

# Foundation seeks to help victims of mass violence

By DON HEPPNER

The terrorists murdered Liz Alderman's younger son, Peter, during the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. The loss of her son kept Ms. Alderman up at night tossing and turning and mourning. Night after night, the fact that the nightmare of one of her children predeceasing her was not a dream at all but a cruel fate made it difficult, especially at night.

From the devastation and ashes caused by the ruthless attacks on the World Trade Center rose a modern-day phoenix, but instead of a beautiful bird, the phoenix that emerged from the rubble in lower Manhattan helped to achieve immortality for Peter C. Alderman in the form of the Peter C. Alderman Foundation, formed after he died on 9/11 to help victims of mass violence.

During one of her sleepless

nights, Ms. Alderman turned on "Nightline" and heard Richard Mollica of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma describing the traumatic experience victims of systemic violence go through. He talked about help provided to those paralyzed by the loss of family members killed in acts of mass violence. The next morning, she presented an idea to her husband, Steve, daughter, Jane, and son Jeff. It would involve a visit to Harvard and time with Dr. Mollica.

"We had been searching for what to do to honor Peter's memory," Ms. Alderman said. "Peter had been killed by terrorists, and this seemed to be a perfect fit because maybe we could do something to help the walking wounded, and my family agreed it was a good idea."

The family drove to Boston to visit with Dr. Mollica, who cleared his calendar for the day to talk with the Alderman family. "We wanted



Liz Alderman, founder of the Peter C. Alderman Foundation, was honored with an "Everyday Heroes" award by Court TV on Thursday, Nov. 4 in Washington, D.C.

to know how we could fit in and how we could help," she said.

The meeting with Dr. Mollica took place about eight months after 9/11. Dr. Mollica's expertise in dealing with the kind of trauma caused by mass violence was well known, and he was called to New York after 9/11 to train some of the doctors at Bellevue. He initially got involved in this because so many of the Cambodian boat people came to the Boston area.

That day in Boston was the first time Ms. Alderman had felt safe since her son was killed. "These people knew what I was feeling," she said. "Not only was this an intellectual fit, but an emotional fit."

The foundation was formed with the idea of creating a new approach to treating families and other victims of mass murder. "We have brought together doctors from post-conflict countries, as well as

Afghanistan and Iraq," she said. "They eat and live together outside of Rome," she said.

The groups of doctors discussing patients overcome with trauma are called master classes, and they last for about a week.

Psychiatry does not exist in many of these countries, according to Ms. Alderman. "The purpose of these classes is to train the primary care physician, the midwives, and other people who come in contact with the victims," she said. "They are chosen because they have a comfortable basis to make a determination if post-traumatic stress disorder exists or if they have clinical depression."

The doctors are given the tools to identify these conditions and the tools to treat them.

She said the idea behind the treatment is not to make the victims "happy," but to make them "func-

*continued on page 7*

# Family seeks to honor son killed at WTC

continued from page 1

tional," so that women can take care of their children again and the men can leave their hut or home and farm or work. "So many of these victims are absolutely paralyzed, so that they can do nothing," Ms. Alderman said.

She said the master class would evolve into an international society of doctors similar to those societies that specialize in the heart or transplants, but the society developed from the master classes would deal with victims of mass violence. "The doctors will convene annually like other specialists and set up manuals of best practices," she said. "They will have an interactive Web site that could offer new cures and describe drug intervention."

The third initiative is to create a series of clinics in Peter's name devoted to treating dysfunctional survivors of victims of mass murder.

"In 18 months, there will be two clinics that will help in mental health," Ms. Alderman said. "One will be in Cambodia, and the second will be in the Republic of Srpska [a small country that borders Yugoslavia and Croatia]."

The last effort the Peter Alderman Foundation is involved in is a meeting of ministers of health from 47 countries. "We are just one of the sponsors," Ms. Alderman said. "Some of the other sponsors are the Vatican, World Bank, the Centers for Disease Control, and others. It gives

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— LIZ ALDERMAN

us respectability to be a part of this."

Italy was an appropriate meeting spot because it is centrally located, making it easier and less expensive to get the doctors to the master clinics. "To bring the doctors to the United States would have been prohibitive," Ms. Alderman said. "Italy has tremendous charitable traditions."

The foundation pays the cost to bring every doctor to the clinics, and it pays for the tool kits that help them deal with the patients suffering from trauma.

"The only thing we did not do was, in the second master class, pay for the Iraqi and Afghani doctors who were brought by another group that could get them out of the country," she said. "The first class was \$35,000, and in the United States that would have been \$100,000."

The foundation money came from various sources. "Not one red cent out of Peter's death will be touched by our family," she said. Other funds came from the Red Cross, and from Bloomberg L.P., where Peter was employed. Friends donated money as well.

"Any of the charitable money received went right into the foundation," said Ms. Alderman. "The big bulk of money came from the Victim Compensation Fund, which went right into the foundation."

She said the foundation would actively start fund-raising after the first of the year. The doctors who participate are eager to get to the master classes. According to Ms. Alderman, one doctor who came from Iraq took a cab from Baghdad to Jordan to catch a plane to Italy, and then made the same trip back.

"He literally put his life on the line to attend this conference," she said. "You hear all the time what those roads are like, and he has a wife and two kids."

Ms. Alderman said that when the doctors leave the master classes, "they know they have all the support they need from us," she said. "They can call us and be in contact with Rich Mollica and any of the professors." The foundation will also have an interactive Web site.

The foundation cannot be political, she said. Ms. Alderman spoke for herself and not the foundation when

she said she believes Saudi Arabia is supporting terrorism. A lawsuit was initiated by about 6,000 families around the world. The United States government wanted the lawsuit dismissed or delayed. Ms. Alderman participated in a rally that took place in Washington D.C., and made it very clear that the people who lost loved ones on 9/11 will not give up the suit against Saudi Arabia.

"We made it quite clear we would fight them tooth and nail on it," she said. The suit is actually not against the Saudi government but against the Saudi banks, individuals, and charities.

"The lawsuit is active and is going through discovery and all the various phases required in a suit of this kind," Ms. Alderman said. "Absolutely, I believe they are funding terrorism. They have been for years and years."

The Alderman family was recently recognized for its achievements through the Peter C. Alderman Foundation by Court TV and its "Everyday Heroes" award.

The award states: "Liz Alderman, from Pound Ridge, along with her husband, Stephen, founded the Peter C. Alderman Foundation in honor of her son who died at the World Trade Center on 9/11. Peter's foundation is an example of how the financial outpouring of the nearly 3,000 people killed on 9/11 is flowing back into the world."