

Remembering September 11: Twenty-Five Years Later

Good morning, students, teachers, administrators and honored guests.

Today, we gather as a school community to remember the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Twenty-five years have passed since that terrible morning, but the importance of remembering has not faded.

Most of the students here today were not alive on Sept. 11, 2001. To you, 9/11 may seem like something found in a history book. But for your teachers, administrators and others who watched it happen, it does not feel like ancient history.

On that morning, terrorists hijacked four airplanes. Two were flown into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Another struck the Pentagon near Washington, D.C. Passengers aboard the fourth airplane, United Flight 93, fought back. That aircraft crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, before it could reach its intended target.

Nearly 3,000 innocent people were killed.

They were office workers, airline passengers, firefighters, police officers, military personnel, teachers, parents, grandparents, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters. They came from many backgrounds, but they shared one thing: They were human beings whose lives mattered.

For the younger children here today, I want you to understand something important. Remembering 9/11 is not meant to frighten you. It is meant to teach you about courage, kindness, sacrifice and the importance of helping one another.

When the buildings were burning, firefighters, police officers and emergency medical workers ran toward the danger while others were running away. Ordinary people helped strangers escape. Passengers aboard Flight 93 knew they were in great danger, but they acted together to protect others.

That is courage.

Courage does not mean that a person is never afraid. Courage means doing what is right even when you are afraid.

That courage continues to be demonstrated every day by the men and women of the United States military and by first responders across our nation and here at home.

Our military members serve throughout the United States and around the world to defend our nation and protect the freedoms we enjoy. They leave their homes and families, sometimes for long periods, because they have answered the call to serve.

Here in our own community, the Greenville Police Department, Darke County Sheriff's Office, Greenville Township first responders, Spirit EMS and first responders and emergency personnel throughout Darke County continually stand ready to protect us.

They answer calls at every hour of the day and night. They respond to fires, crashes, medical emergencies, crimes, severe weather and many other dangerous situations. They often arrive when people are frightened, injured or experiencing one of the worst moments of their lives.

They do not always know what danger may be waiting for them, but they answer the call because someone needs their help.

Our community is also protected by dispatchers, firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, law enforcement officers, rescue personnel, hospital workers, public safety employees and volunteers. Each has an important role, and each deserves our appreciation and respect.

We also recognize the teachers and administrators gathered here today.

Every school day, teachers do much more than teach lessons from books. They encourage their students, listen to their concerns, help

them overcome difficulties and prepare them to become responsible citizens. They teach the values of honesty, respect, compassion and service.

School administrators carry the responsibility of leading their schools, supporting their teachers and staff, and providing a safe environment where every student can learn and grow. They work closely with law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel and other community agencies to protect everyone inside these schools.

Teachers and administrators also answer a call to serve. Their service may look different from that of a soldier or first responder, but it requires dedication, courage and a deep concern for the lives entrusted to their care.

We thank all our teachers, administrators, school staff members and support personnel for guiding, educating and protecting our children each day.

We also recognize all the agencies throughout Darke County that work together during emergencies. Their uniforms, responsibilities and areas of service may be different, but they share the same mission: protecting lives, helping neighbors and keeping our communities safe.

The cooperation among these agencies reflects the same spirit America showed after 9/11.

Across our country, people displayed the American flag, donated blood, volunteered, prayed together and supported families who had lost loved ones. For a time, our differences seemed much smaller than the things we shared.

Twenty-five years later, our country still needs that spirit.

We should never take for granted the men and women who continually protect us. When most people are seeking safety, they move toward the emergency. When others need help, they respond. When disaster strikes, they work side by side, regardless of the color of their uniforms or the name of the agency they represent.

That is service.

That is sacrifice.

That is courage.

Students, you do not have to wear a military uniform, carry a badge, drive an ambulance, teach a classroom or enter a burning building to serve your country and community.

You can serve by treating a classmate with kindness. You can stand beside someone who is being bullied. You can help your family, respect your teachers, obey school rules and assist someone who is struggling.

You can respect the American flag, learn our nation's history and become involved in your community.

You can also thank a member of our military, a veteran, a police officer, sheriff's deputy, firefighter, dispatcher, emergency medical worker, teacher, administrator or other person who serves you. A few sincere words of appreciation can mean more than you may realize.

To the high school students, you will soon inherit the responsibility of leading this country and caring for your communities. Your choices will help determine what kind of nation America becomes.

To the younger students, never believe you are too small to make a difference. Every act of kindness, honesty, respect and courage matters.

To the teachers and administrators, thank you for helping a new generation understand the meaning of Sept. 11. Through your lessons, leadership and example, the lives lost that day will not be forgotten, and the values of courage, compassion and unity will continue.

Today, we remember those who went to work, boarded an airplane or began an ordinary morning without knowing it would be their last.

We honor the first responders who climbed the stairs while others were coming down.

We remember the military members who served in the years that followed, including those who never came home.

We recognize the United States military and the brave men and women who continue defending our country.

We thank the Greenville, Ohio Army National Guard 19D Cavalry Scout unit, the Greenville Police Department, the Greenville Fire Department, Darke County Sheriff's Office, Greenville Township Fire Department and Emergency Services, Spirit EMS and all the law enforcement, fire, emergency medical, rescue and public safety agencies throughout Darke County that continually protect us.

We also thank our teachers, administrators and school staff members for educating, guiding and protecting the young people who represent our nation's future.

But remembrance requires more than a moment of silence. We honor the victims best by living the values demonstrated that day: courage, sacrifice, compassion, service and unity.

Soon, keeping the memory of Sept. 11 alive will be the responsibility of a new generation.

Remember Sept. 11, 2001.

Remember the lives that were lost.

Remember the heroes who answered the call.

Honor those who continue answering that call today.

Listen to your teachers, respect those who protect you and always look for opportunities to help others.

And remember that, whatever challenges we face, we are strongest when we stand together as students, educators, neighbors and Americans.

May God protect the members of our United States military and all our first responders.

May God bless our students, teachers, administrators and school staff members.

May God comfort the families who still carry the pain of that day.

May God bless our community, and may God continue to bless the United States of America.

Thank you