

Helping the Helpers

Charity ball to aid 9/11 first responders

By Jim McConville • STAFF WRITER • September 5, 2009

COLTS NECK — Remembering 9/11 takes a little more work in each passing year.

But each passing Sept. 11 means that there's even more reason not to forget, say members of the FealGood Foundation, who this year are holding their first charity ball to raise funds for first-responder health care and to keep the memory of their contribution alive.

"It's (9/11) more important because it's been neglected," said Peter Grandich, president of Wall-based sports and entertainment management company and a FealGood Foundation volunteer who will be one of three honored at the fundraising event. "And the further we get away from it in time, the more difficult it becomes to bring attention to it."

The black-tie ball will be held Sept. 11 at 7 p.m. at the Trump National Golf Course in Colts Neck to raise funds and awareness for the estimated 15,000 workers and volunteers who served as first responders to attacks on the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. To date, approximately 800 first responders have died from their 9/11-related illnesses, according to New York state Department of Health figures.

But also to date, no federal legislation to provide first responder aid has been passed.

That may change. Bills H.R. 847 and S. 1334, now in subcommittee before the House and Senate, respectively, if approved, would provide an estimated \$8 billion in first responder compensation and health care.

"It's eight years too late," said John Feal, president and founder of the FealGood Foundation. "For our heroes, eight years is long enough," Feal said. "And the further we get away from 9/11, the harder it gets."

And in the eight years since 9/11, the number of people who have succumbed to ground zero-related illnesses has steadily risen. "They say time heals all wounds," said Jo Schloeder, a FealGood Foundation volunteer. "But the tragedy is, that time passes, more people will have died who took part in the aftermath and the recovery than died in the original disaster." Feal also fears a collective 9/11 memory fade.

"For most Americans, the memory fades a little more with each passing day," Feal said. "But the thousands of brave first responders who spent weeks sifting through the burning rubble of the collapsed buildings can never forget."

Feal of Nesconset, N.Y. was a demolition supervisor who volunteered to help at the 9/11 disaster site. Six days into the cleanup, Feal's left foot was crushed by an 8-ton steel beam that forced him to lose one-half of the foot from gangrene.

When Feal ran into difficulty getting medical assistance for surgeries to repair his foot, the then-age-40 Army veteran spearheaded an advocacy campaign — that then became the FealGood Foundation — to help other 9/11 responders.

In 2007, Feal donated one of his kidneys to save Paul Grossfeld of Marlboro, a fellow 9/11 first responder.

The charity ball will also honor three people who have worked to support the 9/11 first responders:

Rep. Carolyn B. Maloney, D-N.Y.; Assemblyman David P. Rible, R-Monmouth; and Grandich, founder of Trinity Financial, Sports & Entertainment Management Co.

Grandich, of Freehold, joined the foundation after reading a story in the Asbury Park Press in 2007 about 9/11 first responder Charles Giles of Barnegat, who was in danger of losing his house due to a long-term illness attributed to working at ground zero.

Touched by Giles' story, Grandich contacted the FealGood Foundation and helped raise foundation money through his broad range of sports and entertainment industry clients.

Feal praised Grandich as a tireless and selfless volunteer for others.

"It's just not about 9/11." Feal said. "The actions of Peter Grandich and his friends should be revered and emulated."

Grandich, along with the Spano Family Foundation, is organizing the charity event.

The event will also include a golf outing at the Trump National Golf Club.

For ticket or sponsorship information to the event, please visit www.FealGoodCharityBall.com, or call contact chairwoman Deborah Weiss at 908-670-9896 or e-mail Deborahwss@optonline.net.

For golfer information contact James Spano at 732-947-8170.



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