

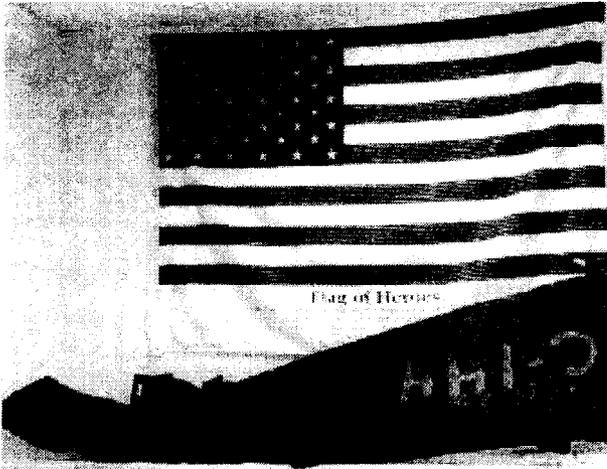
# Wanaque now home to piece of World Trade Center steel

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BY TERESA EDMOND

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The Wanaque First Aid Squad (WFAS) paid homage to the victims of 9/11 with a ceremony that surrounded a piece of steel that was salvaged from the ruins of the fallen Twin Towers.



STAFF PHOTO BY JOE SARNO

**This portion of the World Trade Center was picked up by the Wanaque First Aid Squad last month. The 281-pound, 66-inch steel piece currently resides inside the First Aid Squad building and will remain there until Sept. 10 when it will be mounted and placed in front of the structure.**

The 281-pound, 66-inch-long piece of steel was transported through town in a March 20 procession on Ringwood Avenue from Whistler Place to the WFAS building on Melrose Avenue.

Wanaque resident John Buloga Sr., who lost his son John Jr. in the 9/11 attacks, led the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey received 1,500 requests for pieces of World Trade Center steel, said Port Authority spokesperson Steve Coleman. Around 1,040 of those requests were granted.

Pastor Donald DeGroat of the Midvale United Methodist Church and the Rev. Lancelot J. Reis of the Church of St. Francis of Assisi led prayers at the ceremony.

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According to research by the WFAS, the steel was a part of an elevator shaft in the North Tower.

This memorabilia hit home for many residents as they recalled where they were when the World Trade Center was destroyed.

Resident Marge Jones remembered she was sitting at her kitchen table. Her husband was on the phone asking what was happening to the World Trade Center. Jones told him she didn't know as she watched the disaster unfold on television.

"I was worried about what we should do with my grandson, who was in daycare at a Pompton Lakes church," Jones said. "My husband said we should bring him home. I said, 'No he's in a basement. I think the best thing is to leave him there.'"

Jones' grandson, Colton, who was 3 years old on 9/11, is now 12. He accompanied his grandparents to the ceremony and seemed to have understood the ceremony's significance.

"I could see him standing there ... being very passive," Jones said. "I think he understands more (now) ... and realizes more of what happened that day."

Beyond all the flashbacks residents visualized during the ceremony, pride also surged within the community at knowing how lucky the WFAS was in getting a hold of the steel.

"The squad did a great job," Mayor Daniel Mahler said at the ceremony. "It's great for the community."

### ***Two years in the making***

It took two years for the WFAS to receive the piece of history.

In July 2009, then-WFAS Commander Darryl Gordon wrote a letter to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, which owns Ground Zero, requesting a piece of WTC steel. Almost a year later, the WFAS heard back from the Port Authority, informing the squad that its request would be granted. Five members of the WFAS drove an ambulance – in uniform – to JFK Airport and picked up the steel on Feb. 10.

The steel will be on display in an acrylic glass case at the WFAS building until Sept. 10. The display will be set up this week, said WFAS President Karen Cisco.

After Sept. 10, the historic steel will be mounted on marble as part of a memorial to be erected in front of the WFAS building. Flowers and the American flag will give the memorial a final touch. The WFAS may raise funds from the community to enhance the memorial.

The Buloga family may participate in the 9/11 ceremony on Sept. 10, Cisco said.