

Waukesha Freeman August 26, 2009

Sept. 11 service planned for Expo Center

By Sarah Millard
Freeman Staff

WAUKESHA – Carol Lombardi was in her mayor's office eight years ago when the news came that airplanes had crashed into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and a Pennsylvania field.

"It was the most frightening day," Lombardi said. "... When that attack happened ... none of us knew if it was going to be a massive attack at various large cities in our country."

Lombardi knew Waukesha could be affected by the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks if the planes headed toward Milwaukee and Chicago. The memories kept with her as she planned a public observation program to be held at the Waukesha County Expo Center at noon Sept. 11.

"We must not forget," Lombardi said. "We must be on the alert as never before in this nation against terrorism."

The event – Waukesha County Remembers Sept. 11, 2001 – will honor the people who died in the terrorist attacks and the survivors who suffer the consequences of the event. It also will highlight the need to be prepared, Lombardi said.

Waukesha County Technical College Associate Dean Brian Dorow and Menomonee Falls Police Chief Anna Ruzinski are coordinating the event with Lombardi.

"We should never forget what happened," Dorow said. "It was the worst terrorist attack on American soil, but more important, quite a few years have gone by, and we want to make sure the younger generation is aware of it and keeps it going."

People need to put time and effort into memory events, which have been waning in recent years, Ruzinski said.

"When the incident occurs, they are called heroes, called our saviors, whatever the case may be," Ruzinski said. "People think about that when an incident occurs, but afterward, we tend to forget."

Dorow has helped line up resources and reached out to the law enforcement and fire services communities. He has received an "overwhelmingly positive" response from the groups.

Dorow created and teaches a homeland security course at

At a glance

What: Waukesha County Remembers Sept. 11, 2001

Who: Waukesha County Technical College Associate Dean Brian Dorow, Department of Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement; Menomonee Falls Police Chief Anna Ruzinski; retired Waukesha Mayor Carol Lombardi

When: Noon to 12:30 p.m. Sept. 11. Doors open at 11:30 a.m.

Where: Waukesha County Expo Center, 1000 Northview Road, Waukesha

Cost: free

WCTC. He thinks it is important for the younger generation to know about national changes since the attacks, including the way first responders handle calls and the creation of the Department of Homeland Security.

"They know of the event," Dorow said. "Everyone knows of the event, but not everyone knows why it happened."

Waukesha Alderman Charles Lichtie, 62, plans to attend the memorial service. His son is a Waukesha police officer, so he has firsthand knowledge of the risks in a law enforcement career.

After the terrorist attacks, Lichtie said he took the first plane he could to thank the New York firefighters and police officers. He used his personal money to bring Waukesha Police Department patches.

"I went to thank them for their bravery," Lichtie said. "As soon as I saw the planes hit the towers, I told my wife I had to go there."

Lichtie described New York City as being strangely quiet. Military forces were spread throughout the city with full armor and artillery while pastors and rabbis stood outside the churches, welcoming those in need of help.

Lichtie spent time at ground zero, where people were being pulled from the buildings. The fire was still burning.

"You see something like this in a movie," Lichtie said. "You don't expect this to really happen. I felt like a small ant in a big huge hole in the ground."

Lichtie feels it is important to continue to recognize the people who gave their lives in the attacks.