

# Advice at SUNY New Paltz: Move on – but remember

BY JEREMIAH HARRIGAN  
Times Herald-Record

**NEW PALTZ** – The crowd stood quietly on the rain-softened grass outside SUNY New Paltz's Old Library building.

It had been 10 years, but for some, the memories were as vivid as the day it happened.

There were words and tears and finally, at the end of the brief remembrance ceremony, an opportunity to act. A chance to plant a tiny American flag in the silhouettes of the Twin Towers that had been earlier mown

out of the lawn.

Some of Friday's most moving words were delivered by James Halpern, executive director of the college's Institute for Disaster Mental Health.

Halpern, who was among the region's first responders, suggested to the crowd of about 300 that they remember that the U.S. has been at war since the 9/11 attacks – and that in addition to the civilian casualties, thousands of troops have also died overseas.

And he asked the crowd to also remember and recognize

the hidden casualties of 9/11 – the uncounted thousands suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Some estimates, he said, place the number of returning veterans diagnosed with PTSD at 30 percent, with higher percentages for National Guard and reservists.

But it was when Halpern quoted the words of young people – children who were in grammar school when the Twin Towers fell – that men and women found themselves

blinking back tears.

A seventh-grader wrote how his friend Dan was taken out of class that day. Dan's father worked in the World Trade Center and had not called. The boy wrote how he and Dan and their friends spent the next few days keeping themselves "busy" at the movies and McDonald's, waiting for that call.

"Dan vomited the entire time," Halpern said.

The boy's father worked for Cantor Fitzgerald.

He never called.

After the ceremony concluded and people began planting flags in the grassy silhouettes, Phyllis Freeman, a professor in the college's psychology department, talked about the meaning and need for ceremonies like Friday's.

"We put one foot in front of another and move on. We have to move on," she said. "But if we just do it without remembering and understanding the past, we reinjure ourselves."

[jhorrigan@th-record.com](mailto:jhorrigan@th-record.com)