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World Trade Center column focus of memorial

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MANCHESTER, Conn. (AP) - Although Judy Ferlazo has a great respect for firefighters and the important work they do, the tears that slid down her cheek as she approached the rusted World Trade Center column at the Manchester Firefighters Memorial Garden on Sunday were for her nephew, Brian Terrenzi.

"My nephew died in the North Tower," said Ferlazo, a longtime Manchester resident who attended the 9/11 memorial ceremony, during which the beam was officially dedicated. "The fact that they have the beam here is very emotional; we can come here and talk to him."

Officials said that the 4,800-pound column was from the east exterior wall near the ground-floor plaza of the North Tower, the same building in which Ferlazo's nephew worked as a global financial manager for the financial services firm Cantor Fitzgerald. His remains were never recovered, Ferlazo said.

"He hadn't been there that long. He was training off-site that week and had just come back to the building that Monday," Ferlazo said of her nephew, whose wife was six months pregnant when he was killed in the attacks. "It's just nice to know you have a place you can go, because we don't know where he is, we kind of figured he's just floating around."

Located at Fire Station 331 on Tolland Turnpike, the garden was dedicated on Sept. 11, 2002, in memory of "all who answered the final alarm" that Tuesday morning in 2001. It includes a mix of nine different memorials that honor the 343 firefighters who died on Sept. 11 and many others who have given their lives in the line of duty since then.

In 2009, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey notified public safety agencies that pieces of the twin towers were available for inclusion in public memorials to 9/11 victims. Local firefighters picked up the column on March 10 from JFK International Airport, where it was placed in the garden among the carefully tended flower beds, memorial plaques and two retired alarm boxes that depict the North and South World Trade Center towers.

"It's a tangible remembrance of what happened and what was lost," said Fire Chief Robert Bycholski of the beam. "It is the framework of the tower, a piece of American history. We are proud and honored to bring this piece of history to its new home."

There were many who went the garden Sunday. Firefighters, their families, local residents and visitors from nearby towns stood solemnly as bagpipes played and American flags flapped gently in the warm breeze. Many commented on the blue sky overhead, so similar to the brilliant sunny morning of Sept. 11, 2001.

"My dad was a New York firefighter; they lost quite a few people that day," said Carol Wood, who attended the ceremony with her husband, John, in support of their son David Rich, a Manchester firefighter and paramedic. "I feel very proud to have a piece of history right here, so close to us, and we have this beautiful garden, you can come to it any time."