



September 11, 2008

Widow makes remembrance flags to carry on work of late husband

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When Joanne and Steve Galvin designed a 9/11 remembrance flag a little more than a week after the 2001 tragedy, they did it to keep alive memories of those who died.

Now Joanne Galvin continues the work to keep Steve Galvin's memory alive too.

In mid-September 2001, as the nation reeled from the terrorist attacks that happened just days before, Steve Galvin, a heavy equipment operator from Wolcott, Wayne County, and his wife Joanne Galvin started thinking about what they could do to help.

"We just really wanted to do something. We could've sent a contribution in, but we knew it wouldn't even make a dent," said Joanne Galvin, who works at Xerox.

One day in the car, the idea for a remembrance flag came to Steve as he saw a prisoner of war flag hanging near an intersection. They could sell the flag to raise money for the relief effort and the sight of the flag would forever remind people of the lives lost that day.

In days they had a design and were searching for distributors. By the first anniversary of the tragedy they were selling the flags on the Internet. Soon they were attending dedication ceremonies for the flags, remembrance services for the victims, and they were raising money for related organizations.

But in mid-2004 Steve Galvin was diagnosed with lung cancer.

"We continued on with all of this even through his sickness until he lost his mobility," Joanne Galvin said. "He asked me to continue on with all of this after he was gone. It's not something he needed to ask me to do."

They'd fill orders from their Web site in the evening after work, packing up flags, and printing up shipping labels. And they spent hours on the phone with people who lost loved ones in the attacks, listening to their stories.

Steve Galvin died in June 2005. But Joanne Galvin kept going.

"It gives me a feeling of warmth that we helped, but personally it helps keep alive a lot of the memories that Steve and I had working on this together," she said.

To date, the Galvins have sold or given away 2,000 flags and have donated \$15,000 in money and free flags to organizations such as American Legion posts, fire departments and EMS units in or near New York City.

The flags, which cost \$40, have also been used for fundraisers for American troops returning home

with injuries. The Galvins also donated money to the Pentagon Memorial fund and the temporary memorial at Shanksville, Pa.

The flag, which has a blue and black background and four stars to represent each of the planes that crashed, and the date, flies in 41 states and seven countries, Joanne Galvin said.

Today she will attend the dedication of the Pentagon Memorial, created in memory of those killed on 9/11 when a hijacked plane crashed into the headquarters of the American military.

She was invited to the ceremony, she said, because of the money she donated to the cause, about \$500.

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