

October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2014

Dear Wisconsin Department of Veteran Affairs,

How funding for the 9/11 Steel Story Project will be used for the betterment of the community?

The aftermath of the unprovoked attacks on the World Trade Center have in many ways been compared to the Japanese raid at Pearl Harbor in 1941. In the days and weeks following these tragic events, we as Americans, exhibited a renewed spirit of patriotism. The USS Arizona's burned out hulk was dedicated in Hawaii as a remembrance to those killed in the air raid. So too does the story and symbolism of "our 9/11 steel beam" commemorate the loss of life on that day. Its very presence benefits our community, fosters a spirit of unity and serves to educate the public by drawing positive attention to its meaning.

This story benefits the Greater Milwaukee area in several unique ways:

- There is an outreach by firefighters, veterans, law enforcement personnel, educators and a host of others to share their personal stories from 9/11 in an effort to memorialize everything associated with that horrific day. We have a "piece of that day" right here for all to feel, touch and reflect upon.
- This project is a template and motivator for achievement. It provides the reader an entertaining yet remarkable story on how a community can suddenly come together, confront the challenges it is presented, and bring about those challenges to a successful and unforgettable conclusion.
- As with the Arizona memorial, we have a piece of steel. It is located in a place that has special meaning and purpose. Be it school children, tourists, or the occasional passer-by, it is a constant reminder for us to never forget the sacrifices, heroism and legacy behind our precious "piece of steel".

Why is this project necessary for our community?

The price for freedom is not free. America is the defender of freedom around the world. Today as we defend our Nation's ideals we see in this seemingly innate object the sacrifices and resolve required to sustain our liberties. We are blessed with the opportunity in our community to pay special tribute to those who lost their lives in New York and celebrate the incredible symbol of freedom that makes America a lasting beacon of hope to the world.

Why are we the best organization for this project?

Time heals wounds. Support and remembrance are waning. We have firefighters, first responders, and veterans assisting us. They worked at "ground zero", saw firsthand the devastation and attended funerals for FDNY personnel in the aftermath of the attacks. They have unselfishly assisted us with their firsthand accounts bringing to light the symbolism and meaning of this story.

And it was them, who through their dedication to duty, honor and country, brought back to their community this precious piece of "steel". We have these genuine patriots, and their willingness to once again get involved, affording us the opportunity to share our narrative in true sense and purpose while spreading a lasting awareness.

-Deputy Chief Retired Warren "Ski" Skonieczny from the Milwaukee Fire Department and Vietnam Veteran