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**JOHN P. WEBSTER LIBRARY AT FIRST CHURCH PRESENTS
CELEBRATED 9/11 HERO MICHAEL BENFANTE**

WEST HARTFORD, CT (September 7, 2011) – On Sunday, September 18th at 4 p.m., First Church of Christ Congregational in West Hartford Center will host Michael Benfante, a celebrated 9/11 survivor who tells a remarkable story in his newly released book, *Reluctant Hero*. An informal reception and book signing will take place immediately following Mr. Benfante's presentation. First Church is located at 12 South Main Street in West Hartford. The event is free and open to the public, sponsored by the John P. Webster Library at the First Church of Christ Congregational.

On September 11, 2001, Michael Benfante went to work at his office on the 81st floor of the World Trade Center. Moments after the first plane struck, Benfante and his employees began moving down the stairwells. On his way, he saw a woman in a wheelchair and offered help. Benfante then embarked on a 96-minute odyssey of escape—carrying the woman down 68 flights of stairs and into an ambulance that rushed her to safety mere minutes before the tower imploded.

A television crew caught Benfante just as he fled the building, and the national media immediately came calling. *USA Today*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, *People*, and more began re-telling the unbelievable, heroic story. Benfante sat on the couch with Oprah Winfrey, where she hailed him as a hero. Almost one year to the day after 9/11, Benfante got married, and the woman in the wheelchair sat in the front row. That's the storybook ending.

In the aftermath, Benfante began a dark journey fraught with wrenching personal challenges that eventually led to healing and redemption. In his presentation, Benfante will discuss that horrible day in unflinching detail, his resulting personal struggles, and his call to action: a proposal to declare 9/11 a national day of service to remember those, like him, who were kind to strangers when no one was looking.

For more information or to schedule a media interview with Michael Benfante, please call Trish Accetta at the John P. Webster Library at (860) 232-3893, or email jpwebster@snet.net.

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