

Solemn remembrances of 9/11 in Twin Tiers

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More than 2,000 American flags fill the "Healing Field" outside St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads, which hosted a Sept. 11, 2001 10th anniversary observance Sunday. / JEFF MURRAY / Staff Photo



Written by
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There were tears, there was some laughter, there were solemn salutes and there were quiet moments of reflection.

Across the Twin Tiers on Sunday, residents took part in church services, special ceremonies and other events to observe the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks.

Here are scenes from a few:

Waverly

The Waverly-Barton Fire District hosted a two-hour observance Sunday morning that attracted emergency responders and residents from both sides of the state line.

Many of those people had to put aside their work on recovery from another disaster -- flooding brought on by Tropical Storm Lee that inundated much of the region -- to attend the ceremony.

Lenny Wacenske, former commander of the Sayre Salvation Army unit, said the response to last week's flood was typical of the caring attitude in the Valley.

That attitude gave him strength when he traveled to New York City after Sept. 11 to help with the recovery.

"You are my heroes," he said of first responders.

"This is what America does," Wacenske said. "I'm proud to say I lived in this valley for eight years."

It is hard to believe that it's been 10 years since the attacks, said Joe Satterly, a member of the Waverly-Barton Fire Department who attended Sunday's observance.

"It's one of those events that sticks out in your mind like it happened yesterday," Satterly said.

"It makes you think how fragile life can be, and how much you have to enjoy every day and not let cowards and terrorists take over."

Corning

Corning-area veterans organizations sponsored a Sept. 11 remembrance service Sunday morning at the Veterans Memorial Park on Park Avenue.

The service started at 8:46 a.m., the exact time 10 years ago when American Airlines Flight 11 crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center.

If the terrorists hoped to crush the American way of life and our freedom, they failed, said Don Creath of Corning, who helped organize the event.

"I think on the positive side it brought people together. And there was a cause we could rally around, and we realized that we had to defend our country," Creath said.

"My first thought on 9/11 when they canceled the football games for a week and canceled everything, my thought was pick up the flag and let's move on."

Horseheads

A brief but heavy thundershower early Sunday afternoon didn't stop people from showing up at St. Mary Our Mother Church in Horseheads, where the parish hosted a Sept. 11 observance that included a "Healing Field" featuring more than 2,000 American flags.

Participants also read the names of all of the victims of the terrorist attacks, and Horseheads Fire Chief Art Sullivan talked about his memories of that day 10 years ago.

"Because of the events of that day, a country, community and people came together," Sullivan said.

"The terrorists tried to bring us down, and all they did was make us stronger."

Norma Burgio of Big Flats, a member of St. Mary Our Mother Church, was moved by the emotions brought back by Sunday's service.

"It was very touching. I started crying," Burgio said. "To be here and see those flags and hear all those names, it's very touching. It brings it back. At a time like this, people all come together. They think of others before they think of themselves."

Elmira

The Eldridge Park Carousel Preservation Society introduced a new animal for the park carousel during a Sept. 11 anniversary observance Sunday afternoon.

The horse, named America, was dedicated to all of the victims of the terrorist attacks.

"It's very inspiring," said Jerry Hall of Elmira, a U.S. Air Force veteran.

Just as President Franklin Roosevelt said that Dec. 7, 1941, the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, would live in infamy, the same can be said of Sept. 11, said Michael "Robby" Robertson, president of the Eldridge Park Carousel Preservation Society.

"Nearly 3,000 people died the day we formally entered the war on terror," Robertson said. "Sept. 11 is also a day that will live in infamy, and we must never forget."

Elmira Fire Chief Patrick Bermingham got emotional as he recalled how he and other local firefighters felt helpless as they watched the events of Sept. 11 unfold on television.

Hundreds of firefighters, police officers and other emergency responders were killed, many of them after running into the World Trade Center as building occupants fled.

"That same selfless commitment to duty occurs every day across the nation," Bermingham said. "This is what makes this country great. We are united. Our nation was galvanized by that despicable act of cowards that day."