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David Lee, with the Berrien County Honor Guard, salutes during a September 11 Remembrance Ceremony Tuesday at Resiliency Plaza in downtown Benton Harbor.

# Remembering 9/11

Speakers say that diversity makes America stronger

By **LOUISE WREGE**  
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**BENTON HARBOR** — Unity was the theme Tuesday as more than 100 people in Benton Harbor remembered those who died during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Benton Harbor Mayor Marcus Muhammad said America was deeply divided in 2001.

“The country was at fist-cuffs, if you will,” he said during the September 11 Remembrance Ceremony, hosted by Berrien County Strong-Community in Action at Resiliency Plaza, 201 E. Wall St. “But that



**Lisa Gorman and Bryan Tutton, center, attend a September 11 Remembrance Ceremony Tuesday at Resiliency Plaza in downtown Benton Harbor.**

one event, that sacrifice brought everybody together.”

He said a nurse who was one of the first responders on 9/11 told him that it took her years to overcome post-traumatic stress disor-

der after the event, which killed almost 3,000 people in New York, Washington, D.C., and Pennsylvania.

“One of the things that she shared with me was that as people were running out, they were grab-

bing one another, helping each other,” he said. “No one was asking, ‘Are you a Christian, are you a Muslim, are you a Hindu?’ Or any other kind of religious affiliation.”

He said differences were set aside in the effort to save lives. “So let us reflect and let us remember that we have to look beyond ideological, philosophical differences to see the humanity that lies within each and every person that is here today,” he said.

On display at Resiliency Plaza is a 500-pound steel beam obtained from the wreckage left behind after the World Trade Center in New York City was hit by two planes hijacked by terrorists.

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St. Joseph Mayor Mike Garey said that we should think of America as that steel beam.

“Steel is made up of several different components,” he said. “There’s iron. There’s oxygen. There’s carbon. Just as we as a country are made up of several different components – many races, many faiths, many identities. That’s what makes us strong.”

He said iron by itself is very brittle until the other elements are added.

“That’s what we are as a country and that is our strength and the only weakness that we would have is if we start pulling out those elements,” he said. “... If we start dividing ourselves, we turn into iron. We become more rigid and more fragile.”

State Sen. John Proos said the tragedy caused many people to reevaluate their lives.

“We became a prayerful nation again,” he said. “We became interested in the flag again. We became interested in locking arms as men and women. As individuals of many different faiths.”

Berrien County Trial Court Judge Gary Bruce said that everyone remembers the overwhelming sadness during that fateful day.

“But I remember at the same time, there was another feeling that we all had. That was unity,” he said. “We were united not only as Americans, but as human beings.”

Now, 17 years after the attack, he said the nation finds itself once again divided.

“Truly, if we take the time to think about it, we have way more in common than we have differences,” he said. “So as we take this time to remember 9/11, let’s also take the time to reunite. to rededi-



Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff

**Fire trucks and the American flag provide a backdrop for a September 11 Remembrance Ceremony Tuesday at Resiliency Plaza in downtown Benton Harbor.**



**LEFT: Rep. Fred Upton recalls being in Washington, D.C., during the 2001 terrorist attacks, Tuesday during a September 11 Remembrance Ceremony at Resiliency Plaza in downtown Benton Harbor. RIGHT: Benton Harbor Mayor Marcus Muhammad speaks during a September 11 Remembrance Ceremony Tuesday at Resiliency Plaza in downtown Benton Harbor.**

cate ourselves to the cause of peace and to start with our own lives in our own homes in our own communities.”

U.S. Rep. Fred Upton said a lot has been done to make America safer since 9/11, including upgrades to the nation’s emergency communication system

“We have to be lucky every day,” he said. “They have to be lucky just once, and they were.”

The American Red Cross of Southwest Michigan obtained the artifact in 2010, with the nonprofit World Trade Firmitas unveiling the plaza to display the 5-hv-2-

foot section of steel beam on Sept. 11, 2015.

Michael Hoyh of Berrien County Strong-Community in Action, who hosted the event, said events like this are important to bring the Twin Cities together.

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