

In wake of tragedy...

SSA continues to provide service to the public

The events of September 11 affected the operations of the New York Regional Office, the Office of the Regional Chief Administrative Law Judge, the Office of the Inspector General, the Office of the General Counsel, the Office of Quality Assurance and Performance Assessment, the Manhattan Hearing Office, the Manhattan Downtown, Chinatown and Delancey Street Field Offices, and the state DDS building.

Following the attacks, SSA immediately invoked special emergency procedures to get help to the families of those killed in the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and the plane crash in Pennsylvania so claims could be taken and paid as quickly as possible. These procedures included allowing payment of survivors' claims with airline manifests or employer records, rather than death certificates.

Within days, SSA launched a full-scale outreach effort to find families of victims and get them benefits. We developed a special webpage, linking to various sites for maximum outreach, with information on applying for survivor and disability benefits for those affected by the tragedy. Public information spots were played on every major network affiliate in New York City, the local TV stations and Spanish language stations. Press releases and fact sheets were distributed to national and local media outlets, advocacy organizations and others. And, to make sure that those foreign survivors who might be eligible for Social Security benefits were contacted, the New York Regional Office did outreach to about 60 consulates.

continued

Within days, SSA launched



As of December 10, a total of 5,017 disaster-related claims had been taken nationwide. This included 14 retirement and related spouse's claims; 2,308 children's claims; 833 mothers', fathers', widows' or dependent parents' claims; 1,293 claims for lump-sum death benefits; and 117 disability claims. Extensive outreach and matching operations continue to identify those who need help.

In New York

Employees continue their work at the Family Assistance Centers at Manhattan's Pier 94 and Liberty State Park in New Jersey. New York Regional Commissioner Bea Disman is coordinating efforts with the Bureau of Vital Statistics to post death certificates for the survivors of victims whose bodies have not been recovered.

"We've talked again to the 58 employers who lost workers in the World Trade Center for follow up," said Disman. "We've also been attending special events for families of missing or deceased firefighters to take claims. And, we're working with the uniformed services to ensure that every family — about 500 from the fire, police and Port Authority departments — has been contacted and appropriate claims taken. We're going out and finding families who need our help. We aren't waiting for them to find us."

Acting Commissioner Larry Massanari and Acting Deputy Commissioner for

Operations Jim Kissko visited "ground zero" and saw the devastation firsthand. "Even a short walk through Pier 94, where the New York City Family Assistance Center is located, can be deeply moving as you see the hundreds of personal posters along the walls asking for infor-



mation about missing loved ones," said the Acting Commissioner. "But, at the same time, visitors to Pier 94 can't help but be emotionally lifted by the many efforts being made to help those affected."

In addition to those sites, survivor and disability claims are being taken at a number of other locations. These include our field offices, our toll-free 800 number, as well as hospitals, union offices, facilities set up by large corporations, and even local congressional offices. In response to calls coming into our national 800 number, representatives are referring all disaster-related claims calls to our Immediate Claims Taking Units where benefit applications are taken immediately.

At the time of the attack, there were 15,000 cases pending in the New York Disability Determination Services, which serves residents of Manhattan, the Bronx



the needs of the families who lost a loved one in these tragedies. a full-scale outreach effort.

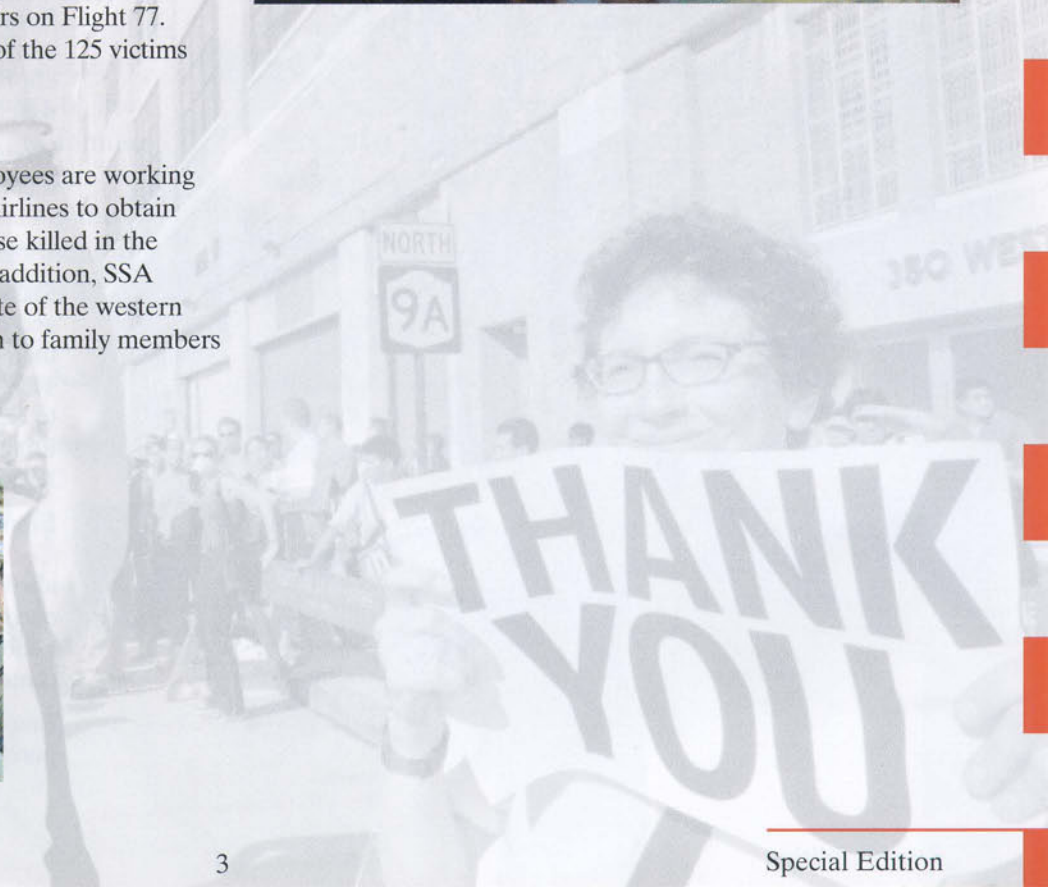
and White Plains. All the case folders were removed from the DDS office and cleaned, tested and certified to be contaminant-free. DDS staff, temporarily located at the Joseph P. Addabbo Federal Building in Jamaica, Queens, are working these cases. Regional Commissioner Disman has met with advocates and congressional staff delegations to commit to 90-day processing of these claims.

On September 24, the Manhattan Hearing Office began hearing cases that had been scheduled for the prior two weeks. The hearings were all completed by the end of October.

At the Pentagon Acting Commissioner Massanari, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Operations Kissko and Acting Philadelphia Regional Commissioner Laurie Watkins visited the Pentagon Family Assistance Center on September 27. They met with U.S. Army Lt. Gen. John Van Alstyne, Department of Defense head of the Pentagon operation, who praised SSA's involvement, saying that SSA employees at the center had a "touch for the work" and were "professionals with a heart."

When the center opened, SSA was one of the first agencies there, thanks to the efforts of Area Director Ruby Burrell and her staff. And, when the Pentagon Family Assistance Center closed on October 12, SSA employees had taken claims from 53 families of the 64 passengers on Flight 77. Employees also served all of the families of the 125 victims working in the Pentagon.

In Pennsylvania SSA employees are working closely with both United and American Airlines to obtain information in locating the families of those killed in the crash who may be eligible for benefits. In addition, SSA staff attended a memorial service at the site of the western Pennsylvania crash to provide information to family members about how to apply for benefits. ★



I t's been about six months since the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centers. Known for their generosity, SSA employees have once again joined forces to show they are Americans first, and if one of us hurts, all of us hurt.

Here are some examples of how offices across the country showed their patriotism and also pitched in to try to ease the pain of those involved in the tragedy.

Employees stand shoulder to shoulder

AT **SSA HEADQUARTERS**, hundreds of employees wore red, white and blue when they attended a patriotic rally. Employees who serve as members of the National Guard or the military reserves attended in uniform. At the National Computer Center, Team Leader Norman Youskauskas,

Office of Telecommunications and Systems Operations, created a wall dedicated to the fallen heroes of the attack.

The staff of the **Kennett, Mo., Field Office**, in remembrance of those lost in the attacks, are wearing red, white and blue ribbons. They also made a contribution to the Federal Employees Education and Assistance (FEEA) Fund. Some employees also donated items to the community effort to send supplies, such as boots, gloves, water and medical supplies, to New York City.

To show their strong support for America, members of the **Grand Prairie, Texas, Teleservice Center (TSC)** wore red, white and blue on October 11.

Staff of the **Memphis (North), Tenn., Field Office** and others in government and private offices in their office complex participated in a blood drive. Thirty-one pints of blood were donated and sent to New York City. Technical Assistant Debra Long and Claims Representative Montrelle Arnold coordinated the blood drive.

Employees of the **Southeastern Program Service Center** arranged for a blood drive onsite. They also sent two banners signed with messages of encouragement, support and sympathy to the Federal Emergency Management Agency relief centers.

Employees of the **Warwick, R.I., Field Office** purchased food, water and socks for the relief



workers in New York City. And at the **Salem and Holyoke, Mass., Field Offices**, employees collected \$450 for the disaster relief fund. FEEA received a donation of \$100 from employees of the **Waltham, Mass., Field Office**.

Two hundred long-stemmed roses were purchased by employees of the **Billings, Mont., Hearing Office**. Each rose was tied with a red, white and blue ribbon along with a card that read, "Together We Can Make a Difference." They sold them for a minimum donation of \$5 each, raising more than \$1,000, which was donated to the World Trade Center/Pentagon Fund established through FEEA.

Employees of the **Manhattan, Kan., Field Office** donated \$730 to be matched by the Manhattan Mercury Disaster Relief Fund for victims of the attacks.

Staff of the **Campbellsville, Ky., Field Office** held a multi-SSA family yard sale at a community fund-raiser, a bake and craft sale, and prepared "themed" box lunches, which Manager Bruce Fraley auctioned off to other staff members to raise money for the American Red Cross. Claims Representative Jeanean Malone, who coordinated the fund raising, said the events raised almost \$1,000.

The staff of the **Milwaukee (North), Wis., Field Office** held a Hispanic heritage luncheon and an office bake sale. Proceeds were donated to the Red Cross. Other **Milwaukee field offices, the teleservice center and the hearing office** raised more than \$1,085, which was sent to the Red Cross. Employees at the **Harold Washington Social Security Center** in Chicago donated blood and also participated in a city-wide commemoration of the tragedy held on September 15.

Employees of the **Lakewood, Colo., Field Office** held a bake-off and raised more than \$600, which was sent to the victim's fund.

"United We Stand" T-shirts were worn by the staff of the **Salisbury, N.C., Field Office** in honor of the victims of the tragedy. Employees also prepared a memorial display containing photos and articles about the tragic events.

Staff of the **Omaha, Neb., Field Office** collected \$1,000 for the Red Cross and collected items for the Salvation Army.

"United We Stand" adorns the T-shirts being sold by members of the **Auburn Teleservice Center's** Spirit Committee and Auburn's special emphasis groups. The profits from the sale of the shirts, which currently totals more than \$3,000, will be sent to the World Trade Center/Pentagon Fund. Pictures of employees wearing the shirts are being sewn into a quilt, which will be presented to the New York Region.

Employees of the **Phoenix (South), Ariz., Field Office** purchased T-shirts from a local manufacturer that sent proceeds from their sales to the relief programs in New York



To show support for America, members of the **Grand Prairie, Texas, TSC** wore red, white and blue on October 11, 2001. Most wore a T-shirt with the words "United We Stand" imprinted on the front of the shirt.



and Virginia. The staff proudly wore their shirts on September 14.

Service Representative Melvina Dillard, **Cherry Hill, N.J., Field Office**, made ribbons for staff members and has started collecting donations to be made to the Red Cross on behalf of the staff.

"Patriot pins" also were created by Paralegal Analyst Lynn Johnson for the members of the **Raleigh, N.C., Hearing Office**. A luncheon was organized by Senior Case Technician Debbie Seagroves, with everyone not only bringing food, but also contributing cash. The office raised \$1,051, which was presented to the Red Cross.

For the staff of the **Nashville, Tenn., Field Office**, Technical Expert Dorothy Perkins coordinated a prayer luncheon in memory of those killed or injured during the attacks.

Members of the **Spokane, Wash., Field Office** raised more than \$450 to send to the Red Cross. They also had T-shirts made, with donations from the sale going to the Red Cross.

Beaverton, Ore., Field Office employees collected more than \$400 for the Red Cross and the FEEA fund. Manager Nancie Stout told *OASIS* that an SSI beneficiary was so overwhelmed by the horrible events that he wanted to have \$50 deducted from his check to give to the relief fund.

The 33 employees of the **Norfolk, Va., Hearing Office** collected more than \$1,440, which was given to the Red Cross.

Technical Expert Wendy Friscone headed a week-long bake sale at the **Middleburg Heights, Ohio, Field Office**. Proceeds were sent to the World Trade Center/Pentagon Fund. ★



Life Bloodmobile Unit Director Linda Long (second from left) greets donors from the Memphis North Office: (from left) Claims Representative Montrelle Arnold; Manager Mike West; and Technical Expert Debra Long.

JENNIFER DeBOY IS A PROJECT OFFICER IN THE OFFICE OF DISABILITY AND INCOME SECURITY PROGRAMS. DeBOY AND HER COLLEGE ROOMMATE WERE ON VACATION BICYCLING THROUGH FRANCE AT THE BEGINNING OF SEPTEMBER. IT WAS ABOARD THEIR RETURN FLIGHT FROM PARIS THAT THEY LEARNED OF THE SEPTEMBER 11 ATTACKS.

Tragedy

BRINGS NEW FRIENDS



*“All of our experiences that week
have combined to convince me
there is more benevolence than evil in
existence.”*

“...how incredibly fortunate I feel to have been part of such a compassionate brotherhood of diverse faiths and ethnic backgrounds at a time when the world seemed to fall apart.”



“If anyone had told us that spending a week with Steve Forbes (he was one of our small tour group) would pale in comparison to the events that followed, I would not have believed them,” said DeBoy. “I hope as you read this, you’ll get some sense of what it was like for me the week of September 11.”

Following are excerpts from a letter DeBoy recently wrote to another American who had cycled with her in France.

... We were also aboard a flight heading to the U.S. when the terrorists struck. Instead of landing in Philadelphia, our American airline got diverted to Gander, Newfoundland. We were not allowed to disembark for 24 hours. Then we were bused to a remote Anglican church campground (minus our luggage). Once there, over 200 of us sat from Wednesday until Sunday evening.

While there were certainly drawbacks (we had no access to the news until townspeople began taping it for the camp’s VCR; there were long waits whenever you wanted to use the ONE available phone; if you didn’t enjoy roast moose for dinner, you were out of luck), we could not have felt more safe — or loved.

Although showers were cold and we bunked 10 to a cabin, it was an incredible opportunity to witness human behavior during such a tragic period in our history. It began with the Canadian customs officials who, nearly in tears, asked why their good neighbors to the south were the targets of such evil. Then the residents of the small town began cooking up a storm for their stranded guests. And they brought us some badly needed clothes! They kept telling us we would do the same if the roles

had been reversed ... you know, I’m not convinced we could have competed with the “Newfies” selfless donations of time and caring.

I surely do not want to leave out the acts of good will demonstrated by the plane passengers themselves. ... The poignancy of the whole surreal week hit me during an impromptu interdenominational memorial service. There were high school boys aboard our jet from a private school in Pennsylvania, and one of them had a set of bagpipes. I looked around as he skillfully played “Amazing Grace,” and there was not a dry eye in the place. Every refugee from every represented corner of the globe had joined together to pay respect. How peacefully supportive of one another our international campground had grown.

I could go on and on about the bilingual games of Scrabble we played, or the softball match where we taught our new foreign friends to swing at their first-ever pitch. But let me instead just say how incredibly fortunate I feel to have been part of such a compassionate brotherhood of diverse faiths and ethnic backgrounds at a time when the world seemed to fall apart. One elderly French gentleman practiced English all week so he could say to us upon departing, “It was worth losing my only vacation to America just so I could meet such kind-hearted citizens.”

All of our experiences that week have combined to convince me there is more benevolence than evil in existence. I’ll forever carry with me my new found (land) security blanket of perfect strangers reaching out to comfort each other when life seemed bleak indeed. ★

H

HUNDREDS OF SSA EMPLOYEES WERE WORKING AT THE FAMILY ASSISTANCE CENTER ON PIER 94 AND OTHER LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT NEW YORK TO HELP FAMILIES OF THOSE LOST IN THE WORLD TRADE CENTER ATTACK. HERE ARE SOME OF THEIR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES:

Assistant Manager Ellen Zwierzynski, Manhattan (Dwtn.) Field Office:

While assisting a gentleman in his late 60s, I learned that he had recently had brain surgery for an aneurysm that affected his memory. His wife, in her mid 50s, took care of everything for him. She also worked at the World Trade Center. He told me how his wife had cared for him while he was ill and how she handled all their paperwork. (All the documents he

shoulder. The claimant looked up and smiled and said she would always remember that.

Public Affairs Specialist James Green, Area I Director's Office:

On my second day at Pier 94, a young woman sat down at my desk. With tears in her eyes, she softly stated that she had lost her husband and that she didn't know what she and her three children would do.

REMINISCENCES FROM THE PIER

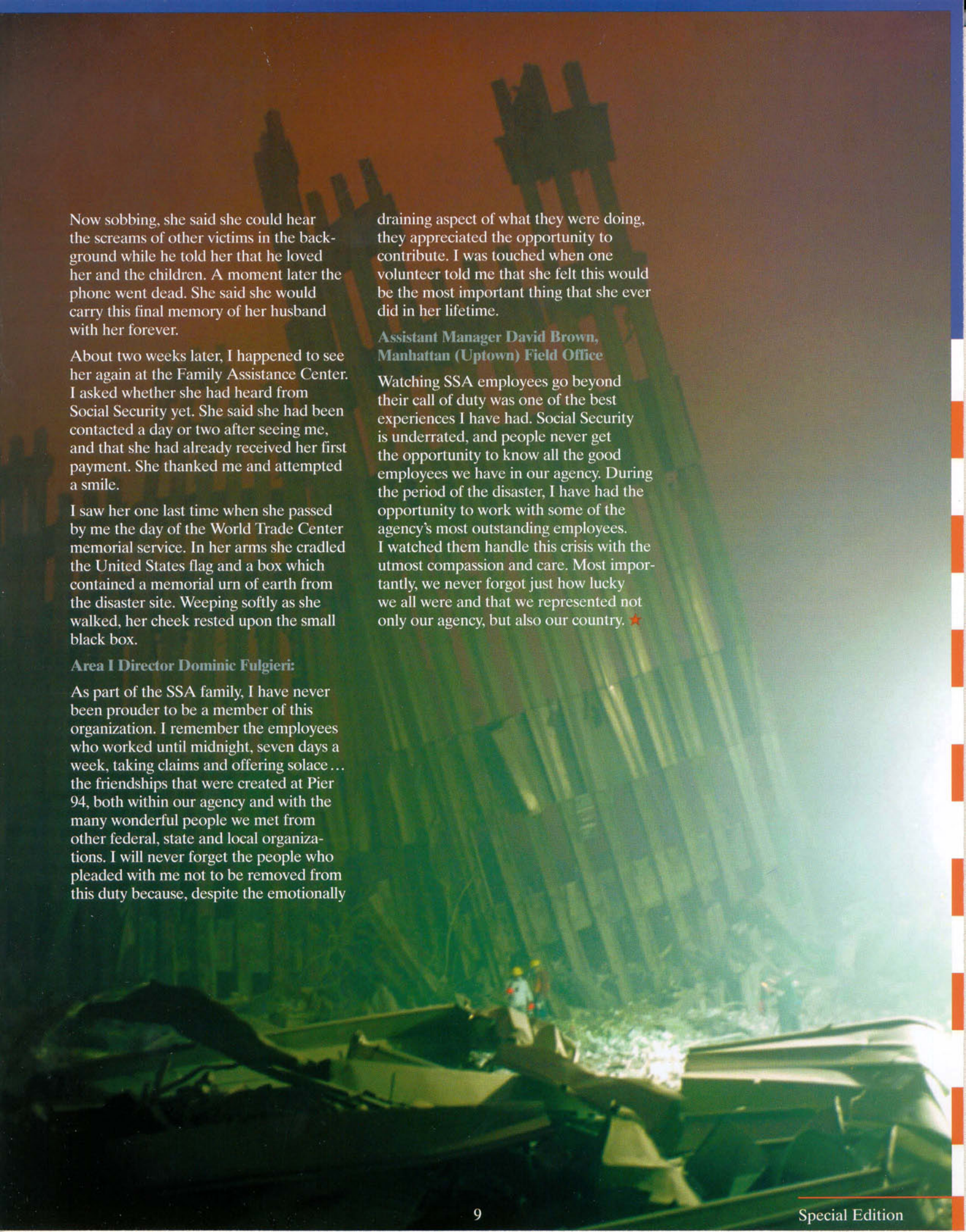
needed to file for benefits were neatly in a folder, clearly organized by his wife). They had no children or other family members. He was alone. But he held on to the idea that his wife was still alive. He asked what would happen if she came home. I told him that we would be very happy to stop the checks, and that was my prayer for him.

Claims Representative Miriam Davis, East Bronx Field Office:

The young woman sitting at my desk was the wife of one of the first firefighters to enter the World Trade Center, risking his life to save others. She said that they have two sons and a daughter. She also told me that her husband was supposed to be named as godfather of her niece on the following weekend. "Now someone else will serve as godfather," she said. I reached for her hand and said that her husband would still be the godfather, but only from afar, that he would be the angel sitting on her niece's



While trying to hold back tears, she said that he was on the 104th floor in Tower 1 and that he had actually called her on his cell phone to tell her that he was trapped. He told her that the stairwell doors were blocked with debris, the office was in flames, there were dead and burning bodies scattered about the floor, and he felt that his own death was imminent.



Now sobbing, she said she could hear the screams of other victims in the background while he told her that he loved her and the children. A moment later the phone went dead. She said she would carry this final memory of her husband with her forever.

About two weeks later, I happened to see her again at the Family Assistance Center. I asked whether she had heard from Social Security yet. She said she had been contacted a day or two after seeing me, and that she had already received her first payment. She thanked me and attempted a smile.

I saw her one last time when she passed by me the day of the World Trade Center memorial service. In her arms she cradled the United States flag and a box which contained a memorial urn of earth from the disaster site. Weeping softly as she walked, her cheek rested upon the small black box.

Area I Director Dominic Fulgieri:

As part of the SSA family, I have never been prouder to be a member of this organization. I remember the employees who worked until midnight, seven days a week, taking claims and offering solace ... the friendships that were created at Pier 94, both within our agency and with the many wonderful people we met from other federal, state and local organizations. I will never forget the people who pleaded with me not to be removed from this duty because, despite the emotionally

draining aspect of what they were doing, they appreciated the opportunity to contribute. I was touched when one volunteer told me that she felt this would be the most important thing that she ever did in her lifetime.

**Assistant Manager David Brown,
Manhattan (Uptown) Field Office**

Watching SSA employees go beyond their call of duty was one of the best experiences I have had. Social Security is underrated, and people never get the opportunity to know all the good employees we have in our agency. During the period of the disaster, I have had the opportunity to work with some of the agency's most outstanding employees. I watched them handle this crisis with the utmost compassion and care. Most importantly, we never forgot just how lucky we all were and that we represented not only our agency, but also our country. ★

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS

Employees offer help to survivors

The tragic events of September 11 affected every employee. There were those who wanted to help in whatever way they could — donating blood, sending needed items and money. Then, there were those who sprang into action to help the survivors. Following are the accounts of a few employees who experienced the tragedy firsthand.

Technical Expert Mary Olsen, Kansas City (Gateway), Mo., Field Office, was called by the American Red Cross on September 26 and the next day was flown to New York for a three-week tour of duty at “ground zero.” Olsen, who has been a Red Cross volunteer for three years, used her own annual leave.

“I really felt it was a privilege to be able to participate in even a small way at this time,” Olsen told OASIS. “Once in New York, I went with other new arrivals by bus to the Red Cross headquarters in Brooklyn, where we were assigned to different functions and locations. My team consisted of four family service technicians (I was one), two nurses, two mental health counselors and a team leader. The apartments surrounding the World Trade Center were evacuated after the explosions. Many were damaged or dust covered. Since the electricity had been shut off, food in the refrigerators spoiled. The quality of the air was a concern, especially for those with children. All families had compelling stories to tell. We were busy each day, working from 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.

“There were volunteers from almost every state. Everyone wanted to do something,” said Olsen. “I was very impressed with the organization of the Red Cross and their ability to make changes quickly as the needs arose.”

Olsen said her co-workers surprised her by sending cards, letters and packages. “I hope all employees know their efforts to help are just as important as being there,” she noted.

Claims Representative Elaine Olson, Van Nuys, Calif., Field Office, helped get survivors benefits for the spouse and two children of a passenger on one of the planes that hit the World Trade Center. The victim was in Boston working as a stagehand for the band, The Backstreet Boys. He was flying home for the birth of his second child. The widow appreciated SSA’s help for her family.

The Immediate Claims Taking Unit in the Western Program Service Center has taken 129 emergency/disaster survivor claims to date. All units have been issued new procedures that will help them process claims as quickly as possible.

“It was one of the most rewarding and physically exhausting experiences I have ever had,” said Scilley.

Claims Representative Daniel Scilley, Maysville, Ky., Field Office, went to New York with the Southern Baptist Convention Disaster Relief, in conjunction with the Red Cross. Scilley volunteered from September 15 to September 22 with the kitchen unit, which provided hot meals for Red Cross members, workers and victims’ families. While delivering supplies and food to workers at “ground zero,” Scilley became aware of a situation where the Red Cross had not established itself at the location. He was asked to meet with the head of the Red

Cross to coordinate getting the organization into the area.

“It was one of the most rewarding and physically exhausting experiences I have ever had,” said Scilley.

On September 17, **Norma Lefebvre, Manager, Brooklyn (Kings Plaza), N.Y., Field Office,** sent this E-mail to a co-worker:

I spent this weekend with many of the families of Cantor employees (Cantor Fitzgerald is a company with 600 of its employees still missing). Bea Disman, our Regional Commissioner, has been running non-stop setting up groups of



SSA managers and technicians at locations where support groups for many of the companies have been gathered. The Plaza Hotel has accommodated several companies affected by the disaster. Cantor is one of them and their support area is the hotel’s grand ballroom — a ballroom now covered wall to wall with pictures of its missing employees.

This weekend, we developed a simplified factsheet of what SSA has to offer these families, and what we need from them to expedite the processing of survivor claims ASAP. They, of course, had no idea that they would be dealing with Social Security at this time of their life. We also completed numerous “leads” for survivor benefits. These claims will be processed by our ICT units.

This was an emotional task, touching and coming face to face with people who were hurting, dazed and angry. The majority of the leads were taken from young women with children (very sad). Several of these women are expecting any day or within a few weeks. It was, however, rewarding when they expressed their gratitude for what SSA is doing for them.

I am proud to work for this agency because we always rush up to the plate to provide our services. We are always thinking of the needs of the public we serve and we do whatever it takes to reach out and touch them all in a positive way.

Vivian Lo Sid, Manager, Chinatown, N.Y., Field Office, sent this message to a central office employee on September 24:

I am overwhelmed by everyone’s kindness. My staff and I appreciate your thoughts and well wishes.

The Chinatown office’s breakroom has a bird’s eye view of the southern tip of Manhattan. We saw the tragedy unfold on 9/11. The staff and public evacuated safely from my office. Public transportation, bridges and tunnels were shut down quickly. The mass transit system reopened around 2 p.m. on 9/11. Bridges and tunnels reopened gradually — over a few days. ... Employees from Chinatown, Delancey Street and Downtown were redeployed to other SSA offices on Thursday and Friday. I came into Manhattan late Friday morning to check

continued on next page

FIRSTHAND ACCOUNTS, *continued*

out the status of the office. The computers were down due to telephone line problems in lower Manhattan, but I chose to reopen on Monday because my staff wanted to come home. They're a great bunch of folks — I couldn't ask for a better staff.

On September 15 and 16, several SSA managers and staff assisted at crisis centers — taking leads or claims from survivors. ... I helped out at the Plaza and noted



the high numbers of young families with children.

... What an awful time to acknowledge the beauty of SSA's survivors program.

... While the rest of NYC was slowly reopening on Thursday and Friday, Chinatown remained shut down until the weekend due to rescue efforts going on at the WTC. Ethnic

media scrambled to find alternate sites — the TV and radio stations weren't working because frequencies went through the WTC.

My staff publicized an administrative telephone number as a hotline for Chinese-speaking survivors to contact us. We've processed six claims.

On Sunday, those of us who worked at the crisis centers on September 15 and 16, attended the Memorial Service at Yankee Stadium. The most moving and patriotic moment was when Lee Greenwood sang "God Bless the U.S.A." Everyone stood up and waved their flags.

The Downtown and Regional Office are reporting to 26 Federal Plaza this morning. Many witnessed the horror three dimensionally. Downtown is on the 31st floor and much of the regional office is spread out from the 30th to the 40th floor. The fireball at the WTC appeared as if it was coming right at the Federal Building.

For all of you and your loved ones who might be involved in military action, Godspeed and a safe return home.

An E-mail on September 27 from **Systems Coordinator Jennifer Botsford, Area III Director's Office, Philadelphia**, said:

I've been leaving the house at 6 a.m. and getting home about 6 p.m. I've been going into the family center for the Pentagon survivors each day. As you can imagine, I've gone through a range of emotions. I must say the military is doing a remarkable job for these families. Each is assigned a crisis counselor. They're getting free lodging and meals at the hotel and have every possible service available to them. There are grief dogs, chaplains and several agencies present each day. The families were

being briefed twice daily, but yesterday the briefings were reduced to one each day. I think they were at the point where they don't think any additional bodies will be discovered. I have attended some of the briefings and it is just heart wrenching. The briefing room has an area where all victims are listed; some include biographies or a few paragraphs that the families have written. If a ribbon is attached, the body has been found. There are still several that have not been found. One side of the room is lined with tables where families have placed flowers, messages, etc., for the victims. The remaining walls contain messages children have written to the families. I make a point to read the biographies of those that come to the SSA tables. Yesterday, the military staff came around to each of the volunteer tables (SSA is also considered a volunteer) inviting us to attend sessions with mental health counselors that are held twice daily. The General is asking that we all attend at least one session.

Teleservice Representative Lori Willoughby, Manassas, Va., TSC, wrote to OASIS:

Given the Manassas TSC's close proximity to Washington, D.C., and the Pentagon (the TSC overlooks the Manassas National Battlefield Park), the attack hit closer to home in more ways than one. Everyone in the office had either worked at the Pentagon or had a close friend or family member who worked there. There are four siblings in my mother's family and they all worked there at one time or another. Years ago, my mother and one of her sisters worked in the very spot that was hit. When I was a child, they occasionally took me to work with them on overtime



Saturdays. It was such an awe-inspiring place, it was almost impossible to believe that I was actually there and that I had family who worked there. The great majority of my family for the past three generations has been

federal government employees in various agencies in different parts of the country. And my fiance works at Reagan National Airport, so we're all a little jumpy right now. But I sit at my desk every day and look out at the spot where hundreds of soldiers fought and died in the name of freedom. And I just can't imagine being employed by anyone other than the government. I feel like I owe it to not only the soldiers but to my ancestors who helped carve civilization out of the wilderness that was so far from their homeland and so foreign from anything they had known before. So at a time like this, there was no question that I should help out in any way that I could, no matter how small the contribution. That's the overwhelming sentiment of the TSC as a whole. They may be small in number, but they're definitely not small at heart. ★

9-11 Volunteer Service Awards

EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR EFFORTS

“September 11 and the eight weeks thereafter saw many heroes,” New York Regional Commissioner **Bea Disman** said. “There are the men and women who ran into the buildings to save others; the volunteers who flocked to ‘ground zero’ to help; the chaplains, the cooks, the mental health professionals; those who donated blood, food, water, blankets and gloves. And there are you — the Social Security Administration’s heroes — who worked with the victims’ families directly and indirectly to ensure that Social Security was there for our most vulnerable citizens, many of whom were children. You made sure these families were cared for and treated well.”

Disman spoke during a ceremony at the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Federal Courthouse in lower



New York Regional Commissioner Bea Disman (l.) with Manager Yvonne Bryant, Jersey City, N.J., Field Office.

Manhattan. The occasion recognized SSA employees for their help in quickly providing Social Security benefits to the victims’ families

and for volunteering their services outside the agency to assist those in need. During the ceremony, 13 individuals and 200 team members received the 9-11 Volunteer Service Award.

Receiving individuals awards were:

Maureen Davis, Claims Representative, Newton, N.J., Field Office

Jianfranco DiPasquale, Benefit Authorizer, Northeastern PSC

Jim Downey, Module Manager, Northeastern PSC

John Gallagher, Systems Coordinator, Area I Director’s Office

Bashir Gryce, Debtor Contact Representative, Northeastern PSC

David Howe, Management Support Specialist, East Brunswick, N.J., Teleservice Center

Bruce Kaplan, Management Support Specialist, Northeastern PSC
Philip O’Keefe, Manager, West Farms (North Bronx), N.Y., Field Office

Louise Raczynski, Claims Representative, Newton, N.J., Field Office

Anthony Russo, Operations Supervisor, Staten Island, N.Y., Field Office

Melanie Sue, Automation Clerk, New York RO

Debbie Vultaggio, Management Operations Specialist, OHA

Michael Wishner, Supervisor, Jersey City, N.J., TSC

Awards were presented to members of the:

★ New York Response Team

★ New Jersey Response Team

★ Immediate Claims Taking Unit at the Northeastern PSC

★ Security Investigation Team

★ Systems Support Team

★ Emergency Procedures Team

★ New York DDS Response Team

★ Public Affairs Response Team

★ Human Resources Response Team

★ Field Services Response Team

★ Investigations Response Team

Regional Communications Director John Shallman served as the master of ceremonies for the event. Also attending the ceremony was Jo Anne Barnhart, her first employee event as Commissioner of Social Security, and Philadelphia Regional Commissioner **Larry Massanari**.

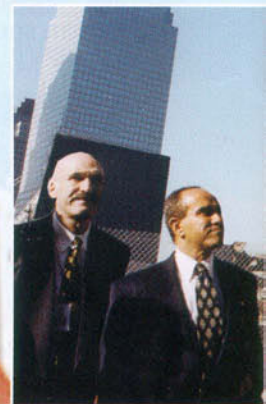
“The entire nation has been deeply affected by the tragic events that occurred here in New York, at the Pentagon and in rural Pennsylvania,” Massanari said. “Bea Disman led our efforts to provide service to the citizens of New York. SSA couldn’t have had finer leadership. And she couldn’t have had a finer group of people to lead.”

In closing, Disman told employees, “You are our heroes. You are the best of Social Security. You are the best of humanity. We are very proud of you. Our experiences of working with the families of the victims changed us forever. Each story was tragic, sad and painful. ...To these families, we were more than Social Security, more than just a government agency. We had a face, a heart, and we were there for them. ... The opportunity to help the victims’ families instilled feelings of great personal pride, satisfaction and accomplishment. ... It reminded us why we are public servants and why we are so committed to the Social Security mission.” ★

Commissioner commends employees

After attending the awards ceremony in New York, Commissioner Barnhart toured “ground zero.” Later, she commended the efforts of employees who reached out to provide services to families of victims.

“With regard to September 11, I want to take this opportunity to express my pride in the response of SSA’s employees to the terrorist attacks. Particularly in New York, but also in northern Virginia and throughout the country, they worked tirelessly to help those who lost family members in spite of the chaos and highly charged emotions of those first few days. They will always have my gratitude and respect for those actions,” Commissioner Barnhart said. ★





A new citizen sees... America's Opportunities

Being born American citizens, many of us take for granted just how lucky we are to live in a republic that offers us so many freedoms. But our attitudes have been changed greatly since the events of September 11.



Sandra Tapia, who came to the United States seven years ago as a teen-ager from Mexico, understands why her father was so determined to bring his family to this country.

“He wanted us to have a better life and better opportunities here,” said Tapia. “When we left, we left everything behind, except clothes and personal things.”

The family settled in Texas, where Tapia went to high school and learned English. Upon graduating, she was offered a soccer scholarship to Huron University in South Dakota. That's how she started working for SSA.

Tapia was hired in a work-study program at the Huron Field Office in 1999.

“Sandra was an excellent employee, performing a variety of clerical duties,” said Assistant Manager **Jim Holiway**. “She was always glad to help her co-workers any way she could.”

About a year ago, Tapia decided to apply for her U.S. citizenship. She began studying the 100 questions that focus on the American Constitution and questions that could be asked during her citizenship test.

Tapia passed, and on June 6, 2001, she joined 35 other people for their citizenship ceremony.

“You have so many opportunities here,” Tapia explained. “You have freedom and your rights are respected as citizens. In Mexico, we don't have many opportunities or the chance to get a scholarship.”

Tapia graduated from Huron University last November with a degree in criminal justice. She left SSA and returned to her family in Texas and has set her goal as finding a job that allows her to work with children.

“We're confident that Sandra will be an excellent employee for whomever hires her, just as she had been for us,” said Holiway. ★

