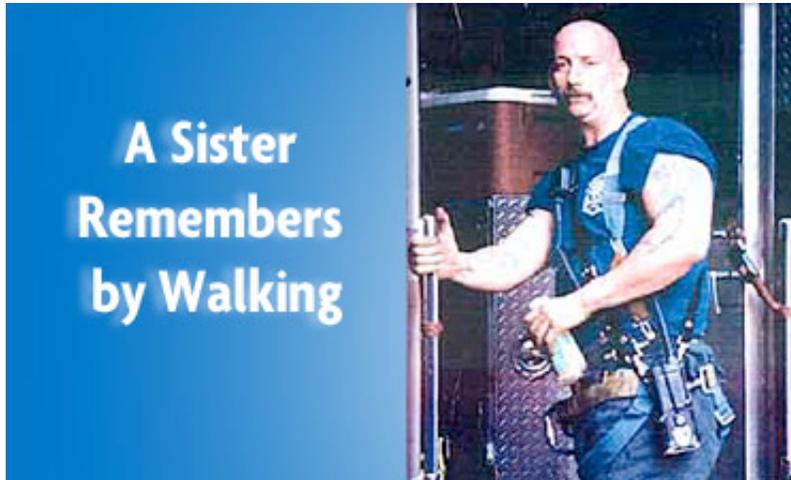


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David Weiss -- an FDNY firefighter with Rescue 1 in Midtown Manhattan who was killed on 9/11 -- is the inspiration for Unite In Peace. (Photo Courtesy Michele Little)

Steps to Heal Walk-N-Ride Fest in San Diego

Former Jems employee raises money for 9/11 responders

Ann-Marie Lindstrom
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Michele Weiss Little, a former Jems Communications employee, is on a mission to raise awareness of and money for 9/11 responders and recovery workers. It has been more than seven years since the attacks, and as most in EMS know, many of the surviving responders are still suffering from the effects. In addition to respiratory ailments from breathing the toxic dust at

Ground Zero, responders and recovery workers are experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at levels similar to Afghanistan war veterans, according to a study sponsored by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and OSHA.

And as they struggle to simply survive, they're also struggling to cope with medical costs and family expenses with little or no assistance from the government or their employers -- or former employers for those too ill to work.

Aware of the lack of support for responders, Little founded Unite In Peace in honor of her brother David Weiss, an FDNY firefighter with Rescue 1 in Midtown Manhattan who was killed on 9/11.

This weekend, Unite In Peace will host the "Steps to Heal Walk-N-Ride Fest for 9/11 Heroes" in San Diego on Oct. 18, 2008. The event will take place at the San Diego County Administration Building North Parking Lot at 1600 Pacific Highway. The Steps to Heal 9/11 Walk will be a short affair, appropriate for almost anyone -- including children. Events will include a motorcycle 9/11 Poker Run, as well as activities for children, food and drinks, local bands, and tours of the Firehouse Museum. The event will be from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Registration for the walk and motorcycle run begins at 9:00 a.m.

San Diego Fire Chief Tracy Jarman will be one of the keynote speakers, and local first responders will be there to meet and greet attendees. Local artists will also display their work.

Little says that Gregg Gerson, a drummer who played with the likes of Billy Idol, will talk about his experiences working on the Pile. His citizen-volunteer story reflects the sense of brotherhood and loss throughout New York City that day and the days that followed.

When asked what would make her happy after Saturday night, Little said, "Knowing we were successful in creating more awareness of the responders' and recovery workers' needs."

So, if you're in the San Diego area (and not off fighting a wildland fire), come to the Fest, have some fun and learn more about the continuing responders' and recovery workers' situations.

If you can't make it to the Fest, [Unite In Peace's Web site](#) can accept tax-deductible donations, or you can mail them to Unite In Peace, PO Box 368, Solana Beach, CA 92075. Unite In Peace will disperse 90% (the expected proceeds after expenses) of all donations to the [New York Interfaith Disaster Services -- 9/11 Unmet Needs Roundtable](#) and the [FealGood Foundation](#). Both organizations provide direct assistance to ailing 9/11 responders and recovery workers.

Ann-Marie Lindstrom is a contributing editor to JEMS.

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