

9/11 (Cont. from 1)

Williams, “We don’t need foo-foo massage on these dogs.” Williams persuaded them to let her show what she could do. She says once the vets saw how much more relaxed the dogs were and how their stamina increased after being massaged, “I had more dogs than I knew what to do with.”

Williams says she was “privileged” to work with FEMA-certified canines, who were trained in disaster response. She calls the partnership between handlers and canines “deep and visceral.” She massaged some 30 dogs in all.

Williams worked 12-hour day shifts. Her first night, she slept on a sidewalk propped up against a building. The other nights were spent in a warehouse across New York Harbor.

She’ll never forget the sights and smells. Williams says if you talk with anyone who was at Ground Zero, they all speak of “that smell.” Williams recalls that in the early days, the mix of chemicals and burning metals “smelled almost sweet.”

She also remembers “the sunlight being blocked by the plumes of ash that just kept floating up in the air.” She says “You’d be walking a lot of times in knee-deep ash. It just kept puffing up. The light was pretty dim a lot of the time.”

Williams continues, “You could feel grit in your teeth.” She wondered what she was ingesting, “It was in my mouth. I was breathing it.” Says Williams, “Every instinct told me this is not a safe place to be.”

She was right. The experience took its toll. Williams worked for days without a mask. Only first responders got “purses,” the color-coded respirator air-filtering masks. When Williams finally was issued a mask, she found it was made out of plain paper. “By that time,” she says, “damage had been done.”

Williams developed serious health problems. “Almost all of us walked away with some kind of severe respiratory COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease),” she says. Williams was diagnosed with asthma. Doctors have told her she breathed in “microscopic slivers of glass” that will keep scarring her lungs until she may develop emphysema.

“The other thing that anybody that worked there came away with,” she says, “was the cough.” She says she “coughed and coughed for about three or four years.”

Because Williams was a volunteer, she wasn’t covered by the government programs set up to pay for the health problems of first responders. For a long time, she says, “all my income went to paying for my lung scans and my medications.” Now, Medicare picks up a chunk of her costs.

Williams knows it could’ve been worse. Doctors have told her she’s “really lucky to be alive because most everybody else we’ve been working with is not here.”

Williams says she has “a jarring insight of how much this country, its democracy and beliefs have been reshaped” in the last 20 years. She says “We tend to think of disasters like 9/11 and the impacts on people as fixed in time. Yet, its effects continue to resonate just as deeply today in ways we could have never foreseen.”

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In 1987, the land was zoned Planned Industrial Development as part of Regency Park. In 2018, a preliminary site plan was approved and on Sept. 8, 2020, the board approved a change of zoning to PUD that includes light industrial, commercial, civic, office, and multi-family residential. See www.ocn.me/v18n2.htm#mpc and www.ocn.me/v20n10.htm#mbot0908.

Planning Director Meggan Herington said this request doesn't include any "vertical development," just the financing service plan. However, the Preliminary/Final site plan shows warehouse development, which is the reason so many people attended the meeting. Becknell Industries includes Monument in its portfolio of properties, calling the

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