

## **Effort Promised to Keep 9/11 Memorial Clean**

By Vito Signorile  
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Although it was recently cleaned, the 9-11 Memorial at Jacobi Medical Center has been dealing with an unfortunate litter problem.

The memorial is dedicated to the thousands of men and women who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The monument by Building 2 in Jacobi Medical Center was in a terrible state of litter when Community Board 11 district manager Jeremy Warneke and the board's vice chairperson, Tony Vitaliano, were given a tour of the hospital campus in March.

The memorial was littered with plastic bags, food wrappers and other typical trash items found on the street. What appalled Warneke and Vitaliano the most were the empty beer cans strewn around the memorial.

Warneke said he had received a complaint last June, while working for Councilman Jimmy Vacca, from a mother who lost her daughter in the 9-11 attacks.

According to Warneke, who served time in Iraq with the United States Army, Jacobi Medical Center responded quickly, however, the litter at the memorial site seems to be an ongoing problem.

"It was inappropriate and very disrespectful to what the memorial stands for," Vitaliano said. "If you're going to put a memorial like that there, it should be cleaned regularly. What we saw that day was a complete eyesore. All we ask is, if there is litter there, it gets cleaned."

Jacobi Medical Center public affairs director Hannah Nelson said that it was unfortunate to see the monument littered, however, the cleaning crew at the hospital will keep their eye on the memorial.

According to Nelson, the memorial is a significant part of Jacobi, but because the hospital campus is so large, it takes time for the cleaning crew to make their way to the area on its regular cleaning schedule.

"It's one of many open sites at the hospital that's available for public access," Nelson said. "In general, it's not a heavily trafficked area, but unfortunately, teenagers sometimes make it a hangout during off-hours."

"We saw a dirty 9-11 Memorial, and that's just terrible," Warneke said. "I understand that it's a public area, but in general, the place should not be a hangout because of what it signifies."

Councilman Jimmy Vacca has been notified as well and he is hoping to offer services of the Vacca Volunteers Corps to help clean the memorial if it should again become trashed.

A somber ceremony is held each year at the memorial site on September 11.

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