feared.

The radio broadcast a call for volunteers at area hospitals anticipating large numbers of injured. My son and I walked to the Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn. On the way we passed people walking from the World Trade Center, covered in white-gray dust from the fallen towers.

We were among hundreds of volunteers who lined up to register. I was assigned to the Emergency

Examining the past, preparing for the future

The New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health will convene a one-day conference to document the extent of the harm from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and probe how the government's response would now be different.

"Protecting Worker and Community Health: Are We Prepared for the next 9/11?" takes place Sept. 16 at the United Federation of Teachers headquarters in lower Manhattan. The event

is sponsored by a host of organizations and unions, including NYSUT, the American Federation of Teachers and the Professional Staff Congress.

Panelists include medical doctors, health and safety specialists, professionals from natural disaster groups and industrial hygienists.

The conference costs \$25 to attend. To register online, visit www.nycosh.org or call 212-227-6440.

Room at Long Island College Hospital to answer calls from people desperately wanting to know if their loved ones were there. I was given a list of patients who had been admitted; unfortunately, I had to tell all of the callers that the person they were looking for was not here.

When I returned to school, my colleague told me how she and other staff members came upon our students with disabilities who were stranded that day. The school buses could not come and take them home. Staff members pushed students in wheelchairs through the streets to get them home safely.

When I thought about the response in our school on Sept. 11, I was upset that some staff and students on the third floor were not notified to evacuate. The process did not work. The chain of command was broken.

What was the alternate plan for students with disabilities? Was it a flaw in the process or panic? Was it that one person didn't follow the protocol? What was the protocol?

I voiced my concerns to the principal. I knew that if I complained about the problem, I should offer to work on a solution. I joined our School Safety Committee and remained a member until I retired.

It was after Sept. 11 that the New York City Department of Education really enforced school safety plan implementation. One issue was to be sure staff assigned to assist were indeed still working in the school, and not retired or transferred. In our school we made sure the daily attendance list of limited-mobility students was easily accessible in an emergency.

While on the school health and safety committee, I proposed adding to the school safety plan the chemical inventory list and emergency procedures for chemical spills, and releases for small spills. At the beginning of each term I conducted a safety walk, reminding science staff of locations and use of safety equipment, material safety data sheets, safe chemical storage, etc.

Hopefully, I left the school a safer place to learn and work for staff, students and especially for students with special needs.

Catherine Henihan is a retired member of the United Federation of Teachers. She is trained in chemical emergency spill response through the UFT and the AFT, and now trains laboratory workers, teachers and other staff. She also works part time for the UFT training lab specialists working in junior high and high schools in New York City.

Finally, help comes for stricken responders

By **BETSY SANDBERG**
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Thanks to the persistence of public service unions, advocacy groups and New York's Congressional delegation, workers responding to help in the aftermath of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center will finally be getting help themselves.

In July, a package of \$4.3 billion in compensation and health care benefits took effect to cover responders, volunteers and morgue employees, as well as people who lived, worked or attended school near Ground Zero, and suffer from illnesses related to exposure of toxic chemicals.

The package is testament to the leadership of then-Senator Hillary Clinton, Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand and Representatives Carolyn B. Maloney and Jerrold

Nadler. The New York Democrats never wavered from the years-long push for the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, named for a New York City police officer whose death was directly related to exposure to toxic chemicals at the site.

Cancer-stricken Ground Zero responders and residents, however, were told in late July they are not eligible to receive benefits.

"Those who went to help others and were exposed to a host of dangerous substances deserve far better than this," said Andy Pallotta, NYSUT's executive vice president. "It is outrageous that first responders to the Sept. 11 tragedy who have cancer will not receive these health care benefits."

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health found that while the debris in lower Manhattan contained known human car-



Ground Zero, 2003

MARIE TRILLER

cinogens, studies found that first responders did not have dangerous levels of exposure and that lower Manhattan residents do not have a significantly higher risk of cancer. NIOSH has promised to do another study on cancer cases by the middle of 2012, but Gillibrand requested the study be done sooner. Other New York leaders also expressed their disappointment in the report.

"We believe this report is premature and that the framework

established by the Zadroga bill will demonstrate that those who were exposed to the witches' brew of toxins at Ground Zero have developed serious illnesses, including cancer, and deserve justice," Schumer said.

The approved package of benefits includes \$1.5 billion for treatment of breathing disorders and mental health problems and \$2.8 billion in compensation. Claim forms became available in June.

Go to www.CDC.gov for the report.

'I'm not always on the edge, but I'm close'

Laurence Wooster was a senior attending Stuyvesant High School in lower Manhattan when two hijacked American Airlines passenger jets hit the World Trade Center towers.

"We saw things I will never forget, like people jumping off the building," Laurence wrote in an account published in the Sept. 26, 2001, issue of New York Teacher, then NYSUT's bi-weekly statewide newspaper.

"I tried to convince myself that, somehow, someone would be on the ground to catch them in a net or a mattress. But I knew that was impossible. I knew I was watching people die."

We asked Laurence to reflect on Sept. 11, 10 years later:

Time heals most wounds, but not all. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the mildest disruptions in normality — power outages, stalled subway cars — appear to me as signals of another attack, signs that New York is once again about to plunge into chaos. I'm not always on edge, but I'm close. Sometimes images come to me, unwanted and unwelcome, of people jumping, falling. This, unfortunately, will stay with me forever.

As a Stuyvesant High School alumnus, I tell my story with a survivor's pride, but in the past decade I've added anger and frustration to the mix. Anger at the unanswered

questions, at the pigeonholing of skepticism as conspiracy, at the complete lack of accountability. Frustration at the pace of recovery, at the lack of resources for those affected physically, emotionally and financially.

I don't blame the faculty for the decisions they made that day, but I do blame their bosses for returning us to Stuy only a few weeks later. This was a poor decision, and our bodies are paying the price. Twenty-somethings shouldn't have cancer and respiratory illnesses, yet those who were Stuy students on Sept. 11 are falling victim to these conditions. Luckily, we've got advocates,

particularly Lila Nordstrom, founder of StuyHealth. Unluckily, nobody seems to care.

Sept. 11, 2011, will pass like any other day. I will remember by looking forward, hoping those affected by the tragedy live long, healthy lives. All I carry with me are demons, and I count myself among the fortunate.

Editor's note: Students at Stuyvesant High returned to school less than a month after Sept. 11. Some developed respiratory diseases and cancer. StuyHealth was formed to be their advocate. Visit www.stuyhealth.blogspot.com or www.facebook.com/StuyHealth/



Sept. 11 resources for your classroom

From first-person videos to interactive timelines, there are many comprehensive resources online to help students learn about Sept. 11.

NYSUT has developed a “Remembering 9/11” lesson plan that will help middle schoolers understand the idea of heroism and the importance of volunteerism. Go to www.nysut.org to see the standards-based, 80-minute lesson and accompanying resource links.

In the days and weeks following Sept. 11, the American Federation of Teachers was in the field preserving and cataloging videos of public school dedication, valor and hope.



These online clips provide a powerful in-the-moment record of the dedication members from all

union constituencies displayed a decade ago. The video clips are available at <http://go.aft.org/911video>.

“September 11th Personal Stories of Transformation,” available at www.tributewtc.org/programs/toolkit.html, is a free online toolkit using eight videos to teach what happened, how people responded, and how they have worked to make their world better. Each story is accompanied by discussion questions, research links and suggested service projects.

Go to smithsonianconference.org/september11/resources/k-12-lessons-and-activities/ for a host of resources, including lesson plans.

www.911memorial.org offers numerous teaching guides, an interactive timeline and video. It’s filled with first-person accounts from survivors, first responders and witnesses.

A campus rebuilds amid lingering sorrow

By DARRYL McGRATH
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For the Professional Staff Congress, the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks were the union’s greatest tragedy and its most poignant, courageous hour.

The PSC, which represents 20,000 faculty and staff at the City University of New York, lost eight members in the twin towers. The City University of New York lost dozens of students.

“There wasn’t anybody at CUNY who was not connected to it. Our loss was very deep, and people are still conscious of it,” says PSC President Barbara Bowen.

PSC members could have fled in shock and fear that morning.

Instead, Bowen remembers, they snapped into action, without regard for their own lives or safety. Members with medical skills sought out those who needed help at the scene. Other members brought their expertise on health and safety issues and counseling services to the recovery and cleanup.

“It was a community trauma. You were walking in a war zone,” recalls Marcia Newfield, the PSC vice president for part-timers, and an adjunct English Department faculty member at Borough of Manhattan Community College. She, too, remembers how “the BMCC staff was totally energized and responsive afterward.” She also remembers how people’s eyes teared for

weeks after the attacks.

Shortly after the jets hit the towers, students and faculty were evacuated from Fiterman Hall, a 15-story classroom building on the BMCC campus, just 100 yards from the World Trade Center’s Building 7.

When the towers fell, dust clouds swallowed the streets. Debris piles six stories high enveloped Fiterman Hall. The building, once host to 400 course sections day and night, never reopened.

The PSC relentlessly pressed the university, the city and the state about hazards at the site and overcrowded conditions at the college. Members rallied, testified and remained vigilant despite working in temporary classroom space. Still,

PSC President Barbara Bowen says, progress toward a new building was largely cooperative.

For more than eight years, Fiterman Hall remained the campus’ visible reminder of what happened on Sept. 11. Then, in 2009, it was demolished. At last, Newfield says, “things are moving forward.”



PROVIDED

The demolition of Fiterman Hall in November 2009 was a turning point for Borough of Manhattan CC. The 15-story classroom building was heavily damaged when the twin towers collapsed on Sept. 11, 2001. A \$325 million rebuilding project is underway.



Ground Zero, 2010

MARIE TRILLER

Remembering 9/11

One member's personal journey

By LIZA FRENETTE
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“I always say to my students: ‘The camera is up here,’ and I point to my head,” said Marie Triller, art teacher, NYSUT member and professional photographer. “Maybe I should also point to my heart.”

Triller’s newly published collection of photographs, *Ten Years: Remembering 9/11*, offers a window into the wounded soul of a nation attacked by terrorists on Sept. 11, 2001.

“I knew no one who died that day. ... But when the towers fell, I was immensely shocked and filled with a sadness I’d never experienced before,” Triller writes in the book’s introduction.

Every year since the tragedy, she travels to New York City to document the remembrance ceremony.

“Friends would ask me, ‘How can you go down there?’ and I remember thinking, ‘How can you not?’” she writes.

Few are allowed to descend into the pit from which the twin towers of the World Trade Center once erupted to dominate the Manhattan skyline. Triller, instead, photographs the periphery of Ground Zero. Make-shift public memorials. Click. Young people wrapped in U.S. flags. Click. Children wearing FDNY caps. Click. Solemn police, firefighters standing at attention. Click. And in tears. Click. Click. Click.

“Remembering 9/11 became a personal ritual for me; I felt compelled to be witness to every annual ceremony since, where much remains the

same,” Triller writes. “The four aching moments of silence marking the time between the first crash and the fall of the second tower. The sounds of bagpipes, flutes, violins and voices. The tolling bells. Even the sky, more often than not, has the audacity to be stunningly blue and cloudless, as it was that day.”

Triller, a high school art teacher in Albany County’s Voorheesville district for the past 22 years, is a member of the Voorheesville Teachers Association. She’ll be in lower Manhattan on Sept. 11.

Ten Years: Remembering 9-11 by Marie Triller (\$29.95) is published by John Isaacs Books with a foreword by U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand. It is available in bookstores, the New York State Museum, the Albany Institute of History and Art, and at www.amazon.com. Triller is available on weekends for talks and book signings; she can be contacted at mariepix@aol.com.



MICHAEL OAKES



Ground Zero, 2006

MARIE TRILLER