

WE MUST NEVER FORGET

Twenty-five years ago, on September 11, 2001, our nation changed forever. Nearly 3,000 innocent people lost their lives in the terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Among them were more than 400 first responders who ran toward danger while others were trying to escape.

Here in Clarence, like communities across Western New York, we watched the events unfold in disbelief. We worried about family and friends, gathered around televisions and radios, and tried to comprehend what had happened just a few hours away in New York City.

But we also saw something else: people immediately asking how they could help.

In the days following the attacks, first responders from Western New York, including members of our own Clarence fire service, traveled to Ground Zero to assist with the recovery effort. They left their homes, their families and their community to help fellow New Yorkers they had never met.

Their actions are one of the many reasons I remain so proud of our volunteer firefighters. When the call comes, they answer. On September 11 and in the difficult days that followed, that commitment extended far beyond the borders of Clarence.

Twenty-five years later, we also have a responsibility to make sure the next generation understands what happened that day. Many young people today were not yet born on September 11, 2001. They did not experience the fear and uncertainty of that morning, nor did they witness the extraordinary unity and patriotism that followed.

President George W. Bush said in the aftermath of the attacks, "Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America."

Those words still resonate today.

On September 11, the Clarence-Newstead Fire Chiefs Association will host a memorial service at Eastern Hills Church at 7:00 p.m. to remember, honor and reflect.

I encourage our Clarence community to join us as we honor those who lost their lives that day, the first responders who made the ultimate sacrifice, those who have died in the years since from 9/11-related illnesses, and all who answered the call to serve our country in the aftermath.

Twenty-five years have passed, but our responsibility remains the same.

We must never forget.