PA Family Honors Fallen Colleagues

Port Authority employees and retirees convened last week at St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church in Lower Manhattan to commemorate the 16th anniversary of the World Trade Center attacks, which took the lives of thousands of people, including 84 of the agency’s own.

Among the many people in attendance were Chairman Kevin O’Toole;

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Here They Are: The 2017 Pillars of The Port Authority

At the Remembrance Through Renewal Commemoration and Awards Ceremony, the Port Authority honored nine employees whose day-to-day work exemplifies the values of the colleagues who were lost in the World Trade Center attacks, including strength and resilience, commitment to public service, and industry expertise. Go to page 7 to learn about each of the recipients.

Always in Our Hearts
Download this slideshow for our fallen friends.

September 11, 2001

February 26, 1993
Robert Kirkpatrick, Stephen Knapp, William Macko, Monica Rodriguez Smith and her unborn child.

Video Available of Remembrance Through Renewal Commemoration, Pillar Awards

Click here for the recorded video of this year’s RTR Commemoration and Awards Ceremony.
Largest Ship to Cross Panama Canal Makes Grand Entrance

Acting CSO John Bilich welcomes attendees to the RTR Commemoration and Awards Ceremony.

There were tears, but also smiles. At times, there were even laughs, and more often, there was applause. It was the emotional journey expected when family gets together.

The Board Room at 4 World Trade Center was at capacity on the afternoon of September 12, as Port Authority employees, retirees, and loved ones joined together for the Remembrance Through Renewal Commemoration and Awards Ceremony, organized by the Leadership and Operations Fellows.

Attendees, as well as employees tuning in via livestream, listened to poignant stories of resilience and honored nine outstanding colleagues who’ve received this year’s Pillars of the Port Authority Awards (see page 7 for Pillars profiles).

There were many event highlights, given the speakers and honorees, who together illustrated a story about an organization that’s responded to great loss with unprecedented movement forward.

The event was kicked off by remarks from John Ma, Chief of Staff to the Executive

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World Trade Center Department Advances World-Class Mission

After more than a decade of construction efforts that have restored the World Trade Center, the Port Authority department behind the redevelopment is now advancing a comprehensive mission to operate, maintain, and promote the complex as a world-class destination.

Recently, the leadership team of World Trade Center Operations devised and implemented a new mission as the newly rebranded World Trade Center Department.

The new mission identifies the scope of the department’s present responsibility at the 16-acre site, and according to WTCD Director Hugh McCann, it symbolizes that the “World Trade Center is back.”

“Our job is to bring it over the goal line and make everybody really proud of the WTC, the way we were proud of it before 9/11,” Mr. McCann said. “Everybody takes it personally, and many people came back here to just work on the WTC, and I couldn’t have picked a better team.”

WTCD will complete its mission by “leading cooperative efforts to enhance the general public’s experiences, build and oversee efficient operations, and partner with stakeholders through open communication and teamwork – preserving the WTC’s status as a landmark of international significance and a world-class destination to be enjoyed by all.”

PAPD Officer’s Wife Educates Students About 9/11

For the students of Secaucus Middle School, 9/11 was not an event in their lifetime. It’s just history. Yes, it’s been that long.

However, through the efforts of SMS staff, including the wife of a Port Authority Police Officer, current and future students will be able to learn about this time in history that forever changed their region and the world.

Teacher Amanda Wargocki, the wife of PAPD PO Mark Wargocki, and two of her colleagues have developed a curriculum about 9/11 to be taught at SMS.

Additionally, the school has planted a Callery pear tree, the same type as the Survivor Tree that stands on the 9/11 Memorial plaza, in dedication of the students, the community, families, and the victims.

As a sign of support and gratitude, Officers Wargocki and Chris Rothenburger presented the school with an American flag that flew over the World Trade Center. The flag will be displayed in the school’s Hero Hallway.

PAAAA Fosters Relationships on Independence Day

The Port Authority Asian American Association recently celebrated the 70th anniversary of India and Pakistan’s independence – when British rule ended in India and the nation was divided into two sovereign states.

The celebration at 4 World Trade Center served as a networking session where attendees learned about history, shared personal experiences, and enjoyed a conversation about bridging the gap between cultures in the professional world.

Planning & Regional Development’s Amit Bhowmick presented on the events leading to independence, and Engineering’s Om Sehgal and Aviation’s Zaheer Jaffery detailed their stories of resilience during the difficult time of division between India and Pakistan.

About 40 employees joined PAAAA for this event, part of the Employee Resource Groups’s ongoing efforts to raise awareness and demonstrate the importance of being a valuable professional and diverse resource within the PA.

If you’re interested in joining PAAAA and taking part in future events, complete a membership form and email it to paaaa@panynj.gov.

Get PA News

If you’d like PA News sent to your personal email address, send a note to panews@panynj.gov.
Walk With PAPD to End Childhood Cancer

Join a cause that hits close to home. Members of the Port Authority Police are raising money to fund treatment for childhood cancer, which has tragically impacted multiple PAPD families over the past few years.

ARFF Police Officer Michael Koehler’s son Owen passed away in June after his battle with cancer, and PO Jill Sharkey’s son Jackson and PO Vincent DiPietro’s son Thomas are currently fighting the pediatric disease.

You can help out by joining PO Sharkey and 10 other officers in the St. Jude Walk/Run to End Childhood Cancer on September 23 at the Jersey Shore. The course starts at the intersection of Seaside Heights Boardwalk and Franklin Avenue. Registration opens at 7:30 a.m., and the walk begins at 10:15 a.m.

If you want to join or donate, visit the registration page. Be sure to spread the word to other colleagues.

Annual PAPD Tourney Honors Fallen Heroes

It was a nail-biter of a final game to close out the Port Authority Police’s annual 38 Heroes Softball Tournament on September 8 at Willowbrook Park in Staten Island.

At the annual tourney, where hundreds of PAPD members honor the fallen heroes of 9/11 and all other officers who’ve been lost, John F. Kennedy International Airport Command defeated the Newark Liberty International Airport Command Team C 13-12 in the championship game.

The victory was bittersweet for the JFK Command, who called their team “JFKennelly” in honor of Police Officer James Kennelly, a member of the command who passed away in June after battling 9/11-related cancer.

This year’s tournament raised money for PO Kennelly’s wife and young daughter, continuing the event’s tradition of tribute as well as support for the department’s fallen members and their families.

Other tournament highlights include the annual Mayor’s Trophy Game, which LaGuardia Airport Command’s Team A won against JFKennelly 5-4, and the Kevin C. Murphy Memorial Game, held in honor of the lieutenant who was killed in a 2013 car accident, which EWR Command’s Team C won against PATH Command’s Team A 3-2.
container vessel’s arrival signifies the culmination of the hard work of so many PA employees, who have ensured the continued competitiveness and vitality of our port,” Port Director Molly Campbell said. “It was almost a century ago when the Port Authority was originally tasked with overseeing and improving marine trade operations in the bistate region. Now, the PA’s made it clear to the region, nation, and world that we are ready for our next century of service.”

The CMA CGM T. Roosevelt is one of the world’s largest, environmentally friendly vessels, measuring about 1,200 feet long and having a cargo capacity of up to 14,414 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units). To put this into perspective, the vessel is more than four times the size of the Statue of Liberty and more than four times the length of an American football field.

Despite its monstrous size, the ship was able to reach APM Terminals at Elizabeth-Port Authority Marine Terminal thanks to the June completion of the $1.6 billion Bayonne Bridge Navigational Clearance Project, as well as other initiatives, such as the 50-foot harbor deepening program, that have worked together to modernize the maritime gateway for vessels carrying up to 18,000 TEUs.

The mega vessel was given a grand welcome to the port, including a water cannon salute, the presentation of the colors by the PAPD’s Honor Guard and Pipes & Drums, and a commemoration event where Chairman Kevin O’Toole, Chief of Major Capital Projects Steve Plate, Ms. Campbell, and several other officials came together to mark the occasion. Many other PA employees also had taken time to watch from a boat or other vantage points as the T. Roosevelt made its way to the terminal — witnessing firsthand as history called on the port once again.

World Trade Center Department Advances World-Class Mission

Chief of Capital Planning, Execution & Asset Management Michael Massiah said, “The WTCD team is making giant strides toward achieving its mission, as World Trade Center Construction passes them the baton.”

WTCD’s mission has evolved just as the complex has taken form over the past 16 years. The first phase of its work, back when the department’s was known as WTC Redevelopment, involved navigating an intimidatingly complex web of engineering, architectural, government and public affairs, and security challenges to spur and sustain the rebuilding of the WTC site, working closely with World Trade Center Construction, Engineering, and various other PA departments to restore the complex.

Around 2015, the department began to establish the operational systems and processes to ensure the site functions effectively as a center for retail, transportation, and commercial real estate, as well as a place of remembrance and respect for the thousands lost on 9/11. This came after many components of the site had been completed, including One WTC, 4 WTC, and the WTC Transportation Hub.

With much of the groundwork now done, WTCD will work to finish the transition from construction and achieve fully stabilized operations, standardize critical processes around compliance and oversight across the site, establish a uniform identity, and manage and maintain the complex as a world-class facility.

PA Family Unites to Commemorate Fallen Colleagues

Commissioners Leecia Eve, Gary LaBarbera, George McDonald, and Caren Turner; Executive Director Rick Cotton; Chief of Staff to the Chairman Peter Simon; Chief of Staff to the ED John Ma; Board Secretary Karen Eastman; General Counsel Michael Farbiarz; Chief Financial Officer Libby McCarthy, Chief of Major Capital Projects Steve Plate; Chief Procurement Officer Lillian Valenti; Chief Engineer James Starace; Chief Technology Officer Robert Galvin; and Acting Chief Security Officer John Bilich.

Also joining the service were numerous former agency leaders who wanted to honor their fallen colleagues, including former Chairman Lewis Eisenberg, Commissioners Virginia Bauer, Tonio Burgos, Christy Ferer, and Anthony Sartor; Executive Directors Steve Berger, Pat Foye, Joe Seymour, Tony Shorris, and Chris Ward; and CSO Joseph Dunne.

This reunion of multiple agency generations spoke true to what former Chairman Eisenberg had said to Chairman O’Toole before the service, which Mr. O’Toole shared with attendees: “Once you’re in this family, you never leave it.”

Mr. O’Toole also offered his condolences to the families for their loss, saying that from that loss, which he felt six years ago when his brother tragically passed away, there will be born something of hope.

“There will be born a rebirth of purpose, and if you look around this room, and see what this agency has given birth to yesterday, today, and tomorrow, that is the hope we can live with,” Chairman O’Toole said.

Executive Director Cotton said, “The loss of life and the sacrifices made by all of these remarkable individuals should never be forgotten. It will never be forgotten. I will add my efforts to all of yours and your colleagues to ensure the Port Authority will remain committed to honoring those lost on 9/11 in everything we do.”
Watch the Toastmasters Compete for Laughs

Participants compete in the impromptu speech contest: (from left) Patricia Chen, Sara Yildirim, Maura Rogers, and Alan Ginder. Pictured watching the contestants is Alexis Sanchez, President of Speaker’s Portal Toastmasters.

The Speaker’s Portal Toastmasters are inviting colleagues who enjoy a good laugh to attend their upcoming speech contest at noon on September 27 at 4 World Trade Center, 21st Floor, Conference Room A/B. Participants will be asked to come up with comical speeches.

This contest is one of two that have been organized this month by the Speaker’s Portal, a Port Authority chapter of Toastmasters International committed to helping employees improve their communication skills.

The first contest was held last week and challenged participants to perform impromptu speeches, coming up with remarks off the cuff based on the topics provided.

Contestants included Alan Ginder, Maura Rogers, Sara Yildirim, and Patricia Chen. Ms. Rogers took first place, earning the honor to represent the PA on October 11 at an event with other chapters in the area.

If you're interested in watching the Toastmasters show off their comedic chops, RSVP by contacting Ms. Yildirim at syildirim@panynj.gov.

At RTR Commemoration, A Tradition Endures
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Director, who spoke on behalf of Executive Director Rick Cotton who was unable to attend. Mr. Ma shared the ED’s praise for the RTR program and the Pillars recipients.

Acting Chief Security Officer John Bilich gave welcoming remarks as well. He discussed the theme of this year’s RTR – “An Enduring Tradition, A Lasting Legacy” – and commended the first responders of 9/11, as well as “those that work in the PAPD who confront the 21st century threat each and every day.”

The keynote address was delivered by Lee Ielpi, President of the Board of Directors for the September 11th Families’ Association, co-founder of the 9/11 Tribute Museum, and a retired FDNY firefighter who responded to the 9/11 attacks.

Mr. Ielpi stressed the importance of educating young and future generations about 9/11, shared the story of his son Jonathan, an FDNY firefighter who died trying to save people that day, and encouraged PA staff to volunteer at the 9/11 Tribute Museum to honor their fallen friends. He also thanked the PA for supporting the museum and praised their rebuilding of the site.

“We talk about resilience; look at what the Port Authority has done here,” he said, “Look what we’ve done out that window. I can’t tell you how proud I am when I bring people here and I talk about you all.”

The event then moved into the staff storytelling segment, which featured three PA veterans and docents for the 9/11 Tribute Museum.

PA retiree Susan Mollo talked about how she overcame her survivor’s guilt after escaping the WTC by volunteering at the museum and being there for her grandson. Comptroller’s Peter Bitwinski discussed how he and his colleagues saved friend John Abruzzo, a quadriplegic, by carrying him down 69 stories. And retiree Dave Hood walked through his harrowing tale of finding his way out of the collapsed WTC.

Although these 9/11 stories differed in perspective, they shared a common thread by describing how PA staffers were able to pick themselves up and honor their fallen friends through their commitment to service and telling the world what happened 16 years ago.

The event culminated with the presentation of the 2017 Pillars of the PA, kicked off by HRD Deputy Director Julia Basile. Danijela Kvalic, Frank Minervini, and Rohan Dennis were honored for exemplifying strength and resilience through their work; Rizwan Baig, Selene Ortega, and William Radinson were honored for their commitment to public service; and Bernadette Brown, Mario Palmieri, and Sam Sharma were honored of their industry expertise.

When Vice Chairman Jeffrey Lynford took the podium to deliver closing remarks, he was visibly awed by what he had heard throughout. He began his remarks with a resounding “Wow.”

Vice Chairman Lynford praised the keynote speaker, the storytellers, and the 2017 Pillars, and closed with a paraphrased excerpt from President Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address:

“We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men and women, living and dead, who worked and died here, have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here. But it can never forget what they did here. It is for us, the living, rather, to be dedicated to the unfinished work, which they so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to convene here today to re-dedicate ourselves to complete the great task of rebuilding, so that these dead shall not have died in vain.”
The 2017 Pillars of the Port Authority
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**Pillars of Strength and Resilience**
Recipients demonstrate perseverance in the face of adversity. Their personalities drive them forward after professional setbacks and demonstrate an ability to adapt to changing situations while continuing to perform at the highest standard; level-headedness in times of increased pressure or crisis; and willingness to change course, scope, or schedule in the face of an unexpected challenge.

**Daniijela Kvalic** (pictured at podium; was introduced by Carla Bonacci) – Senior Resident Engineer in World Trade Center Construction with seven years of agency experience. Nomination highlights: Delivers high quality work in the face of tight deadlines, competing priorities, and public visibility.

**Frank Minervini** (introduced by Paul Lucien, who received on his behalf) – General Maintenance Supervisor at the George Washington Bridge & Bus Station with 27 years of PA experience. Nomination highlights: Responds to highly critical and time/safety sensitive situations at the GWB&BBS, such as failing bridge finger joints, in a calm, expert manner.

**Rohan Dennis** (introduced by Renee Morgan) – Assistant Chief Operations Supervisor at John F. Kennedy International Airport with 18 years of PA experience. Nomination highlights: Coordinated the unloading of more than 500 passengers and their luggage from a diverted plane that landed in a remote corner of the JFK airfield, all while liaising with local law enforcement, air traffic control, and other facility employees.

**Pillars of Commitment to Public Service**
Recipients demonstrate a strong connection and dedication to the public and demonstrate commitment to upholding the public interest amid competing priorities, interests, and influences; dedication to developing more effective and efficient methods of service delivery; and willingness to go above and beyond to respond to the needs of the public.

**Rizwan Baig** (pictured left, introduced by Michael Diculescu) – Assistant Chief Traffic Engineer with 26 years of agency experience. Nomination highlights: Works tirelessly to innovate new and improved ways for our public to travel through our facilities; represents the agency well at public community meetings.

**Selene Ortega** (pictured left, introduced by Caterina Vazquez) – Purchasing Manager in Procurement with 28 years of agency experience. Nomination highlights: Dedicated to transparency and ethics in procurement; instills in her staff these same values.

**William Radinson** (pictured left, introduced by Andrew Murray) – Assistant Director or Aviation with 33 years of PA experience. Nomination highlights: Supports future leaders by transferring his institutional knowledge through mentorship and guidance; committed to the agency’s mission and the travelling public in all projects he works on.

**Pillars of Industry Expertise**
Recipients possess an exceptional degree of thoroughness, craftsmanship, professional competence, and/or mastery and produce consistently superior work; demonstrate exceptional and reliable performance in their assigned duties, special projects and/or extenuating circumstances; and deliver lasting results in the workplace, including increasing efficiency or effectiveness in work processes or resolving a long-standing problem.

**Bernadette Brown** (pictured left, introduced by Kim Dickie) – Supervising Office Assistant in Security Operations & Programs at John F. Kennedy International Airport with four years of Port Authority experience. Nomination highlights: Implemented numerous process improvements, saving the agency more than $100,000 in 2016 alone; dedicated to improving office and team morale.

**Mario Palmieri** (pictured left, introduced by Brian Johnson) – Manager, Construction Design Standards, in Engineering with 16 years of PA experience. Nomination highlights: Has reviewed more than 10,000 tenant construction projects for a total construction cost of $24 billion; developed process improvements across his career.

**Sam Sharma** (pictured left, introduced by Sam Orlan for Tim Ryan) – Supervisor of Rail Projects at PATH with 24 years of agency experience. Nomination highlights: 57 years of experience in diverse fields such as structural and geotechnical design and forensic investigation of failures; full of pride for the Port Authority and his work.