

DELIVERING A MESSAGE OF PEACE

From near and far, they came to honor Groton family lost on 9/11

By Andrea Gregory
Sun Correspondent

GROTON — Lee Hanson was on the phone with his son, Peter, just before United Flight 175 crashed into the World Trade Center.

"He said, 'I think they are going to crash us into a building. Don't worry, Dad. It will be quick,'" Lee Hanson said yesterday, remembering his son's last words. "All of a sudden we were cut off. I looked up and saw the plane crash into the building" on the television.

Peter Hanson of Groton, his wife, Sue Kim, and their 2-year-old daughter, Christine, were killed on Sept. 11, 2001.

Lee Hanson shared his story with local residents at Groton-Dunstable Middle School yesterday. A parade of emergency-response crews from New York traveled down Main Street.

A memorial was held to remember the Hanson family and mark the playground



The Hanson family of Groton — Peter, Sue Kim and their 2-year-old daughter, Christine — were among 2,973 to lose their lives in the terrorist attacks.

FAMILY PHOTO

behind Groton Public Library, Christine's Playground, where the youngest person to die on Sept. 11 once played.

The playground will soon have a

plaque with Christine's image.

"We can't save other people's children, other people's lives without peace in our hearts," Lee Hanson said. "There is so much emotion. I tend to cry a little bit."

Hanson said he still has the sorrow of his loss. He and his wife, Eunice, traveled from their Connecticut home to Groton for a school project aimed at spreading peace.

With the guidance of middle-school teacher Betsy Sawyer, students set out to beat a world record. It is called the "Big Book: Pages for Peace Project" and they have been collecting letters about peace from around the world. The newest addition is about 100 letters from first-responders to the Sept. 11 attacks. Several firefighters and police officers hand-delivered the letters, and shared their experiences and ideas on peace.

"What we are learning on this journey is so much bigger than the book

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John Feal, founder of the Feal Good Foundation, assisting those affected by the Sept. 11 attacks, said first-responders took the first steps toward peace the day of the attacks.

Kenny Specht, president and founder of The New York City Firefighter Brotherhood Foundation, was supposed to have the day off on Sept. 11, 2001. But he was called to report to Shea Stadium. While waiting for orders, he heard that his brother, a police officer, was missing and last seen at the World Trade Center. Specht headed there. He got word his brother that was OK, then went to the Trade Center to help.

Specht was diagnosed with cancer in 2007, which he believes is directly related to being at the attack site. He is now cancer-free, but has little hope that he will remain well. He has known many first-responders who are sick or have died from illnesses related to the attacks.

"It is good to know people still care," said Specht. "These



kids, we wanted to let them know hard work counts and it matters. We come here to teach, but we are leaving as learners."

"This place is special. This project needs to continue,"

said Feal. "You call us heroes, but you are all heroes. Small-town America made a difference in our lives. I think it is the good in all of us that are going to unite this country, not politics and religion. I believe this book is something special."



Participants in yesterday's ceremony visited Christine's Playground, in memory of Christine Lee Hanson, behind Groton Public Library. The plaque bearing the girl's image will soon be installed permanently.