

9/11 A Decade Later: Stuyvesant High School Alumni Battle Illness from Ground Zero Toxins

By: Bobby Cuza NY1 July 15, 2011

Alumni from Stuyvesant High School near Ground Zero believe toxins have negatively impacted their health, and they successfully lobbied for students to be included in the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. NY1's Bobby Cuza filed the following report.

In 2006, Amit Friedlander was undergoing treatment for Hodgkin's lymphoma.

"I'm mad about being sick," said Friedlander at the time. "I just don't think I have anyone to be that mad at right now, other than the terrorists."

Friedlander was one of the students that was told it was safe to return to classes at Stuyvesant High School just weeks after 9/11. He's now in remission, but suspects that toxins from Ground Zero caused his cancer.

"I don't know if we'll ever be able to 100 percent prove it one way or the other, but I do think there's a good chance that that's how I got sick," said Friedlander.

Amit, along with other Stuyvesant alumni, held a press conference in 2006. They called on the federal government to provide healthcare to students who were sick due to exposure to toxic Ground Zero dust.

"We learned that the school building had not even been cleaned as thoroughly as promised," said another Stuyvesant graduate, Lila Nordstrom, in a 2006 interview. "Yet to date, no monitoring of our health after 9/11 has ever been done."

Nordstrom founded Stuy Health, an advocacy group for those Stuyvesant alumni who were in school around 9/11. She suspects that her asthma and the acid reflux she experiences are due to 9/11 toxins.

"Asthma treatment is not only really expensive, but it's very difficult to get doctors to kind of understand the background fully," said Nordstrom.

Nordstrom and Friedlander were successful in their efforts to get area students included in the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act. That means students who may have been exposed to 9/11 toxins will be entitled to medical benefits.

"We were told it was safe to go back, we were mostly minors and should also be taken care of," said Friedlander.

Although cancer is not currently covered under the 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, Friedlander is hoping that the disease will be added soon.

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