



**Family Newsletter**  
Fourth Quarter, 2014

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## In Memoriam



**Mayor Thomas Menino**

### **Farewell To Boston's Longest Serving Mayor**

"...I don't think I did anything special. I did what you are supposed to do -- help people." These are the words of Mayor Tom Menino. Without intention, he eloquently described how he lived his life, and more specifically, how he served as Mayor of Boston for 20 years. When the Mayor passed away on Thursday, October 30, he left a grieving family, an enormous network of friends and coworkers, and a city that will always feel his absence, and his presence through the indelible mark he left on the city of Boston. The Mayor became our friend, our advocate, and our protector. He was available to us, and was adamant about commemorating our loved ones in a way that made us comfortable. Quite simply, he helped us.

Thousands of people waited in line for more than two hours, braving the bitter, wind-driven, sloppy snow to bid him farewell and pay their respects as he lay in state at Faneuil Hall just three days after he died. Had he been able to speak to us, he would have said we were out of our minds and we should have stayed home and watched in on TV. But the line of people from all walks of life, Boston residents and beyond, speaks to the kind of man he was -- kind, thoughtful, considerate, friendly and funny. He was a man of the people; a public servant who took delight in it, every day. Mr. Mayor, we thank you, and we will miss you.

All of us at the Massachusetts 9/11 Fund offer our sincerest condolences to Mrs. Menino, his children and grandchildren, and all who loved him. For those of you who would like to reach out to his family:

*Cards for the Menino family can be mailed to: **Mayor Menino's Office**, Boston University, 75 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215.*

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made by clicking on the link for the [Thomas M. Menino Fund for Boston](#), so that the family can continue to support the programs that Mayor Menino embraced, and that helped so many.

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**Remembering Tom Menino**

There are people who talk a great game, and then there are the doers. Never has that been more evident than the last few weeks in Boston, where people are remembering the city's longest serving Mayor, Tom Menino. And when it comes to leadership lessons, Mayor Menino's might be some of the most important for those who lead and for all of us, as we choose those who will lead us.

In my 31 years living and working in Boston, and working in the media here, I have covered and witnessed a lot of memorials to fallen leaders. None have been as personal as the tributes to Mayor Menino. The question is why, and the answer lies in the Mayor's personal work ethic, his belief in his mission and the work of an exceptional staff.

I got to know Mayor Menino when I was News Director at WCVB. Specifically, I knew him as more than the Mayor when our beloved political reporter Kirby Perkins died suddenly of a heart attack. He and Kirby had a special relationship dating back to the Mayor's City Council days. When we started a scholarship fund in Kirby's memory, the Mayor was right there. When I was on the Mass 9/11 Board and the families needed a special place in the city for a Memorial, I called Mayor Menino. He responded instantly and wanted to know how he could help. Our hope was to find a place in one of Boston's iconic locations. He helped us make sure the Memorial was constructed in a beautiful spot in the Public Garden and put key staffers on the project. What could have been an extremely difficult task was made easier by Mayor Menino's commitment to the families. For that, I know the families are forever grateful.

My encounters are small compared with the countless lives he changed by not just shaking a hand and saying, "I hear you," but by assigning a member of his staff to follow through. It is that follow through that was his hallmark. Ask some of the shooting victims in the city of Boston. The Mayor was there from the beginning and stayed with them as they grew up. Ask people from the many racial and ethnic groups around the city who felt welcome because of his policies. Ask the gay community, since he embraced gay marriage long before it was legal in the state. Ask the children. We have all heard story after story of the kids who spoke personally with the Mayor and kids whose lives were changed because he didn't just listen. He acted out of a belief that government can make a positive difference in peoples' lives.

Leaders have a choice every day. Take the easy path or do the hard work. Make the tough decisions. Get the right people in place to make things happen. In leadership, it's always about the tough choices. Choose to lend a hand or choose to take one away.

Mayor Menino always extended his hand, whether it was literally his own, or one of his colleagues who could act on his wishes. Leaders in all walks of life could learn a great deal from that simple act. Perhaps those who benefitted from his professional generosity will honor his memory and extend their own hand, and then follow through with action that will make a difference.

Candy Altman  
Former, Mass 9/11 Fund Board Member

## 13<sup>th</sup> Commemoration



Mayor Walsh and Maureen Gilligan



Boston Fire Department Quartet

### 2014 Madeline Amy Sweeney Award

The Madeline Amy Sweeney Award for Civilian Bravery was created in February of 2002 in honor of Amy Sweeney, an American Airlines flight attendant who died on September 11, 2001. The award is presented annually on September 11, to citizens of the Commonwealth who have displayed extraordinary courage, bravery and heroism without regard for personal safety, in an effort to save the life of another.



The 2014 recipient, Michael DeSousa of Fall River, was stopped at a traffic light on July 6, 2013, when he saw flames coming from a nearby apartment building. DeSousa left his car and rushed into the burning building. He then forced open a door to a hallway and began knocking on doors to warn residents. DeSousa then went into an adjacent building to warn residents of the fire. DeSousa was emotional as he recalled how one elderly woman had difficulty understanding the danger and was reluctant to leave her home. He then described how he spoke to her, first in English and then in her native Portuguese, before lifting her up and carrying her to safety. It was then, he said, the woman kissed his cheek and thanked him.

### Youth At Our Commemoration

The Arlington High School Madrigal Singers, an accomplished A cappella choir, participated in the 13th Annual Commemoration by performing the opening and closing music in the House Chamber. Led by Ms. Cheryl Christo, their lovely selections included "An Irish Blessing" and "Somewhere."

The Arlington High School students were not our only young participants this year; a contingent from Needham High School helped with logistics and felt similar emotion and awakening. Students who volunteered at the commemoration received certificates of appreciation as mementos of the day.

More important than the certificates, however, is that attending our commemoration is a powerful teaching moment. Ms. Christo asked her students for their reflections. In her words, the event "had a powerful and profound impact on many." Here are some of their words:

*"As I was only three years old when 9/11 occurred, I can't say that I remember the day of the incident, nor the months of hardship that followed. I am not one of the many people who lost a friend, neighbor, teacher, colleague, or family member. In many ways, I've been lucky enough to have avoided the painful repercussions of 9/11. For this reason, I was surprised by how emotional I felt during the 9/11 memorial."*

*"I noticed that many of the speakers and performers had lost family members on 9/11. I was amazed at the grace and courage with which they stood in front of the audience to honor the memories of their loved ones."*

*"The slideshow in particular made me realize that we were all affected by 9/11. ... I came away from the state house that day changed, pitiful for our past but optimistic for the future."*

*"I'm beginning to understand as the years go by, that this event will never become unimportant in U.S. history. It will be written in textbooks but more importantly, live on in the hearts of all American citizens."*

Going forward, the MA 9/11 Fund expects to continue involving students from one or two high schools in the commemoration as this practice is aligned with the educational aspect of the Fund's mission. Please feel free to contact the Family Advisory Committee if you would like to recommend a high school with which you have a personal connection.



The Arlington High School Madrigal Singers



Needham High School Volunteers

## Events

### With RE2PECT To Derek Jeter



On September 28th, Derek Jeter of the NY Yankees played his last game at Fenway Park. What a way to go! It was a beautiful sunny and warm autumn day. The RE2PECT and tributes for the Yankees captain were abundant and powerful. The emotional pre-game opening ceremony included a montage showcasing the span of the Yankees-Red Sox rivalry set to Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start The Fire". Representing the NY Yankees and 9/11, the opening pitch was thrown out by Olivia, Ethan and Victoria Charles. Representing the Boston Red Sox was Heather Abbott, who was injured during the Boston Marathon bombing last year.

Ronan Tynan performed "God Bless America" during the 7th inning stretch after which Bernie Williams played an acoustic version of "Take Me Out To The Ballgame" with the fans singing the words.

Both teams were out of the playoffs, and the Yankees won 9-5, ending a game, a season and a career on a day devoted to an amazing player and person!



Ethan, Victoria and Olivia Charles



## One WTC Now Open

New York's One World Trade Center is officially open for business, having welcomed its first tenant, Conde Nast, on Monday, Nov. 3. The magazine publishing giant began moving in the first of its 2,400 employees, with more to follow through the spring.

Standing 1,776 feet from ground to spire top adjacent to the north reflecting pool, 1 WTC now claims the title of being the tallest structure in the Western Hemisphere, previously held by the Sears Tower in Chicago. The city has been scrutinized by critics for erecting a tower in the very spot that became the target of terrorists. But architects say the cement core of the building is 7 times stronger than sidewalk cement, and the elevators and stairway are within that core for safer evacuation in an emergency. An observatory, scheduled to open in the spring, sits at the top of the tower. Admission to the observatory will be \$32, but will always be free to 9/11 family members and first responders.



One World Trade Center

## Widow To Widow

"Tuesday's Children" collaborated with the "American Widow Project" to offer a retreat for widows of 9/11 as well as those of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, to share, laugh, and heal. This program offered opportunities for those who registered to empower, strengthen, and learn from each other. The activities included a cooking class, treasure hunt around NYC, yoga in Central Park, guided meditation, and other activities organized by both organizations and sponsored by generous supporters of Tuesday's Children. 16 widows traveled from all over the country to NYC and shared rooms in a rented townhouse over three days, starting September 7. The retreat ended with everyone attending Tuesday's Children "Roots of Resilience" annual gala on September 9, where Taryn Davis, the Founder and Executive Director of the American Widow Project, was one of the honorees.

The American Widow Project was created in 2007. Taryn Davis, was widowed at 21, when her husband was killed in action in the Iraq war. She created the non-profit, "American Widow Project" to provide peer-to-peer support to military widows grieving the loss of a spouse in the armed forces. To read more about Taryn Davis, and her work with "Widow University" click on the link [Taryn Davis WidowU](#).



All those who are registered with Tuesday's Children are eligible to attend their programs. Christie Coombs and Teresa Mathai attended from MA. There were 8 widows of 9/11 and another 8 war widows from all over the country. The 9/11 and War Widows participated in a cooking class in NYC (see photo). The sharing and camaraderie were amazing as we shared our common experiences, coping strategies, and roller-coaster journeys of grief and healing. It was eye opening to realize that the average war widow is 24 years old. We memorialize our loved ones during annual commemoration services on 9/11, while the war widows, in addition to Memorial Day, commemorate the individual anniversaries of losing their loved ones on their "Angelversaries." "Our comfort zone after our husbands were killed was our grief, our pain, this feeling that nobody understood who we were," Davis said. "And when they come to these events, they step outside of that comfort zone, and they're laughing and they're smiling. ... It's one step, but it's the one step that leads to the next step. ... As long as they're taking steps forward, that's all that matters."

## Family Service Projects

### COMING SOON Camp Harbor View Holiday Gift Wrap Project

We are looking for family members who would like to volunteer their time on **Tuesday, December 16th**, to wrap holiday gifts for children at the Camp Harbor View program office in Boston. Toys, art supplies, winter coats, and other clothing items will be among the gifts to be wrapped for delivery to children in families living in at-risk neighborhoods in Boston. Last year, gifts were wrapped for 126 children in 51 families. Each family received one bag of gifts including toys, winter coats, hats, boots, pants, gloves, shoes, socks, sweaters, etc.

The gift-wrapping will take place from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at **2 Dearborn Street in Roxbury** with lunch provided for the volunteers. **Please respond by Dec 7<sup>th</sup>** by contacting Karin Charles at [Karin.Charles@massfund.org](mailto:Karin.Charles@massfund.org) or Judy Smith at [judyandgeorges@aol.com](mailto:judyandgeorges@aol.com) if you are interested in this holiday service opportunity.

Participation in this service project has special meaning to the 9/11 families since it was part of our gift to honor retiring Mayor Thomas Menino, who initiated the Camp Harbor View program in 2007. We plan to make this an annual day of service in his memory.

## Upcoming Social Events For Families

### Snow Tubing

With the cold and snowy weather quickly approaching, we are once again heading to Amesbury Sports Park for a fun-filled day of snow tubing. The date is yet to be determined, but planned for the end of January/early February. We will be sending an email with all the details once the date is set. We had such a great time last year, we hope that you'll join us for this event. It's a great way to beat the winter doldrums and get out and enjoy the wintry weather.

### FAC Notes

### Commemoration Feedback

Many thanks for sharing your feedback regarding the 13th commemoration, either at the reception or later via the electronic survey. Your thoughtful comments and suggestions will be taken into consideration as we plan the next commemoration. We were gratified that most of you enjoyed the change of venue to the Taj Boston; the delicious food and attentive service were well appreciated.

If your local high school would like to volunteer or perform at our next commemoration, we look forward to hearing from you as we love to include youth in our program.

If any of you have something in particular to discuss with us, please get in touch with us directly as those were anonymous surveys and we have no way of getting back to you unless you included your email or phone number.

### Do You Have Something To Contribute?

Family members who wish to contribute a letter, article or news item for publication in an upcoming quarterly newsletter can do so by e-mailing it to [Teresa.Mathai@massfund.org](mailto:Teresa.Mathai@massfund.org) or [Karin.Charles@massfund.org](mailto:Karin.Charles@massfund.org).

Each piece submitted will be reviewed and, if approved by the Family Advisory Committee and the Board, will be published in an upcoming newsletter. The submission deadline for the first quarter of 2015 newsletter is February 20, 2015.

*Please note: The Mass 9/11 Fund does not promote or endorse individual or family foundations.*

