

Local 9/11 responder dies from lung cancer; blamed Ground Zero debris

Tammy Vigil, KDVR-TV
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DENVER -- A 34-year-old Denver man who responded to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City died in Loveland Saturday.

The family of Chad Milosevich believes his work at Ground Zero killed him, and now communities in Denver and Windsor are mourning his loss.

Many of Milosevich's fans only knew him as "coach." He founded Windsor Lacrosse about three years ago, and before then, it was a sport that kids around town had never heard of.

"I thought it was actually the sport where you ride on horses and hit the balls," says lacrosse player, Petey Maxwell, 13.

"He not only taught me lacrosse. He taught me life lessons," says 12-year-old Josh Bloss.

His girlfriend, Angela Maxwell, says his lessons of good sportsmanship and perseverance brought him to Ground Zero three days after the World Trade Center towers crumbled to dust.

He worked on the World Disaster Team for Lucent Technologies, and stayed on location in New York for four months.

"For the first week, he wore a chemical suit. Then, they determined there was no chemicals, no toxins in the air. And since it was government property, he had to give it back," she says. "He said there was a lot of dust in the air. They kept telling him there were no toxins. It's all okay."

But two years later in 2003, doctors found and disregarded a 1 centimeter spot on his lung. Five months ago, on September 13, Milosevich discovered the spot had grown into lung cancer.

"The day he got diagnosed, it's almost been five months and he's gone," says a tearful Angela.

She says he had no family history of cancer, and he never smoked a day in his life.

"He said absolutely it was from 9/11. He knew it was from 9/11," she says.

Milosevich said the cancer came from inhaling the toxic dust, a claim made by many recover workers now plagued with debilitating illnesses.

"We just didn't have time to do anything. We didn't know we weren't going to have time," says Angela.

He had even asked her to get married as soon as they left the hospital. She said yes.

His sudden death has left Angela shaken, but she is certain in her mind that he died a hero.

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