

Keeping a 9/11 promise

Just as the terrorists learned after they shook us with their cowardly attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, Americans have an unwavering resolve.

And so, when Joanne Galvin promised her dying husband Steve in 2005 that she would continue the efforts they started together after 9/11, she meant what she said.

"That was a very easy promise," she said. "I wouldn't ever think of letting it just fade away."

The Galvins — of Wolcott — were, like millions of Americans, horrified by the events of that fateful day. Though they didn't lose anyone directly in the events at the World Trade Center towers, the Pentagon or in Pennsylvania, they were deeply moved.

Figuring that any monetary donation they could afford to make to relief funds for the victims' families wouldn't amount to much, the idea hit them to instead design and produce a flag, which has come to be known as the 9/11 National Remembrance Flag.

"I promised Steve that I would continue on with the flag efforts that the two of us did together before his passing," Joanne said. "I can only hope that he is proud of how I have carried on with the flag."

There's no doubt that he is beaming with pride.

To date over 3,000 flags have been sold, primarily through the website www.911remembranceflag.com. The Galvins' flags fly in 47 states and nine countries. Proceeds have been donated to relief funds, and \$15,000 was raised and sent to the American Legion scholarship fund to help children of members of the armed services. She has donated hundreds to families of 9/11 victims and to fundraisers for service members.

And now, as we close in on the ninth anniversary of the attacks, a movement is under way in New York state, at least, to have 9/11 Remembrance Flags flown on all buildings and on all days "on which the flag of the United States of America is displayed."

State Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, is the sponsor of bill S4762, which currently is being reviewed by the state Senate Finance Committee.

A few other Remembrance Flags besides the Galvins' exist, but obviously, if the bill becomes law, Nozzolio is backing their flag to be the one that is flown.

"As we approach the 10th anniversary of Sept. 11 and the most horrific terrorist attack on American soil, it is important that we recognize the sacrifices, commitment and dedication of the thousands of Americans who answered the call to duty on that fateful day," Nozzolio said Wednesday.

"The 9/11 Remembrance Flag, created by Steve and Joanne Galvin, symbolizes the

CONNECTIONS

By Mike Cutillo



resilience of the American people to rise up from the devastating losses of that day and to help Americans come together to heal and rebuild our country."

Joanne, who has worked at Xerox for 37 years, said she has been touched by Nozzolio's support, though the efforts are bittersweet.

"It would be more than amazing if ever our flag design was selected to be the official flag to represent and honor those we lost on 9/11," she said. "My only sadness would be that Steve would not be here to share it with me."

In the meantime, their flag — which features a blue-and-black color scheme and four stars representing the four planes that crashed — continues to gain in popularity.

► Last year, the Fairport High School Class of 1974, which lost a former classmate on 9/11, dedicated a park bench to her and raised a flag.

► In October, Joanne is going to an event at Cornell University where one of her flags will be signed by a number of 9/11 first responders and then hung at a new camp in Locke, N.Y. that caters to wounded veterans and their families.

► Also for the last three years, she has attended a 9/11 event in Shanksville,

Pa., where United Flight 93 went down after its passengers fought with hijackers. Their flag is featured at those ceremonies and also in a documentary by Tony and Kitch Mussari called "Face of America," which honors and remembers those who died on 9/11.

Because of their flag, Joanne has met hundreds of people touched by the tragedy, including a woman named Trish who lost her husband in the Pentagon and was the first person to get one of their flags.

"Steve and I first met Trish and her son when she invited us to attend a dedication ceremony in honor of her husband at Fort Belvoir (Va.)," Joanne said. "For all of the years since then, we have communicated by e-mail on an almost daily basis."

Chances are, as she clicks away at the keyboard, Steve has been watching over her.

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