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Appleton woman turns grief into action--After losing parents in 1999 air crash, she will mentor families of terror attack victims

By Ed Lowe

Nearly two years after her parents were killed in the crash of EgyptAir Flight 990, Appleton resident Kathleen Mulvey still struggles with the loss. Yet her journey has been eased by "Ned," a man who knows her emotions well, because he lost his own parents in an air crash.

Now Mulvey will use her experience to help the survivors of those killed when two hijacked jetliners crashed into the World Trade Center Sept. 11

Mulvey was matched with Ned, her mentor, through **AirCraft Casualty Emotional Support Services**, a nonprofit, volunteer organization founded in 1996. ACCESS was formed to comfort and support the loved ones of aviation crash victims through long-term contact with mentors who lost loved ones to similar aviation tragedies.

So when **ACCESS** founder Heidi Snow appealed for new mentors after the terrorist attacks, Mulvey didn't think twice.

"I know there isn't a whole lot that I can do personally to help all those people who are suffering through what happened in New York," Mulvey said Wednesday. "But if this is one small thing that I can do to help another person get through this, that's a small price to pay."

Watching the horror of Sept. 11, Mulvey knew all too well that family and friends of those killed would one day awaken to the emotions she has faced since the deaths of her parents, Dr. H. Paul and Patricia Jacobi.

"At first it was a matter of finding out what happened," she said, comparing the Sept. 11 attacks with the EgyptAir crash of Oct. 31, 1999, which killed all 217 aboard. "Just like everyone else (on Sept. 11), I was watching things on TV, trying to find out everything I could. It's frustrating knowing you're many miles away and there's really nothing you can do."

For Mulvey, Sept. 11 provided another sad reminder of the faint hopes she clung to as details of the EgyptAir crash filtered through the media.

"For me, it was a serious case of *deja vu*," she said. "You're watching something on television and you know all these people are hoping against hope that maybe their loved ones didn't get on the plane."

Mulvey has been in contact with Ned for 18 months via telephone and e-mail, but has not met him in person. They share memories of their parents. Sometimes he sends short notes reminding her that she's in his thoughts. Ned provides her with practical advice, such as when he recommended a lawyer specializing in aircraft disasters.

Funds and volunteers are in suddenly short supply for ACCESS, which employs a single paid staffer in its president and founder, Heidi Snow. As of Wednesday, the organization had 200 trained volunteer mentors, about 50 of them recruited since Sept. 11.

To help ACCESS, Mulvey's employer, Aid Association for Lutherans, scheduled a casual dress day fund-raiser, during which AAL employees contributed \$4,500 in a single day. AAL doubled the gift through a matching grant.

Two months after the death of her fiancée in the 1996 crash of TWA Flight 800, Snow learned the support network that formed in the wake of the tragedy was limited in duration.

"We usually get a few calls in the days following a major incident, but most of the time, it's a month or two before people come to us for help," Snow said.

"Once everybody goes home and there's no support system left behind, people start calling us. They're looking for validation from someone who's been through what they've been through and help on a variety of things to help them get on with their lives."