



# THE DAILY STANDARD

Wednesday, August 31st, 2011

By Margie Wuebker

## Healing field marks tragic day REMEMBERING 9/11

Nearly 3,000 red, white and blue flags and a host of patriotic events are part of the Midwest America Healing Field returning to the region this week as the nation marks the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy.

The local event begins Friday and continues through Sept. 11 at Bearcreek Farms near Bryant, Ind.

Mercer County residents Chez Bonifas, Fred Eischen and Bets Eischen are spearheading the effort. The Healing Field program started as a way to commemorate the lives lost Sept. 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon near Washington, D.C., and a farm field in Pennsylvania.

Since the first display in 2002, hundreds of communities across America have hosted similar displays to honor the sacrifices made by veterans, active duty military personnel, police, firefighters and emergency medical service crews.

Fred Eischen and his mother, Bets, were involved with the West Ohio Healing Field observance that took place in September 2006 on the grounds of the Spiritual Center of Maria Stein.

"I saw the effect the event had on people and knew then and there I wanted to bring it back to the area," Fred Eischen said. "I also got my mom involved to help because she and dad (Don) were among the organizers last time.

Bonifas, who is married and the father of three young girls, also stepped up to the plate.

"I wanted to be a part of all this," he said. "It's my way of saying thanks to my brothers and sisters in arms for their service to our country."

The Coldwater man, who has completed two tours of duty in Iraq as a U.S. Army medic, will soon leave for deployment to Afghanistan with members of his Ohio National Guard unit headquartered in the Toledo area.

The planning for this healing field demonstration began two years ago. Carla Loy, general manager at Bearcreek Farms, offered use of the facility including a large corner field where 3- by 5-



feet flags attached to 8-foot flagpoles will be arranged in perfect rows similar to the tombstones at Arlington National Cemetery. Each flag will fly in honor of someone's hero who served in the military, law enforcement, EMS, fire department or as a first responder.

The entrance to the display will be a towering 60-foot replica of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers.

The 10-day schedule includes talks by government officials from Ohio and Indiana, Mercer County Sheriff Jeff Grey, Bonifas and Cliff Mosser, a former sailor who was on board the USS Cole when it was bombed. Guy Gruters of Minster, who spent five years as a prisoner of war during the Vietnam War, will speak each day.

Special guests Mike Ballone and Robert Barrett of New York Ladder Company 20 will speak at designated times Sept. 6-8 before traveling to New York City for anniversary observances and the unveiling of a long-awaited 9/11 memorial.

Barrett was a firefighter with the ladder company and Ballone became an honorary member after spending 257 straight days involved in recovery efforts at Ground Zero.

The World Trade Center Traveling Memorial, housed in a large motorhome, will be on the grounds Sept. 8-11.

The museum on wheels contains an extensive pictorial display, a video documentary and artifacts recovered from Ground Zero. The artifacts include airplane fragments, a fireman's coat and doors from responding police cars.

Emblazoned on the motorhome, which makes a final stop at the South Carolina State Fair before returning to New York City permanently, are the names of 37 Port Authority police officers, the unit's K-9 Sirius and 38 civilian employees who perished a decade ago on Sept. 11.

#### IF YOU GO:

Midwest America Healing Fields

- When - Friday through Sept. 11
- Where - Bearcreek Farms, 8339 North 400 East, Bryant, Ind.
- Hours - Field of Flags will be open 24 hours a day following opening ceremonies at 6 p.m.

Friday.

- Directions - From Celina, take state Route 29 west to Indiana, where the road becomes Route 67 South. Continue past Trinity, Ind., before turning right onto North 450 East, then left onto East 800 North and right onto North 400 East.

- Logistics - Food, rest areas and restroom facilities will be available on the grounds. Golf carts can transport people with difficulty walking into the flag display.

- Fees - No admission will be charged, but donations will be accepted to defray costs.

- For more information - Log on to [www.midwestamericahealingfield.com](http://www.midwestamericahealingfield.com).

#### Schedule of events:

Friday (Opening Day)

- 6 p.m. - Opening ceremonies
- 8 p.m. - Entertainment

Saturday (Veterans Day)

- 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. - Guy Gruters of Minster (a Vietnam prisoner of war)
- 11 a.m. - Proclamation by Portland, Ind., Mayor Bruce Hosier
- Noon, 3 and 6 p.m. - Cliff Moser (former USS Cole sailor)
- 4 p.m. - Singer Riley Post
- 4:30 p.m. - Chez Bonifas
- 8 p.m. - Entertainment

Sunday

- 9 a.m. - Reading of names of those honored at the field

- 12:45 p.m. - Ohio Rep. Jim Buchy
- 1 p.m. - Guy Gruters
- 8 p.m. - Entertainment

#### Monday

- 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. - Guy Gruters
- 8 p.m. - Entertainment

#### Tuesday (Armed Forces Day)

- All day - National Guard displays on the grounds
- 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. - Guy Gruters
- 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. - Mike Ballone, honorary member of New York Ladder Company 20, and retired firefighter Robert Barrett from the same company.
- 8 p.m. - Entertainment

#### Sept. 7 (Law Enforcement Day)

- 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. - Guy Gruters
- 11 a.m. - Mercer County Sheriff Jeff Grey
- Noon and 6 p.m. - Mike Ballone and Robert Barrett
- 3 p.m. - Names of fallen firefighters read and last call issued
- 8 p.m. - Entertainment

#### Sept. 8 (Emergency Medical Services Day)

- All day - Special demonstrations and displays
- 9 a.m. - Mike Ballone and Robert Barrett
- 11 a.m.-7 p.m. - World Trade Center Traveling Memorial
- 4 p.m. - Guy Gruters

#### Sept. 9 (Red Cross Day)

- All day - Disaster relief vehicle and other displays
- 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. - Speaker Guy Gruters
- 11 a.m.-7 p.m. - World Trade Center Traveling Memorial
- 1 p.m. - Red Cross speaker
- 2-7 p.m. - Blood drive

#### Sept. 10 (Firefighters' Day)

- All day - Special displays, demonstrations and speakers
- 9 a.m.-6 p.m. - World Trade Center Traveling Memorial
- 1:30 p.m. - Special ceremony for firefighters

#### Sept. 11 (Remembrance)

- 9 a.m. - 9/11 ceremony
- 9 a.m.-6 p.m. - World Trade Center Traveling Memorial
- 3 p.m. - Reading of the names of 9-11 victims
- 8 p.m. - Closing ceremonies