

Horseheads school fundraiser honors 9/11 heroes



Written by

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HORSEHEADS -- Twenty-six years of memories came crumbling down in a matter of hours Tuesday with the demolition of the old playground at St. Mary Our Mother School in Horseheads.

The school, an affiliate of St. Mary Our Mother Church, decided to replace the aging wooden structures after several students suffered broken bones in the past year.

The playground will be replaced using money raised through the sale of American flags to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001.

A committee of [parents](#) and school officials formed earlier this year to host a "Healing Field" on school grounds to observe the anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks.

The Healing Field movement is a national effort to remember the heroes and victims of Sept. 11, and locally, it enables people

to buy American flags that will be displayed on the St. Mary Our Mother property.

"We've raised about \$60,000 or \$70,000 so far after expenses. We need about \$120,000," said Carol Gough, a [parent](#) at the school who is chairing the Healing Field project.

"The community outpouring has been amazing. People will buy a flag and throw in an extra \$20 or \$50 just as a [donation](#). It's been very humbling. (Sept. 11) was a time that touched a lot of lives."

In addition to [funding](#) a new playground, proceeds from the flag sales will also support the American Legion, Bath VA Medical Center, American Red Cross, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Boy Scouts Five Rivers Council.

The flags will be on display during the 10th anniversary weekend. An opening ceremony on the evening of Sept. 9 will include remarks by Chemung County Executive Tom Santulli, state Sen. Tom

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O'Mara, R-Big Flats, Horseheads Mayor Don Zeigler and others.

A service will be held at 10:30 a.m. Sept. 11 on the school grounds to honor local heroes of 9/11. Local politicians and other dignitaries will read the names of the victims of the terrorist attacks starting at 1 p.m. that day.

After the ceremony, organizers will figure out how much money they raised and what they will be able to afford to include in the new school playground.

Even though the fundraiser is still going on, the demolition process started Tuesday when Hendershott Excavating of Horseheads donated time and equipment to raze the old playground.

Inmates from the Camp Monterey Correctional Facility will be on site Thursday and Friday to gather up the playground debris, and Swarthout Recycling has offered to haul it away for free, Gough said.

It will be good to see a new facility for children to use, but it was also hard to watch the old playground get torn down, said Felicia Scarseletta, whose four sons have all attended St. Mary Our Mother School.

"It was a gut-wrencher for us. There are so many happy memories there," Scarseletta said. "My aunt had actually helped build that playground 26 years ago for her kids while they were in school. It was hard to see. But I understand we need a new playground, there's no question about that.

This was definitely something that had to happen. It was bittersweet."

Healing Fields

» More information about the Healing Fields project at St. Mary Our [Mother](#) School in Horseheads is available online at

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