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# 20 YEARS LATER ...



ROB OSTERMAIER / DAILY PRESS

Students at Christopher Newport University in Virginia gather Thursday evening to remember the victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Arthur Cyr discusses the journey America has taken in the proceeding 20 years. **OPINION, PAGE 8**

## ‘What was it like just after the 9/11 attacks?’

Many of us made promises to become better people and more compassionate toward fellow Americans. It didn't take long for our human instincts to hijack our good intentions.



**Jerry Davich**

*The second of two columns on the 20th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.*

The young woman was curious. “What was it like just after the 9/11 attacks?” she said.

As I began to reply, she took a break from cutting my hair. In a mirror at the salon, I noticed her waiting for my response. I was taken back by her earnestness. I thought she was just humoring another gray-haired baby boomer customer.

Instead of continuing with my reply, I asked her a question: “What do you remember?”

“Oh, I'm not old enough to remember anything about it,” she replied. “Just what I've been told.”

I've been pondering her response since

that day, late last month.

“Just what I've been told.”

There are moments when the past 20 years since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks feel like 20 months ago, or 20 minutes ago. Everything rushes back for those of us old enough to remember the phone calls that morning from friends, loved ones or co-workers asking the same urgent question.

“Are you watching this on TV?”

From that moment on, all of us shared the experience together, with nine out of 10 of us watching it live on television. Every frantic minute of the station-to-station coverage. It didn't matter where we lived, who we voted for, how much money we earned or the color of our skin.

All that mattered was that we were old enough to understand what was happening. And that we shared it in real-time. The shock. The sadness. The fear. The anger.

“This may sound weird but I'm kind of jealous of missing all that,” the young woman told me.

I remember feeling similarly odd thoughts about previous historical events in our country, including the attack on Pearl Harbor, the victory after World War



Artifacts from Ground Zero, including part of a television and radio antenna from the North Tower, is viewed during a 2014 preview of the National September 11 Memorial Museum.

SPENCER PLATT / GETTY

II, the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the first moon landing in 1969. For that last event, I was too young to understand the gravity of Apollo 11's milestone achievement.

“I've always been fascinated by 9/11,”

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Smoke rises from the World Trade Center after hijacked planes crashed into the towers in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001. **RICHARD DREW/AP**

## ‘The smell of death is one thing you never forget’

Waukegan High grad recalls time at Ground Zero after 9/11

**By Yadira Sanchez Olson**  
For News-Sun

When Angel Camacho joined the Army after graduating from Waukegan High School in 2000, he never could've imagined what was to come from his service.

The 38-year-old, who now lives in Zion with his family, said he just wanted to get away to someplace different from where he'd been.

“I just thought then, that maybe I'd go to college and become somebody,” Camacho said. “I never thought I'd see war.”

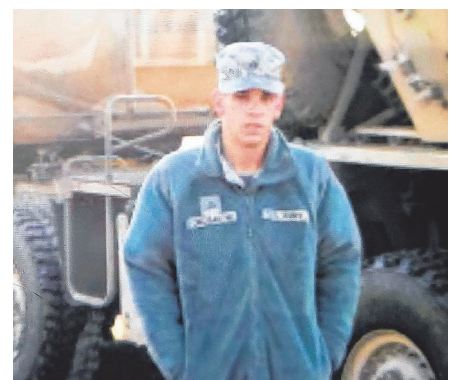
Meanwhile, plans of an attack on the country and its citizens were brewing and were carried out on Sept. 11, 2001.

On 9/11, Camacho was 18, had just finished his training the month before and was stationed in New York.

“It got real too fast,” he said.

His job was to look for possible explo-

**Turn to 9/11, Page 3**



Zion resident Angel Camacho shown in Iraq in 2007 before he was wounded and retired. Camacho was stationed in New York with the Army at the time of 9/11.

**ANGEL CAMACHO**

# Edward-Elmhurst, NorthShore to merge

By Lisa Schencker  
Chicago Tribune

NorthShore University HealthSystem and Edward-Elmhurst Health announced plans Wednesday to merge — a union that would create a nine-hospital system across Chicago's northern and Western suburbs.

The merger would result in a new parent organization led by the head of NorthShore, with two regions: one that would include NorthShore's hospitals in Highland Park, Skokie, Glenview and Evanston, as well as Swedish Hospital on Chicago's North Side and Northwest Community Hospital in Arlington Heights; and the other that would include Edward Hospital in Naperville, Elmhurst Hospital and Linden Oaks Behavioral Health, which has an inpatient campus in Naperville.

The deal is expected to close later this year, pending regulatory approval.

NorthShore has been growing rapidly in recent years, and if the merger is finalized, the system will have more than doubled in size since 2019. NorthShore acquired Swedish Hospital in 2020, and then scooped up Northwest Community earlier this year.

The merger with Edward-Elmhurst would make the new system nearly as large as competitor Northwestern Medicine, which has 11 hospitals.

NorthShore attempted to expand several years ago through a planned merger with Advocate Health Care. But the two systems walked away from that deal in 2017 after a federal judge ruled in favor of the Federal Trade Commission, which had argued that the two systems together would have had enough leverage to impose price increases on Illinois health insurers.

Spokeswoman Julia Szniewajs said Wednesday that NorthShore is optimistic that the FTC will allow the new merger because of the systems' complementary geographies and demographics.

Neither NorthShore nor Edward-Elmhurst anticipate layoffs as result of the merger, she said. A decision has not yet been made about what the name of the new organization may be.

If the merger goes through, NorthShore President and CEO J.P. Gallagher would lead the overall system, with Edward-Elmhurst President and CEO Mary Lou Mastro remaining as CEO of the Edward-El-

Elmhurst region.

The new system would have 25,000 employees, and would expect to expand service lines including orthopedics, cardiology, obstetrics and behavioral health.

It's a plan that the FTC is likely to examine closely, said Amanda Starc, associate professor of strategy at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management. When hospital systems combine, that can give them more leverage to make health insurers pay them higher prices for services. Health insurers may then pass those higher costs on to employers and consumers, she said.

Though NorthShore and Edward-Elmhurst have less geographic overlap than NorthShore and Advocate did, they are still both part of the broader Chicago metropolitan area. It might be particularly important to insurers to have the new system as part of their networks because those insurers may serve employers in Chicago that have workers in the northern and western suburbs.

"Basically, what we've seen over time is there have been a lot of hospital mergers and typically those hospital mergers lead



NorthShore University HealthSystem and Edward-Elmhurst Health announced plans Wednesday to merge — a union that would create a nine-hospital system across Chicago's northern and western suburbs that includes Edward Hospital in Naperville, above. PHIL VELASQUEZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE 2016

to higher prices to consumers with no benefits in terms of increased access or improved quality," Starc said.

It's a notion with which hospitals have long disagreed, with the head of the American Hospital Association recently writing in a letter to federal officials that, "most proposed hospital mergers present no competitive issues and offer real benefits for those communities." Mergers lead to cost savings and quality improvement, wrote AHA

President and CEO Richard Pollack.

Mark Silberman, a partner at law firm Benesch in Chicago and vice chair of the firm's national health care group, expects the FTC to look more favorably upon the new proposed merger than it did upon NorthShore's deal with Advocate, given that Edward-Elmhurst is a smaller system than Advocate and that it serves a different area than NorthShore.

Joining forces will likely give the systems more stabil-

ity, Silberman said. He noted that, in recent years, smaller hospital systems have often joined larger ones to better cope with changes in health care reimbursement and technology.

"The broader your patient base and the broader your service area, the more stability (you have) and the more you can weather the ebbs and flows of health care," said Silberman, who does not represent either health system. "If anything proved that, COVID did."

NorthShore and Edward-Elmhurst also announced Wednesday that they would each commit \$100 million to their respective communities, in the form of investment funds. The funds are expected to generate millions of dollars in interest annually that will be used to support partnerships with groups helping their communities.

Through the fund, NorthShore and Edward-Elmhurst each anticipate putting \$3 million to \$6 million annually toward improving community health, health equity and local economic growth. Both systems intend to move forward with the investment funds regardless of whether the merger closes, Szniewajs said.

## 9/11

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sives in and around the wreckage from the twin towers of the World Trade Center so the area could be cleared for rescue crews to search for possible survivors.

"It was like a nightmare," Camacho said. "You feel the fear; the smell of death is one thing you never forget."

He served six tours after that — three in Afghanistan, and three in Iraq — before retiring in 2012.

Retiring was more of a decision made for him by fate, he said, as he was wounded in 2010 when clearing roadside bombs in Iraq.

Bedridden for two years, his health care providers warned him he most likely wouldn't walk again.

"They were right," Camacho said. "I don't walk, I run. I proved them wrong."

On the 20th anniversary of the day that reshaped what he thought his life would be like, Camacho reflects on all the horrors he's seen from humanity, but he also passionate about helping others, something he said he learned during his service.

"I was very young. I was a kid learning about things I never thought I'd see in my life, and I grew up too fast," he said.

But he doesn't regret a thing. In fact, he'd do it all over again if he had to, he said.

Every Sept. 11 is a day when he likes to remember friends who never made it home. He doesn't enjoy going to events commemorating that day that include barbecues or other boisterous activities, he said.

It's a solemn and quiet day



Naval Station Great Lakes drill sergeant Eugene Siewe next to his mother, Julienne Ngatcho, whom he calls his hero. PHOTO PROVIDED BY EUGENE SIEWE

for him.

How he continues to serve others now is by volunteering at the Midwest Veterans Closet in North Chicago, where he said he does whatever is asked of him.

"When you talk to other veterans, no matter what uniform, we can all relate," Camacho said. "9/11 and everything that came from that was a nasty experience, but it was inspirational the way police, firefighters and us worked together to save people."

His story is one of many that narrate how that one morning unified strangers and made helpers out of so many.

He said helping is addictive. It's not something you stop doing after you've learned what impact it has in the world.

**Drill sergeant calls it a turning point:** For Eugene Siewe, the terrorist attacks on 9/11 were shocking.

"We never knew something like that could happen at home," he said.

Since he was 18, he

wanted to join the Navy, and in 2002 he did.

"In a country like this one, I believe there are people who have to stand up for others," Siewe said.

Now a drill sergeant at Naval Station Great Lakes, the 42-year-old father says for him, 9/11 is a touchy subject.

It was a turning point for everyone in the country, including him, and while he said he was scared to be in a position of protector, that same fear was what he drew from to do what was needed.

He's hard on the young cadets he trains, he said.

Although he doesn't specifically refer to the 9/11 attacks, he's always reflective of that day and indirectly summons it up in his speeches about how missteps can get people hurt.

What has come from a day filled with tragedy, shock, terror and confusion, are scars that so many have in a variety of ways.

Moving forward with intent is how some heal.

For Siewe, it helps to

know he's helping prepare generations to protect the country.

For Camacho, volunteering at a place that serves his fellow veterans makes him feel great.

At the American Legion, it's by way of providing scholarships, that they repay servicemen and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice while serving on active duty on or after 9/11.

### Legacy Scholarships:

Through the national organization's Legacy Scholarship that was created in 2002, children of those men and women are qualified to apply for a needs-based scholarship.

Children of post-9/11 veterans who have been assigned a combined Department of Veterans Affairs disability rating of 50% or greater can also apply for financial assistance toward higher education.

Americanism Division Director Jill Druskis, said it's an honor to be able to directly help those families.

Since its inception, more than 400 scholarships have been awarded — 16 in Illinois.

Fundraising for the program comes from American Legions throughout the country, with the biggest contributor being the American Legion Riders, who annually make the American Legion Legacy Run that has generated more than \$1 million, Druskis said.

"We, at the American Legion, will never forget 9/11," Druskis said. "We're excited each year for those young students who apply (at [www.legion.org/scholarships/legacy](http://www.legion.org/scholarships/legacy)) and give us a chance to serve them."

