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9/11 memorial planned at Columbia convention center

Organizers hope to raise \$175,000 by August

By ADAM BEAM

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Two rusted, mangled pieces of steel from the ruins of the World Trade Center will be featured in a memorial at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

Organizers hope to have the memorial open by Sept. 11, the 10th anniversary of the terrorist attacks in New York that killed nearly 3,000 people. But first, they must raise \$175,000 by August to buy 60 tons of granite — a task that could be aided by news that U.S. forces had killed Osama Bin Laden, the mastermind behind the attacks and the world's most wanted man.

"I think a lot of people had forgotten about Sept. 11 until last night (Sunday)," said Dan Dennis, president of the Dennis Corporation, which is providing free engineering work for the memorial. "I think a lot of people remembered what happened after the events of last night."

Dan Hennigan, a retired U.S. Army officer, secured the two beams from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The beams, one 13 1/2 feet and the other 14 1/2 feet, came from the north tower and were originally planned for a memorial in Lexington County.

But the memorial has been shifted to the convention center because the facility was paid for in part by Columbia and Richland and Lexington counties.

"It would be everybody's memorial in the Midlands," Hennigan said.

Most of the work for the memorial is being done for free, including donations by L-J Inc., Gregory Electric, Sun Printing, Pine Press Printing and the Tyler Ryan Group. The major cost is for the granite and landscaping around the memorial.

Hennigan was born and raised in Brooklyn. He came to Lexington County in 2005 after his wife's work transferred her there. He got the idea for a Midlands memorial after organizing a high school essay contest on the attacks and taking the winners to New York. He applied for the steel beams and was accepted, driving them back from New York with two local firefighters, an American flag flapping in the breeze for the 800-mile trip.

The memorial will feature two 25-foot granite representations of the two towers, engraved with the name of every Midlands soldier, police officer, firefighter and emergency medical service worker who died while on duty since Sept. 11, 2001. The steel beams will connect the two pillars and cross in the middle.

"I think that memorials around the United States are there so we can never forget and never drop our guard," Hennigan said.



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9/11 memorial

A memorial featuring two steel beams taken from the ruins of the World Trade Center is planned for the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. Organizers need to raise \$175,000 to purchase the granite for the memorial. They hope to have it open by Sept. 11, the 10th anniversary of the attacks. **To donate visit www.scremembers911.com or mail checks to 6017 St. Andrews Road, Columbia, SC 29212. Make the check payable to the Irmo Fire Foundation Inc.**

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Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin said the memorial is important to help children understand the importance of the day and why it should be remembered.

Benjamin said he spent Monday explaining to his 6-year-old daughter who Bin Laden was and “what (Sunday night) meant to the world.”

“This will be an opportunity to teach children about what it means to be an American,” Benjamin said.

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