

Westerville remembers Sept. 11 attacks

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By Chris Parker/ThisWeek

Attendees bow their heads to observe a moment of silence during the Sept. 11 memorial service Friday in Westerville.

Hundreds gathered in Westerville on Friday to remember the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and to get a glimpse of a piece of steel from the World Trade Center's north tower recently obtained by the city.

People lined State Street on Friday morning to see the steel as it was carried on a truck bed through Uptown to Main Street. The truck drove to Fire Station 111, where people were able to see, photograph and touch the steel.

At noon, more than 100 people stood in front of the fire station for the city's annual Sept. 11 memorial.

This year's service included music by a bagpiper and drummers, and by students from Annehurst Elementary School. Chaplains from the city's fire and police divisions offered prayers to mark the day.

Addressing the memorial's theme, "Why We Must Remember," and the importance of the soon-to-be-constructed First Responders' Park, representatives from the police, fire and communications divisions also spoke.

"We need to stay strong. We need to stay vigilant against evil everywhere," said police officer Corey Baker, who spent time working with New York police officers after Sept. 11. "Let this (the World Trade Center steel) not be a static reminder."

Baker asked those attending the service to remember that those who bravely worked to save lives on Sept. 11 fought against the evil that happened that day and asked that they use that remembrance as a call to be better and to fight evil in their own lives.

Communications supervisor Alan Fish said life changed for all Americans on Sept. 11, when the realization hit that the first plane that struck the tower was not an accident.

He said his hope is that people will continue to share with younger generations what happened and to remember the important lessons they learned that day -- that ordinary people can band together to make a difference in difficult times.

"It's my prayer that, as a country, we will never forget that day," Fish said. "And that we take the lessons we learned and apply them."

Firefighter Tom Ullom, the driving force behind bringing the steel to Westerville and fundraising for First Responders' Park, said it's important to hold memorials and plan monuments so that people do not forget what happened on Sept. 11 and to remind them to use what they learned to better their lives.

"We need memorials, holidays, reminders ... so we will not forget," Ullom said. "This park will be an inspiration to all of us to reach out to others in their time of need."

For more information about First Responders' Park, visit www.wffmemorial.org.