



## **KICK-OFF TO NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH - NEBRASKA**

### **FDNY FIREFIGHTERS LEAD EFFORT TO REBUILD LITTLE SIOUX BOY SCOUT CAMP CHAPEL September 3-6, 2009**



On June 11, 2008 an F3 tornado tore through the Little Sioux Boy Scout Camp northeast of Omaha in western Iowa killing four young Eagle Scouts and injuring dozens participating in a leadership training weekend. In the devastating aftermath, stories of incredible heroism arose from the destruction as children rescued children, pulling one another from the rubble while performing life-saving first aid.

This year from September 3 – 6, the New York Says Thank You Foundation brought over 220 volunteers from New York and from around the United States, including 20 New York firefighters who were at the World Trade Centers on 9/11, to help build a chapel on the foundation of a shelter where four Scouts died in the tragic 2008 tornado. The event was organized by the NYSTYF and the Mid-America Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

Firefighters worked shoulder-to-shoulder with the young Scouts, their families, and volunteers to help rebuild the camp. This is part of an effort by the New York Says Thank You Foundation near the 9/11 anniversary each year to help rebuild communities across the U.S. affected by disaster.

The group used reclaimed timber from the camp and surrounding areas to construct the chapel. In addition, the volunteers helped build trails to reach the peak of the North Valley and participate in various other projects around the 1,800-acre wilderness camp.



Nebraska Gov. Dave Heineman hosted a ceremony September 2 at the State Capitol in Lincoln to salute the Little Sioux volunteers. During the ceremony in Lincoln, Gov. Dave Heineman said the Scouts' actions at Little Sioux most likely saved several lives. All Americans, he said, need to be prepared to respond to an emergency like 9/11 or the Little Sioux tornado.

An American flag that survived the 9/11 attack was unfurled at the ceremony by a Boy Scout honor guard in front of a crowd of 130 people at the State Capitol. Mitchell Snyder, an 18-year-old Eagle Scout from Lincoln, said the pieced-together flag symbolized what happened to America on 9/11.



Source: Omaha World Herald

The flag was being carried across the country as a symbol of resolve by the New York Says Thank You Foundation. Volunteers with the Foundation carried the flag to the Boy Scout camp near Little Sioux, Iowa, for the remembrance ceremony September 3.

At Little Sioux Camp, the FDNY firefighters were joined by more than a thousand local volunteers from Nebraska and Iowa in the rebuilding effort. They worked side by side with families of the four boys who died — Ben Petrzilka, Sam Thomsen and Josh Fennen, all 13, of Omaha; and Aaron Eilerts, 14, of Eagle Grove, Iowa.

A fourteen year old Scout who survived the June 11, 2008, tornado at Little Sioux Boy Scout Ranch pitched in to help with the rebuilding effort. He was in the north cabin, where the four boys were killed when the tornado destroyed it. He helped fellow Scouts help wounded survivors. He reminisced that seeing something built on the site where he was brought back bad memories but to see the chapel going up was calming.



Source: Omaha World Herald



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New York Says Thank You founder Jeff Parness reflected on the people helping each other heal by doing something positive and uplifting, beyond their own tragic experiences. He said it was not about building structures, but about building hope – that's what America is all about.



Source: Omaha World Herald