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« Episode: AirTalk for September 8, 2011

The families of 9/11 – how survivors cope with grief, guilt and life going on

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A visitor touches a name that is etched in the wall of the newly constructed 'Empty Sky Memorial' at Liberty State Park on September 7, 2011 in Jersey City, New Jersey.

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- Tribute WTC Visitor Center
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- A Caring Hand: The Billy Esposito Foundation
- An Unbroken Bond: The Untold Story of How The Cantor Fitzgerald Families Faced the Tragedy of 9/11 and Beyond, by Edie Lutnick
- 9/11: The World Speaks, by Lee Ielpi

It's been said that 9/11 changed everything. And for those who lost loved ones on 9/11, the memories will never completely fade away. Lives and families were shattered in countless ways. Nearly 3,000 children lost parents. Susan Esposito is one of them. On September 11, 2001, Esposito's father went to work and never came back. "I was Daddy's little girl," Esposito says. "I had to get married without him. Raise three children without him. There's so much he doesn't know about our lives today." Post 9/11, Esposito's faith in the U.S. government was shaken, as was her sense of security. But she managed to find new meaning by helping others who have experienced the loss of a parent. Founding "A Caring Hand," an organization that provides bereavement services "gave me a place to put my anger and my energy," she says. "It was better than me hitting someone with a car."

Lee Ielpi is a retired New York City firefighter. His son Jonathan was one of the 343 firefighters that died at ground zero. Ielpi spent 9 months in the recovery effort at the World Trade Center site. He helped recover remains, including those of his own son. "I then made a commitment," Ielpi wrote in a blog post, "to help other dads look for their sons. Many, to this day have not been able to find their children." Despite all the loss, the nation came together after the attacks. And Ielpi co-founded the Tribute WTC Visitor Center to help people remember the love that came out of this tragedy, rather than the hatred and distrust. "We must work together," he says, "so that these memories do not fade."

Similarly, Edie Lutnick found that after losing her brother on 9/11, caring for others helped her heal. Edie's brother Gary was a partner at Cantor Fitzgerald, the Wall Street Firm hardest hit by the terrorist strike. 658 of Lutnick's colleagues died that day. "There is no closure," she says. "Ten years is a milestone but it's not an ending." Esposito, Ielpi and Lutnick join Larry in-studio in New York to talk about the long shadow of 9/11 and the slow journey to find new meaning.

Guests:

Lee Ielpi, retired New York City firefighter who lost his son Jonathan on 9/11; President of the September 11th Families' Association and Co-Founder of the Tribute WTC Visitor Center at ground zero

Edie Lutnick, Co-Founder and Executive Director of The Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund; author of *An Unbroken*

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Bond: The Untold Story of How The Cantor Fitzgerald Families Faced the Tragedy of 9/11 and Beyond; her brother Gary Lutnick, who was a partner at Cantor Fitzgerald, died on 9/11 along with 657 others

Susan Esposito, Founder of A Caring Hand: The Billy Esposito Foundation, which provides bereavement services and educational opportunities to children that have experienced the loss of a parent; Susan's father Billy Esposito died on 9/11, he was Vice President and Partner at Cantor Fitzgerald



From left to right, Lee Ielpi, Edie Lutnick and Susan Esposito in studio.

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Sean

1 week, 5 days ago

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Larry, in light of last night's debate and the opinion of some, notably Congressman Paul, that we can do without the TSA and the airlines themselves can handle security, did any of your guests refuse the 9/11 compensation to be party to the litigation against the airlines who were in charge of airport security on 9/11?

wade

1 week, 4 days ago

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Larry, how does Susan and her group feel about the mayor asking for people to stop calling the site "ground zero" ?

Mark

1 week, 4 days ago

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My wife, two daughters, and I were on Flight 11 from Boston to LA on September 9th 2001. I feel like we were very lucky but I wonder if the flight crew was the same for those two days. I still have a lot of anger. It's something I think about every day.

Barbara

1 week, 4 days ago

[Link to this comment](#)

I listen every year to all comments on 9/11. But the Cantor-Fitzgerald stories always hit's extra hard. I worked for a company where they were one of our clients. Different division's of our company talked to Cantor employee's everyday, every week, once a month. And here in Calif while we were at work and realized what had happened, we realized Cantor was gone, it was like we all lost a common friend. We knew we would never talk to them again. Not like when someone one moves on to another job, but there was no opportunity to reach them again. While our company had other company's effected, we knew we lost all of Cantor. I know of not one person working with me that day who still does not have a raw, sore spot for Cantor. Thank You Cantor for what you have done for your families. I wish the government would follow your lead.

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