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Message of Hope Delivered Through Forget-Me-Nots

By BEN CORBIN and JENNIFER PINTO
Specially Written for The Westfield Leader and The Times

SCOTCH PLAINS — With a special remembrance of the son she lost on September 11, 2001, Diane Horning recently made an emotional appeal for the ashes of her son and others lost in the collapse of the World Trade Center to be returned to the site as part of a fitting memorial.

Held two weeks ago at Mrs. Horning's Scotch Plains home, the press conference addressed legislation that would require ash collected at the World Trade Center site to be returned there for use in a memorial honoring the victims of last year's terrorist attacks.

The ashes of people who died in the collapse of the towers is now mixed with ash that is piled at the Fresh Kills landfill in Staten Island, N.Y.

In explaining her desire for requesting the return of the ashes of victims who were not recovered or identified after the tragedy, Mrs. Horning shared a poignant memory of her 26-year-old son, Matthew, that returned to her in a special way earlier this year.

"Every Mother's Day, my son would take me to the flower store and help me pick out flowers for my garden," said Mrs. Horning.

She recounted that he would then carry all the flowers and load them in her car. For one day, he would be at his mother's side to help her plant flowers.

"He was my lackey for the day," said Mrs. Horning.

This past Mother's Day was extremely difficult for Mrs. Horning. Her son was

no longer there to take his mother to the flower store. This year, Mrs. Horning could not muster the strength to plant her garden without her son, so she left the garden untouched.

After some time had passed, Mrs. Horning noticed that there was a weed in the garden, but decided not to pull it out because the weed had a very pretty blue flower on it. Shortly afterward, she looked at her garden again and noticed that Forget-Me-Nots had started growing all over her garden. The blue flowers struck Mrs. Horning because she and her son had never planted Forget-Me-Nots in the family garden.

Recently, Kurt Horning, Matthew's father, was shopping in an antique shop in Westfield, where he came across a beautiful piece of china that had Forget-Me-Nots painted on it. With his wife in mind, Mr. Horning purchased the piece.

Mrs. Horning explained that her husband's mother had once hand painted china. She stated that when her mother-in-law died, all of this ornate china was lost and never seen again by the rest of the family.

Ironically, when Mr. Horning came home that day with the piece of china, he noticed that the signature on the china happened to be that of his mother.

Mrs. Horning felt this coincidence served as a reminder for her family to never forget what happened to Matthew. As she works in support of the legislation for return of victims' ashes to the World Trade Center site, she hopes all families will have a place to go in order to feel closer to their loved ones.

Celebrity Boxing, Dinner to Aid Weldon F.O.P Research Fund