

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Sperry Associates FCU Launches ‘Operation: Helping Heroes’ to Provide Assistance for 9/11 First Responders

*– New Effort Commences with Donation to FealGood Foundation –*

**Garden City Park, NY** – September 7, 2011 – Sperry Associates Federal Credit Union today announced the launch of Operation: Helping Heroes, a long-term initiative to provide support and awareness on issues facing 9/11 first responders. The Nassau County community banking institution lost five members on 9/11, and in their honor, will pledge \$2,500 to the FealGood Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established for 9/11 first responders. FealGood provides financial assistance to those who volunteered or worked at Ground Zero in the aftermath of 9/11; funds can be used to pay for food, healthcare, rent/mortgage and utilities bills. The charity also offers educational support and grassroots activism.

FealGood is led by its Founder and President, John Feal, who served in the cleanup and recovery mission at Ground Zero following the 9/11 attacks. Five days into John’s assignment, approximately 8,000 pounds of steel crushed his left foot; after eleven weeks in the hospital, Doctors had to amputate half of the injured foot. John has since endured numerous surgeries and many hours of physical therapy, ultimately triumphing as a leader among 9/11 first responders. He frequently appears in the news media, and in 2010, lobbied Congress to pass the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act.

As the United States commemorates the ten-year anniversary of 9/11, Sperry hopes to increase public awareness of the major illnesses and hardships that Ground Zero first responders presently experience. Some of these conditions are highlighted in a September 2011 study by The Lancet, a prestigious medical journal that gathered data on 27,449 participants in the World Trade Center Screening, Monitoring, and Treatment Program, which includes “police officers, firefighters, construction workers, and municipal workers.” [Source: [http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/S0140-6736\(11\)61180-X](http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(11)61180-X)]

The Lancet’s findings in this particular study do not include data on cancer; however, it shows Ground Zero first responders have a collective nine-year cumulative incidence of:

- Sinusitis: **42.3%**
- Spirometric (lung function) abnormalities: **41.8%**
- Gastro-oesophageal reflux disease: **39.3%**
- Asthma, **27.6%**

Excluding police officers, The Lancet's findings also show Ground Zero firefighters, construction workers and municipal workers have a considerable nine-year cumulative incidence of mental health disorders:

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): **31.9%**
- Depression: **27.5%**
- Panic Disorder: **21.2%**

A decade after 9/11, Sperry recognizes that many Ground Zero first responders lack sufficient access to healthcare. Furthermore, a review released by the U.S. Government's World Trade Center Health Program in July 2011 claims that "insufficient evidence exists at this time to propose a rule to add cancer, or a certain type of cancer, to the list of WTC-related health conditions." As a result, first responders with cancer may not receive benefits under the Zadroga Act. In light of these developments, the executive team at Sperry is taking steps to alert the public on behalf of first responders.

Operation: Helping Heroes will aim to alleviate financial hardships for all first responders in need. Long-term drives include fundraising, volunteerism, grassroots advocacy, community events, public awareness projects and partnerships with local non-profit and not-for-profit organizations to further the mission; Sperry will also appeal to businesses, educational institutions and government agencies in the region to join this effort.

"Ground Zero first responders will always be remembered for their heroism and dedication to America following the tragic events of 9/11," said Sperry FCU President/CEO James Duffett. "Operation: Helping Heroes is about recognizing the many contributions first responders have made to our society, and in turn, showing them how much we appreciate it. We hope to roll-out this initiative with the support of people and businesses in our community; working together, we will do great things for these heroes."

FealGood will be hosting a 9/11 memorial event at South Shore Sports Complex (3505 Hampton Road, Oceanside, NY 11572, 516-442-7111) on Sunday, September 11. For more on the event and FealGood Foundation, visit <http://www.fealgoodfoundation.com/>.

For more on Sperry Federal Credit Union, visit <http://www.sperryfcu.org/> or call toll-free 1-800-676-5512.

#### **ABOUT SPERRY FCU**

Sperry Federal Credit Union was established in Nassau County, NY, 75 years ago for employees and family members of Sperry Gyroscope Corporation. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Sperry FCU continues to grow and now serves more than 17,000 member-owners as a full service community banking institution with over \$320 million in assets. Sperry is a proud contributor and partner to many charitable organizations across Long Island.