

{ REMEMBERING }

# OF MEMORIES AND MEMORIALS

Memorials can't bring back the victims of the attack on the World Trade Center 20 years ago. They can only ensure that these loved ones are never forgotten.

**Whenever a plane flies** a little low overhead, whenever we glance at Manhattan's altered skyline while crossing the George Washington Bridge, we recall September 11, 2001, and the lives lost in that day's terrorist attacks. Two decades have passed in an instant, and for some families there's still an empty place at the table and a recurrent ache in the heart. There is, in fact, a kind of grief for all of us as we mourn the loss of the people we were before it happened.

Even the sailors who perished at Pearl Harbor knew that donning their country's uniform put them potentially in harm's way. But our friends and relatives and neighbors simply went to work on a sunny September Tuesday. They did not scale battlements or lead brigades; they were blasted away amid the ebullient ordinariness of simply living. They had workday things on their minds, meetings to attend, coffees to sip, clothes to be fetched from the dry cleaner's and kids to pick up from day care. They died, as Englewood's 9/11 memorial says, "living their lives with the freedom we so cherish."

Memorials of stone and marble are enduring; these evidences of our remembering will still be here when we and our grandchildren are no longer here to remember. No, they can't capture for all time the lively humanness of the suddenly departed—their vivacity and gussedness and what looks in retrospect a lot like nobility. But they can afford us a site and a moment for reflection. They can prompt us to stop and consider, as from time to time we should, a dreadful day and the ones we lost so much too soon.

Here, nine area residents share their 9/11 experiences and how memorials help them remember:

Photo courtesy of Gatty Images



## FINCH PARK, RAMSEY

"You can't take the kids to Finch Park without recalling the day, because Ramsey's 9/11 memorial is right there. I get chills every time I'm there with the family — you see the memorial and you remember the day, and remember the people who died and think about their families. That's what 'never forget' means to me, that we'll always remember all those who were lost. Everything that happened that day is still vivid in our minds."

—Jason Brockport, 46, Ramsey

## WESTWOOD TRAIN STATION, WESTWOOD

"It's hard not to think of 9/11 daily, not only because I work near Ground Zero, but because I see my town's memorial park right next to the train station. It's a haunting sight but a beautiful tribute to those who died in the Twin Towers. Seeing it up close, walking the path that's shaped like a memorial ribbon and reading the names of the victims can leave you choked up. Whenever I'm there, whether it's on September 11th or any other day, I like to say a quick prayer, look up to the heavens and let them know they're not forgotten."

—Jeannie Marie Coady, 42, Westwood

## 9/11 MEMORIAL, ORADELL

"As a mother to both Boy and Girl scouts, I have been to many services at the Oradell 9/11 memorial, which allow the community to mourn the lives that were lost. The Oradell memorial in front of the local firehouse is a perfect backdrop for the events. On the anniversary each year, I reach out to those who were my coworkers at the time. My office was on Spring Street and my husband, who was then my boyfriend, worked for Deutsche Bank. His building was destroyed, and afterward he ended up walking to my building. We discuss the day and are thankful that we were able to get out unscathed, and we remember all the lives that were lost."

—Heather Corrigan, 46, Oradell





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**CRESTWOOD PARK, ALLENDALE**  
“I often go on walks at Crestwood Lake, where there is a beam from one of the towers, bringing me back to a solemn drive I took 20 years ago. I was in Washington, D.C., for a work conference the day of the attacks. D.C. was completely shut down, and I had to drive back home to New Jersey the next day. No one was on the roads, which was eerie. Getting on the Turnpike and seeing smoke where the towers once stood is something I will never forget.”  
—Kevin Kennedy, 57, Allendale

“I’ve gone to Allendale’s 9/11 memorial in Crestwood Park, and it’s usually quiet and solemn. When I visit, I’m always reflective and prayerful, and in fact, I have prayed there. On September 11, 2001, I was sitting at my desk on the 80th floor of the North Tower when the impact hit. Though there was no emergency announcement and we did not know what had happened, we decided to get out of there. It was crowded as we walked down because people from the floors below us had already entered the stairwell. Most of the people were fairly calm; I attribute this to our ignorance of the true circumstances.  
Sometimes people ask me if I think about my 9/11 experience much. I think about it mainly when the anniversary approaches, and when I do, I can’t help but feel grateful. God gave me all these years of life since then. In those years, I watched my daughters grow up.”  
—Rick Albrecht, 61, Allendale

**REMEMBRANCE PARK, CLOSTER**  
“The 9/11 Memorial at Remembrance Park in Closter is where a fellow rescue team member — Don Albelli — and I each year remember together the lives of two friends we lost. Don is on the Closter Volunteer Ambulance and Rescue squad. We grab coffee and look at the lights down by the ferry. In 2001 I was teaching at East Brook Middle School in Paramus and also working as a volunteer EMT in Closter. Each year, because I am a first responder, I work with my students to focus on the heroes. I start the lesson with a Mister Rogers quote, and we talk about how the students and school community came together.”  
—Lisa Oliveri Vreeland, 50, Closter



Photos courtesy of closterboro.com and tourofthetown.com



**BAY PARK, HAVERSTRAW, N.Y.**  
“After 9/11, my parents became directly involved in the annual memorial held at Haverstraw Bay Park at the Rockland County Sept. 11 Memorial by the Hudson River, because my brother David was a Rockland County resident. He was 40 and working at Keefe, Bruyette & Woods in World Trade Center II as an equity analyst when he died in the attacks. I eventually got involved and now participate each year in the ceremony, which involves reading the names of the 81 Rockland natives who died during the WTC attacks (and one victim of the 1993 bombing). It is important to honor our loved ones who perished on that day.”  
—Gary Graifman, Ridgewood

“I was a Bergen County Sheriff’s Department detective at the time of the attacks and worked on the recovery efforts in New York. We checked in at a high school by the West Side Highway and walked down to the site. I remember the whole thing. I can still smell it. Pictures, like the ones you’d find on a fridge of kids and family members, were floating everywhere. People were walking around like zombies because they didn’t know what to do. It’s hard to forget being there. I dug through the rubble, and there are some things I just don’t wish to relive.”  
—John Derin, 59, Edgewater

“My father, Lieutenant Robert D. Cirri of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey Police Department, was killed on 9/11/01. Every 9/11, we visit his grave site and go to our town’s memorial service. We end the day by going to dinner at the same restaurant every year — Tapas de Espana in North Bergen — with some of my dad’s friends, and we sit and tell stories about the amazing person he was. We always want to keep his memory alive because he was truly one of a kind.”  
—Jessica Cirri-Perez, 33, West New York



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