MAYOR'S MESSAGE *September 23, 2021*

On September 11, I was honored to gather at Veterans Park with other members of our community to remember the thousands of victims who died following the infamous terrorist attacks in New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia in 2001. It can be difficult to believe that twenty years have passed since that fateful September morning; however, I truly feel that as long as we come together and honor the lives lost as we did last week, we will ensure that those who died will remain in our hearts – and we will continually remind our enemies that we will never forget what happened on September 11, 2001.

Several days after we acknowledged the twentieth anniversary of the 9-11 attacks, we gathered once more at Veterans Park in honor of National POW-MIA Recognition Day, which takes place each year on September 17. During that ceremony, we were joined by several special guests, including veterans advocate and radio talk-show host Joe Griffies, who is a very familiar face here in Sea Isle City. Also with us that day was Patrick Hughes, a Vietnam War veteran who now serves as the national photographer for Rolling Thunder, a non-profit organization that raises awareness for America's prisoners of war and those who are still missing in action. We were also honored to welcome the event's guest of honor, Ralph Galati, a U.S. Air Force Captain who was shot down over North Vietnam in 1972 and then spent more than 14-months as a prisoner of war.

I am very grateful that all of our special guests were able to be with us during our annual POW-MIA Recognition Day ceremony – especially because this year we unveiled Sea Isle's new "Chair of Honor," which is now on display at Veterans Park, where it will serve as a permanent memorial to the men and women of the United States military who were prisoners of war or remain missing in action. If you were not able to attend our ceremony on September 17, please stop-by and view our new Chair of Honor and reflect its meaning.

After a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic, Sea Isle City's Division of Tourism hosted this year's Fall Family Festival on September 18 & 19 – and it was such a pleasure to see so many people out-and-about during that beautiful weekend. On Saturday, Excursion Park was filled with festival-goers who enjoyed free amusement rides and other family-friendly activities, all the while folks were shopping at the festival's seaside vendors market and having lunch at the food court. Then, on Sunday, scores of vintage cars and trucks participated in the annual Fall Family Festival Antique Auto Show and Parade, which is named in honor of my late brother, Gerard, who hosted that event for many years.

All-in-all, this year's Fall Family Festival was a great success, and I want to thank all of the people who helped make it an event to remember, including organizer Trish Jackson from our Tourism Office and auto show hosts Jim and Karen Ambro.

As we all know, this is an ideal time to be in Sea Isle City – and since yesterday was the first official day of autumn, I hope everyone gets the opportunity to enjoy our seaside community as the weather cools down and the fall season arrives in all of its glory! –Happy Autumn!

Smile…You're in Sea Isle,

Len

Mayor Leonard C. Desiderio

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