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# Cantor Fitzgerald family creates fund to help 9/11 families

By [Janice Lloyd](#), USA TODAY

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**Correction:** An earlier version of this story misidentified the CEO of *Cantor Fitzgerald* and the title of the book.



Eileen Blass, USAT

Edith Lutnick holds a picture of her brother, Gary Lutnick, in front of a quilted American flag in her office in New York City.

NEW YORK — Edie Lutnick is hugging a mock-up of her new book next to her heart as if she is holding onto a loved one.

She recently finished writing *An Unbroken Bond: The Untold Story of How the Cantor Fitzgerald Families Faced the Tragedy of 9/11 and Beyond* in time for the 10-year anniversary of 9/11.

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Lutnick knows the families well: She became the megacaregiver for them after the financial firm lost 658 employees — more than two-thirds of its staff — in the attack on the **World Trade Center**.

"When people come to you and they're in pain, you do everything in your power to help them," Lutnick says, sitting in an office several blocks from Ground Zero. "These people were the brightest and best in so many different walks of life."

Among the dead: her younger brother, Gary. Her older brother, Howard Lutnick, is the firm's chairman and CEO. He implored his sister to head up the cause to help the families, she says.

Lutnick, a former labor lawyer, writes about Howard's phone call to her Sept. 13 and all the calls that followed as she worked to get families on solid footing again. "My phone was — and still is — always on," she says.

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Charity starts with a phone call

In her book *An Unbroken Bond*, Edie Lutnick recalls the Sept. 13 phone

call from her brother, Howard Lutnick CEO of Cantor Fitzgerald

"He says, 'Edie, we need to do everything we possibly can to help these families. I want to start a charity and I need you to run it.' I think, 'He has lost his mind.' In my head, I start ticking off the names of all the people I consider to be far more suitable for this task than I and in better shape than I presently am. And then it hits me. They are all gone. I tell him that I am barely functioning. He says again that he needs me to do this. I ask him, 'Why?' He says, 'Because you are me.'

"I never try and hold onto my pre-9/11 professional life as an attorney. On September 14th, 2001, the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund is formed and I am its executive director and co-founder."

director of the Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund helped her cope with the losses — and with what might have been. She says that had the jet hit at 2 p.m., all three Lutnick siblings would have been working in the north tower and would have died.

"I credit the families for healing me," she says. "Because when you have a purpose greater than yourself, that is when you heal. That is what I live by."

In hindsight, she knows that "the way we handled the families in the aftermath could have been done better." Cantor discontinued the salaries of the dead on Sept. 15, drawing criticism from their loved ones. Howard Lutnick attempted to win back their trust by calling hundreds of them and writing 1,300 letters of condolence.

Ever since, Edie Lutnick says, "Howard and I have done everything possible for our families." She accepted the Hope Award in 2006 from The Mental Health Association of New York City for Cantor Fitzgerald's efforts.

Distributing \$180 million to the families from the Cantor fund is one of the more obvious ways she has helped. But there are hundreds of ways she offers guidance and support and gives "big hugs" to the family members, says Stevie Esposito, whose husband, Billy, was among the fatalities.

"She's an incredible lady," Esposito says. "My daughter wanted to start a bereavement center, and Edie helped her set it up. She showed us how to get started. Any child who had lost a parent in the attacks could come to the center and get help."

At 51, Edie Lutnick plans to stay the course, holding events, helping with causes and finding counseling for family members. For the 10-year anniversary, she expects 5,000 family members to attend the Cantor Fitzgerald memorial service in **Central Park** after the official gathering at Ground Zero.

"These memorial services and the charities will continue," she says. "It won't ever stop. What we do to honor those we lost on 9/11 defines who we are going forward."

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