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## Wauconda Heroes of Freedom Memorial Committee

# Press Release

### Wauconda Has Opportunity to Have 9/11 Memorial

### Proposed Memorial to Include Beam from the World Trade Center

Wauconda, IL; **March 10, 2015**: The Village of Wauconda has the opportunity to honor the fallen, first responders, and survivors of the 9/11 Attacks with a professionally designed memorial to be located in the heart of the village, designed, constructed and supported by volunteers, and local businesses and community groups.

“The Wauconda Heroes of Freedom Memorial brings citizen volunteers, businesses, groups, veterans, and government together – much as they were in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 and provides a positive focus,” said Frank Bart, Wauconda’s mayor and supporter of the project. “We lost 2,977 people from more than 90 countries that day. The majority were innocent men, women, and children. We seek to honor them all.”

The Wauconda Heroes of Freedom Memorial committee has been working to create a fitting tribute to all those who have sacrificed so much, and for their families since July 2104. This was the work of an open, collaborative committee encompassing nearly all of Wauconda’s civic groups as well as the Fire District, Park District and neighboring church board.

The proposed location for the memorial is on Main Street just south of West Liberty Street (IL Route 176) in a public space between the Wauconda Village Police Department, the Federated Church of Wauconda and across the street from the Wauconda Fire District Station. The memorial will be located in the heart of the town and serve as a focal point for visitors, an attraction for tourist, and a place of healing for the survivors, families and friends of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice that day. Located near the Wauconda Military Veterans Memorial, the proposed memorial will enhance the center of the village as a location for patriotic events, activities, and ceremonies. It is envisioned and planned that this memorial be completed and ready for the 14th Anniversary of the 9/11 Attacks (Patriots Day, Friday, Sept. 11, 2015) and will serve as a focal point for remembrance events that day.

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“Our goals are to create a lasting tribute for those who have sacrificed so much on September 11, 2001 and their families and for those who fought the wars that followed and their families,” said Bart. “May we always remember their sacrifices.”

The components of the proposed memorial encompass the aspects of September 11, 2001 and the days, weeks, months, and years that followed. Overall the memorial faces east - oriented towards New York City, Washington DC, and Shanksville, PA - the locations where so many perished that day.

Visitors approach the memorial facing the west and first see the 19 foot tall beam – recovered from the interior of the 91st floor of World Trade Center building 2 – which is set in a Pentagon-shaped base.

This beam is reaching towards as if beseeching the sky, evocative of the prayers of so many that day. It also stands as a resilient, silent sentinel to remind visitors of those – the Survivors, First Responders, and the Military – who stepped forward to meet the challenge and help others. The single I-beam artifact is from the 91<sup>st</sup> Floor of the North World Trade Center building. Its two external facings, each representing one of the Twin Tower which stood, and later fell on that same day. The beam will be coated with materials to protect it from the elements.

Beneath and supporting the beam is a Pentagon-shaped base, with the apex of the eastern corner positioned towards the entrance of the memorial area and pointing east. The Beam and Pentagon part of the overall memorial are center on a 24-foot round concrete pad, representing the world, a reminder that this was not an attack on America, but the world.

Evenly spaced on the north and south sides of the circle are four cast benches, one for each of the planes hijacked for the attacks. On the north (right side as one enters the memorial) the benches will be in honor of:

- American Airlines Flight 11: a Boeing 767 aircraft, departed Boston's Logan Airport at 7:59 a.m. en route to Los Angeles with a crew of 11 and 76 passengers. The hijackers flew the plane into the North Tower of the World Trade Center at 8:46 a.m.
- United Airlines Flight 175: a Boeing 767 aircraft, departed Logan Airport at 8:14 a.m. en route to Los Angeles with a crew of nine and 51 passengers, not including five hijackers. The hijackers flew the plane into the South Tower of the World Trade Center at 9:03 a.m.

On the south (left side as one enters the memorial) the benches will be:

- American Airlines Flight 77: a Boeing 757 aircraft, departed Washington Dulles International Airport in Virginia at 8:20 a.m. en route to Los Angeles with a crew of six and 53 passengers, not including five hijackers. The hijackers flew the plane into the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m.

- United Airlines Flight 93: a Boeing 757 aircraft, departed Newark International Airport at 8:42 a.m. en route to San Francisco, with a crew of seven and 33 passengers, not including four hijackers. As passengers attempted to subdue the hijackers, the aircraft crashed into the ground near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, at 10:03 a.m.

On the western side of the memorial there will be a 12 foot long, 5 foot high arched remembrance wall with a symmetrically arched raised planter in front of it. The raised planter will contain earth recovered from the Shanksville site, and will be a living memorial to those who stood and resisted the hijackers.

The Heroes of Freedom non-profit joined with Wauconda's civic, community, veterans' groups, and other beginning in July 2014 to discuss this project and plan for the Memorial. The Wauconda effort is a part of a larger non-profit Heroes of Freedom group, a non-partisan, non-profit group lead by Gold Star Father Kirk Morris of Gurnee. The non-profit is registered and in good standing with federal and state agencies, and has a strong history and background in supporting military personnel and veterans. Morris, whose son Geoffrey died in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004, has been a leading advocate and supporter of military and veteran-centric events in the northeastern Illinois area for over 10 years. Morris took the pain and tragedy of his son's death and channeled it into positive events for veterans, which include events, programs, and the annual PFC Geoffrey Morris Memorial Fishing Tournament ([www.gsmtournament.com](http://www.gsmtournament.com)). The annual fishing tournament is held one weekend after Father's Day on Lake Michigan and includes a free day of sport fishing for wounded and disabled veterans.

Once completed, the intent is to gift the memorial to the Village of Wauconda.

The approach the Heroes of Freedom Memorial Committee chose was to establish a strong base for this project of three sequential components:

First – get the overall thematic of the memorial accepted by the Wauconda Village Board, which includes the architectural proposal presented on to the Trustees in a public meeting on Tuesday, March 3, 2015. Included in the proposal is a physical model showing how the memorial will look, which is on display in the Wauconda Village Hall until the next Village Board Meeting on Tuesday, March 17, 2015.

Second – to get the Village Trustees to accept the Artifact Display Agreement regarding the World Trade Center Beam. That agreement clearly outlines the responsibilities of all parties, specifies the location, design and provides for repair and maintenance costs.

Third – Once the first two components are approved and completed, Wauconda businesses, groups, veteran organizations, prominent citizens, and elected officials that they are committed to making this happen at no cost to the taxpayers of Wauconda. The committee has fundraising planned and will ensure this is a well-funded and financially stable project, with an endowment account to ensure the proper maintenance and upkeep of the memorial.

The Attacks of September 11, 2001 in many ways unified us as a nation. The sobering catastrophe unfolded before our eyes, and we turned towards each other, not away. We cared for and consoled each other. Many made extreme sacrifices that day, while others readied themselves and their families for sacrifices to come. The Heroes of Freedom Memorial is a unique opportunity Wauconda to remember, honor the fallen, and help heal those still dealing with the Attack. This memorial will help to start that conversation. This memorial will help us to find peace with these struggles and share in a future way forward together.

What can you do to help?

We hope people who live in Wauconda will contact their Village Board members and let them know that they support the Heroes of Freedom Memorial and that they want it in Wauconda. If you can, come join us for the next Village Board Meeting on Tuesday, March 17, at 7 p.m. and see your Village Board in action. We've asked that this be the first item on the agenda for that meeting, and we would appreciate your support.

Once the Village Board approves the Artifact Display Agreement and the Heroes of Freedom Memorial, the Heroes of Freedom Memorial committee will need the continued support – to join with the materials, supplies, equipment, and labor already promised – to raise funds, awareness, and support for the Memorial, which is planned for a dedication and presentation to the Village of Wauconda on Sept. 11, 2015, the 14th Anniversary of the Attacks.

Please step forward. Make a difference. Make your voice and opinion be heard.

Remember and honor.