



Guests listened to Arizona Heroes Memorial vice president Steve Didio, at the podium, during the 25th anniversary remembrance of Sept. 11, 2001, at the Oro Valley memorial. "Even in the darkest moments, the light of courage rose," Didio said. (Arizona Heroes Memorial/Submitted)

A solemn OV remembrance of Sept. 11

BY DAVE PERRY

Tucson Local Media Contributor

A crowd near 200 people gathered under monsoonal clouds at the Arizona Heroes Memorial on Sept. 11, giving solemn remembrance to those lost in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

It was the 25th anniversary of the commercial aircraft hijackings and crashes that claimed the lives of 2,977 people, and injured thousands more on American soil.

"Twenty-five years ago, our nation stood still," said Steve Didio, vice president of the Arizona Heroes Memorial board of directors. "Those of us old enough to remember exactly where we were when we heard the news. We re-

member the confusion, the fear, the heartbreak, and the disbelief as we watched nearly 3,000 souls ... innocent lives were lost that day."

Most of those at the event, held at the Memorial in Oro Valley's Naranja Park, were indeed old enough to remember the attacks. Some were not; one-third of Americans were not alive on Sept. 11, 2001, and countless others were too young to recall.

Young Scouts, handing out materials and glow sticks, and the Canyon del Oro High School Canyon Singers, under the direction of Ashley Sova, weren't yet born in 2001. But they experienced the gravity of the day. The Canyon Singers had opened the commemoration by singing The National Anthem.



The Canyon del Oro High School Canyon Singers, directed by Ashley Sova, sang The National Anthem at the event. (Dave Perry/Submitted)

"Twenty-five years later, we commemorate the 25th anniversary of 9/11, to carry forward the spirit of unity that emerged from tragedy, and to teach our children about what happened on September 11th, but also what followed: A great nation standing together with courage, sacrifice, resilience, and love of country," Didio told the audience.

"Even in the darkest moments, the light of courage rose," Didio continued. "We saw firefighters race up smoke-filled stairwells while others were running down. We saw police officers risking everything to protect strangers. We saw first responders, healthcare workers, military personnel, and ordinary citizens answering the call to serve with extraordinary bravery."

Nearby, the Golder Ranch Fire District flew a large U.S. Flag off one of its ladders, and uniformed officers of the Oro Valley Police Department stood nearby.

"Everyone was impacted by the events of Sept. 11, Didio said. "The pain reached every town, every neighborhood, and every American heart. Right here in Oro Valley, that spirit of unity and need for remembrance remains strong in our community."

Shared grief "became a shared purpose for the visionaries and board of directors working to build this memorial," Didio said. "They understood that future generations needed a sacred place where the stories of 9/11 heroic actions could live on, where sacrifice would never be

forgotten, and where people could come to reflect, heal, and honor those who put themselves in harm's way so that others might survive."

"What a thrill it is for me to be standing in front of this large group, when 20 years ago this was a dream and nothing more," said Dick Eggerding, the Oro Valley nonagenarian who founded the Memorial and serves as its board chair today.

Eggerding was the first of four Memorial directors to ring a bell, each ring followed by 7 seconds of silence. He honored the 1,402 people lost when American Airlines Flight 11 struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York City.

Kay Williams rang the bell for 614 people lost when United Airlines flight 175 struck the South Tower. Arizonan Gary Bird, 51, perished in that attack.

Alan Dankwerth rang the bell for 184 people lost when United Airlines Flight 77 struck the Pentagon.

Vickie Shoopman rang the bell for 44 people lost when passengers overcame the hijackers, causing United Airlines Flight 93 to crash in a Pennsylvania field.

On Sept. 11, 343 firefighters and 71 law enforcement officers died trying to save others. Another 55 members of the U.S. military died that day.

"This evening we gather to honor those lost on 9/11, and to honor the firefighters and police officers who answered the call on 9/11, and those who continue to stand watch over our communities every single day," Didio said.

Amazon to invest \$20M in Colorado River Basin

BY JACK MIESSNER

Tucson Local Media Staff Writer

Amazon is launching a Colorado River Basin Collaborative (CBRC) to raise \$100 million, including a planned \$20 million of its own funds, for water conservation.

"We're working to be good water stewards everywhere we operate, supporting water projects," said Amazon Water Stewardship Lead Will Hewes. "We recognize that the Colorado River Basin is facing huge challenges right now."

Marana relies on the basin for 15% of its water through the Central Arizona Project (CAP), a 336-mile system that delivers Colorado River water to Arizona communities. In 2022, a shortage impacted Marana's agricultural water users, the town of Marana's website says. Currently, proposed cuts to Arizona's CAP shares are on the table.

CBRC is a collaboration between Amazon and the Water Resilience Coalition, an organization that mobilizes global companies to "drive bold, coordinated action against the planet's water crisis," its website says.

Amazon is expecting to provide at least \$20 million to projects that support the basin, including initiatives to improve water efficiency and restore watersheds, over the next two years. According to a press release, the CBRC, which aims to create "one of the biggest corporate water conservation efforts for a single U.S. watershed," has already amassed \$32 million across participating companies, including Amazon's contribution.

"To be clear, we're not saying we're



Amazon is investing in irrigation technology for Northern Arizona farmers. (Amazon/Submitted)

going to solve the whole problem here," Hewes said. "But there's a whole bunch of work we can do right now to help support the communities that rely on the Colorado river."

Aldi, The Coca-Cola Foundation, Eco-lab, EdgeConneX, Grundfos, Vantage, and Xylem are among the other organizations involved. In the CBRC framework, each participating company invests independently. Amazon's Water stewardship team has collaborated with water utilities, farmers, tribes, local governments and non-governmental organizations to develop a pipeline of projects specific to the basin.

"At the end of the day, it's what the community needs the most that we're trying to support," Hewes said. "We do a lot of engagement with stakeholders in those communities to figure out what that is."

Amazon announced two initial projects. The first is a \$2.4M investment to agricultural technology company Arable, to bring its irrigation equipment to Northern Arizona tribal farm communities. The technology prevents overwatering through Amazon Web Services-

powered sensors that "give farmers real-time data on when their crops need water," the press release said. The project reduces withdrawals from the river, while also reducing operating costs for participating farmers.

The second project, located in Orange County, provides funding to fix identified leaks in the water distribution system and provide additional leak identification.

In Amazon's project pipeline, much of the work focuses on using technology to improve irrigation efficiency, as well as lining canals to prevent water-loss.

"The overarching point is that this is the beginning point, not the end point, and so we are very much inviting more companies to join us in supporting this work," Hewes said.

"We think that if you operate in this base and you have customers or operations there, we all have a bit of a responsibility to help solve these challenges. So it's an open invitation to other companies and other funders to join us." ★

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Chaplain Det. Tim Fane offered the invocation. Memorial director Otton Suarez gave closing remarks. James Duprey, U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. (Ret.), concluded the ceremony with the playing of "Taps."

When the event concluded, the audience — citizens, veterans and their families, elected officials — conversed as the lights came up in the Naranja Park memorial.

"We plan to have an event like this every year, not just on the 25th anniversary," Didio told the audience. ★

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