

Ground Zero Search-And-Rescue Dogs' Ashes To Be Incorporated In World Trade Center Memorial



Hunterdon County Democrat Sarge and Nutmeg were two of the dozen search-and-rescue dogs dispatched to Ground Zero on Sept. 11, 2011, to search for survivors as members of the all-volunteer New Jersey Task Force One. Ground Zero search-and-rescue dogs from Lambertville gallery

By Rene Kiriluk-Hill

LAMBERTVILLE — Sarge found the body of a firefighter who perished when the World Trade Center was brought down by terrorists. Nutmeg recovered body parts.

Now plans are underway to include the ashes of the two rescue dogs, as well as a section of I-beam from the fallen towers, in a memorial at Mary Sheridan Park.

Sarge and Nutmeg were two of the dozen search-and-rescue dogs dispatched to Ground Zero on Sept. 11, 2011, to search for survivors as members of the all-volunteer New Jersey Task Force One.

They and their owners, Pat and Spring Pittore of Lambertville, spent 10 days on the rubble pile, under the direction of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Sarge was 2-and-a-half at the time, trained as a "live find" search-and-rescue dog.

Nutmeg was 6, and had been cross-trained to also alert searches to the presence of cadavers. Many live-find dogs are "proofed off" this type of find, Mrs. Pittore explained, and in September 2011 Nutmeg was one of the few search dogs initially on the scene who could help humans recover body parts and pieces.

One of Nutmeg's recoveries was an arm with a ring, making that victim easier to identify.

"We worked a lot of hours," said Mrs. Pittore. At the time, she said that most FEMA dogs were live find. There has been "a major upsurge since then in cadaver" trained search dogs, she said, while rescuers hope they don't need to put the skills to use.

The Pittores are active volunteers — he has volunteered with the Lambertville-New Hope rescue squad for more than 47 years and she is a supporting member. She is also the nurse at West Amwell School and both have a long volunteer history with canine search-and-rescue teams. Today they have three dogs trained in various types of rescue, Pippin, Copper and Autumn.

The Pittores and Sarge and Nutmeg were at the World Trade Center along with Lambertville squad life member Don Huggins, who went as a member of the State Police's Urban Search and Rescue team.

The rescue squad later requested steel from the site and received a piece, said Mr. Pittore, that is "about 2-feet tall and 36-inches wide. It's a piece of I-beam" and is "quite heavy. It takes a machine to move it."

City architect Micheal Burns volunteered to design a memorial incorporating the steel. There was discussion about locating the memorial at the corner of Bridge and North Union streets, in a small public space.

But now it would go in the city's Mary Sheridan Park on York Street, not far from a Civil War monument.

Pat Pittore likes the park location. "It's a good place to contemplate what happened," he said today, March 18. It's quiet, he said, affording visitors a good setting to "reflect upon the whole process. It's important to remember what happened."

He hopes that visitors will also think about the many emergency crews that responded to the attack.

After their work at the World Trade Center, Sarge and Nutmeg were inducted into the New Jersey Veterinary Foundation's Animal Hall of Fame. Nutmeg died nearly six, and Sarge three years ago

New Jersey Task Force One is an urban search and rescue team with more than 150 members. They provide disaster aid, from structural and HAZMAT specialists to search dogs and search cameras, said Mrs. Pittore said earlier

Mr. Pittore said his dogs, along with 10 other dogs from Task Force One, were at Ground Zero for the first 10 days aiding in the search. Unfortunately, "If we didn't find them in the first hour or so, there was no hope," said Mr. Pittore of survivors.

Ultimately, he said, about 300 dogs helped with what instead became the search for remains at Ground Zero.

Lambertville's mayor and city council could introduce an ordinance on March 19 at their 7 p.m. meeting to borrow money to build the memorial at Mary Sheridan Park.