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## From the Executive Director

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### For Project Rebirth's Educational Mission, Time is an Ally

I was asked recently if 9/11 was still a compelling topic for discussion and study given that there has been no shortage of disasters, tragedies and global conflicts in the years since Sept. 11, 2001. I understand the inclination to see the events that shape our world as being in fierce competition for our attention – most of us struggle daily to absorb a constant stream of local, national and global news while trying to get on with the business of living. When so much is happening in the here and now, does it make sense to look back and ponder the events of a single day sixteen years ago in the city of New York?

In fact it is the passage of time that has made it possible to look at the events of 9/11 with a deepened perspective and a knowledge of all that we have done to rebuild and recover in the face of tragedy. The lessons of human resilience in the face of this seminal historic event have not lost their emotional power, and people around the world today have more need than ever to face disasters and violent events with faith that even Life's greatest challenges can be met over time if individuals and communities work together to heal, hope and grow more resilient.

The result is that Project Rebirth is now working with educators and institutions that in earlier years were hesitant to build lessons and programs around 9/11. We are excited to work with a growing number of schools that find our feature length documentary and our short films to be powerful, emotionally impactful learning tools around which to teach lessons in their global studies and history classes. The addition of our film library to the Georgetown University Library's digital collection and our new Live Tiles sponsored platform for middle and high school teaching tools give us the ability to impact the way in which today's and tomorrow's students study and discuss the human aspect of major historic events.

I hope you will support us as we continue to use the hard won wisdom that the passing years have granted us to teach, heal and inspire.

*Helen Rafferty*

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# Project Rebirth's film collection is now part of Georgetown University's Digital Library collection

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Project Rebirth's feature length documentary and nine short films have found a permanent home as part of the Georgetown University Library's digital collection. This most recent collaboration between Georgetown and the Project Rebirth organization will preserve our unique library of documentary films and provide new opportunities for them to serve as teaching and learning tools.

Salwa Ismail, who heads Georgetown's department of Library Information Technology, is excited to share the Rebirth film collection with a wide range of students, educators and researchers. *"Georgetown University Library is honored to help make this collection available online, freely accessible to anyone in the world through DigitalGeorgetown. Preserving and making accessible our collective history is a core mission of the Library. Project Rebirth captures this tragic moment in our history in such an intimate and moving way. These eyewitness accounts will help transform how students, faculty, and researchers here at Georgetown and beyond learn about and identify with this seminal date in our history and understand how resilient we really are as individuals and as a nation."*

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## Project Rebirth Middle & High School Teaching Tools to be Made Available on Live Tiles Online Platform

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**Dr. Donna Gaffney, Project Rebirth's Director of Education & Programs**, has developed teaching tools built around Project Rebirth's nine short films that will be available for free to middle school and high school teachers. Thanks to our generous partners at Live Tiles our short films, along with viewing guides, links to complimentary resources and an interactive forum for discussions and commentary, will be available on a user-friendly, visually exciting online platform. Teachers around the country will be able to use our unique film content to explore the human dimension of the events of 9/11 and can share the discussions and insights that students inevitably generate when they experience the emotionally engaging and thought provoking first-person narratives that our documentary films provide.

Dr. Gaffney is currently working with Project Rebirth team member Christina Rancke to refine and hone our middle and high school teaching tools with the help of a group of educators who have volunteered to preview and share their feedback. We expect to share our teaching tools on a wider scale in time for the fall 2017 school semester.



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## Project Rebirth's First Responder Resilience Network

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### National impact on First Responder health guidelines:

The NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) has agreed to incorporate language submitted by our First Responders Resilience network recommending a proactive and ongoing approach to Firefighters' behavioral health in their guidelines for 2017. We are proud of our First Responders team – it took dedication and perseverance to achieve this level of impact on how fire departments around the country look at the behavioral health of our nation's firefighters. Congratulations to Bob Gray, Donna Brehm, Dodie Gill, Gary Randall, and Dr. Sam J. Buser for this significant achievement.

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## The Sarasota Film Festival Veterans' Cohort to Debut Its Documentary on April 4<sup>th</sup>

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Project Rebirth is proud to announce that the Sarasota Veterans' Cohort have completed their documentary to be premiered at the upcoming Sarasota Film Festival on April 4th. These Veterans have had the opportunity to work together as a team while learning the art and business of film making with a team of talented film professionals.

**Sarasota Film Festival Producer John Secor** has been the driving force behind establishing the Veterans Filmmaking Academy and we look forward to working with him to offer future opportunities for Veterans to share their stories while gaining professional experience in the world of film.



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## Meet Project Rebirth Team Member Dr. Donna Gaffney

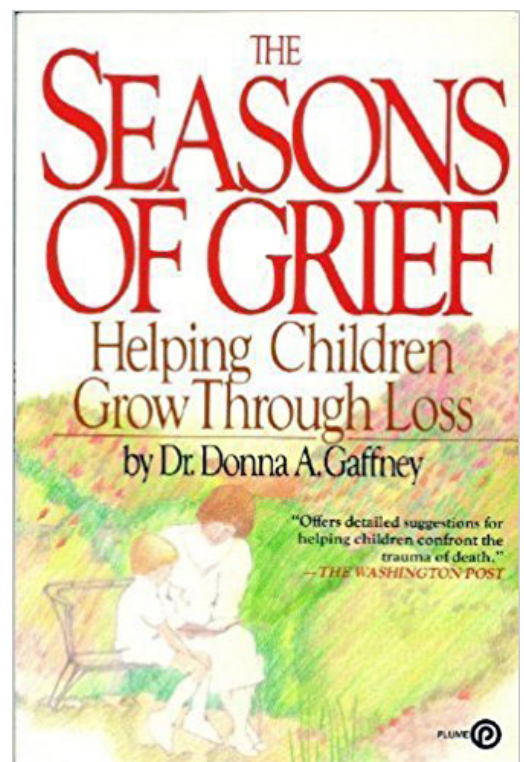
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In the fall of 2016 Project Rebirth welcomed Dr. Donna Gaffney back to our team. As Project Rebirth's Director of Education & Programs, Donna is leading our efforts to further develop and refine teaching and learning tools built around our unique library of documentary films. With the passage of time, many educators and school districts that hesitated to utilize 9/11 content in middle school and high school classrooms in the past are now using our films in their History and Global Studies classes. Teachers are finding that classroom discussions and written exercises built around our films make a lasting impression on their students. Our films are proving to be a powerful tool in educator's efforts to explore the human dimension of this seminal event in US history. Donna has also done an outstanding job updating our Project Cohort program model, taking it from a general idea that our films could be used to build online resources for Peer-led Veteran Support groups to a concrete plan of action for working with partner organizations in the Veteran space. Dr. Gaffney will be working on developing exciting and productive partnerships with several new Project Rebirth partners in 2017.

Donna's work with Project Rebirth both reflects and benefits from a long and distinguished career during which she has devoted her considerable talents to helping individuals and communities face Life's greatest challenges. She has taught and developed programs for the International Trauma Studies Program, Columbia and Seton Hall Universities. Donna holds master's degrees from Teachers College and Rutgers University and a doctorate from the University of Pennsylvania. As a clinician, Donna has long addressed the issues of loss and trauma; working with schools after the Challenger explosion, families following the Pan Am 103 crash, and communities after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. She was deployed to Louisiana post-Katrina and consulted with health professionals returning from Haiti. In addition to academic publications, Dr. Gaffney is the author of *The Seasons of Grief, Helping Children Grow through Loss*. Donna is on the advisory boards of *The Families of September 11* in New York and *Good Grief* in Summit, New Jersey.

Donna is an avid fan and collector of children's and young adult literature. She has incorporated her passion for books into her professional work as well, authoring discussion guides for young adult books ("*9/11: The Book of Help*" and "*Breath to Breath*"). In 2005 Donna worked with New York Reads Together to bring Laurie Halse Anderson's book "*Speak*" to high school teachers and students in New York City. In preparation for the ten year commemoration of September 11<sup>th</sup>, she was an advisor to The New York Council for the Humanities' 9/11 National Day of Service and Remembrance Community Conversation program, in which she wrote facilitator tips and parent guides for the children's books in the program. She counts among her favorite authors, Roald Dahl, CS Lewis, Kate DiCamillo, and Laurie Halse Anderson. Donna firmly believes that we can be inspired and comforted by the words found on the pages of children's books, for they are not written for children alone, "*So Matilda's strong young mind continued to grow, nurtured by the voices of all those authors who had sent their books out into the world like ships on the sea. These books gave Matilda a hopeful and comforting message: You are not alone.*" — Roald Dahl, *Matilda*



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## Monica Davis Speaks at The Quell Foundation's Inaugural Gala

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For the past four years, **Monica Davis** has served as **Project Rebirth's Social Media Director**, growing our number of online followers to over 30,000 while leading the effort to keep our far-flung Project Rebirth team organized and motivated as we pursue our vital mission. Recently, Monica has also joined forces with **The Quell Foundation**, whose mission is to, "Create a paradigm shift in how society views and treats people with a mental health illness." In November 2016, Monica spoke movingly at The Quell Foundation's inaugural Lift the Mask gala in Chatham, Massachusetts.

*Monica's story touches the heart as she clearly articulates the importance of lifting the mask to help reduce the stigma associated with mental illness. Her courage is inspiring. - Kevin Lynch, founder of The Quell Foundation*

Monica's passion and professionalism have made her an invaluable team member for a number of organizations working to help people heal, hope and grow more resilient. We are proud to have her on our team.

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## LeadersLink Holds Its First Fund Raising Event

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Project Rebirth's senior press advisor **Kathleen Koch** also runs the nonprofit **LeadersLink**, which held its first fundraiser February 25<sup>th</sup>. More than 100 people turned out at the Washington, D.C. event to raise funds to make communities better prepared for crisis and disaster and help them recover more quickly. The Kelly Bell Band headlined the event and a silent auction featured everything from one-of-a-kind sports memorabilia to a weekend in New Orleans. On hand were county officials from around the country as well as current and former members of the Washington media. "It was exciting to see so many people come out and support our work," said Koch, founder of LeadersLink. "The money we've raised



**Kathleen Koch at Mardi Gras Bash**

*will help us finish our website and get the dozens of interviews we've shot with disaster veterans online where their advice and insights can benefit everyone."* The organization believes that by harnessing and sharing the lessons learned of elected officials who have already brought their cities well through disasters, they can create a new culture of preparedness. LeadersLink's acclaimed video **Leading Through the Storm** is being used around the country to teach leaders about the importance of being ready for disasters. Besides putting leaders' institutional knowledge at the fingertips of anyone whose community is in harm's way, the organization provides "disaster mentors" to advise elected officials when crises occur.

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# Project Rebirth Marks 15 Years

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**This March marks 15 years since Project Rebirth first began filming the rebuilding of the World Trade Center**, placing the first three of what would become 14 time lapse cameras shooting one frame of film every five minutes throughout the day and night – continuing until the completion of the Freedom Tower nine years later. Shortly after, **“Rebirth” Director and Producer Jim Whitaker and Director of Photography Tom Lappin** began recording the **journeys of nine people** directly affected by the attacks, creating a chronicle of the strength of the human spirit coping with disaster, and a unique historical record that is still finding new ways to help people learn and grow today. The inspiration of the Project Rebirth team and its early supporters, and their ability to deliver on their promise of this massive undertaking deserves special thanks and respect as we continue to see the long term value of their effort.

Our nine film participants opened their lives and spirits to the camera in ways that allow us to continue to build something good from the horrors of the 9/11 attacks, and also to highlight the universal nature of meeting the challenges of grief and trauma. One reason Project Rebirth’s film content continues to find new applications and ways to help people 15 years later is there has not been another group of people since -- individuals suffering from intense grief and trauma -- that in the early depths of their pain committed to share their stories, in personal detail, over a period of many years, to help others through similar journeys. **“Never Forget”** remains a rallying cry for many responses to 9/11, and our film participants made difficult decisions and sacrifices to open their lives to millions of people so that the human dimension of the attacks – and the strength of the spirits of nine very different New Yorkers representing the community itself – would not be forgotten. Besides the thanks of the Project Rebirth team, our partners and supporters, each time our film participants stories are told every day in the 9/11 Museum, in classrooms or in training sessions with first responders and veterans around the country, or each anniversary when communities look to reflect on the anniversary of 9/11, it represents a note of thanks to them.

Project Rebirth is one of the few non-profits born of the community and country’s response to 9/11 that is still advancing its mission today. We owe this to the support we have had over the years from many people and organizations, and to the fact that from the earliest days Project Rebirth’s mission focused on the legacy of 9/11 as it affected everyone, understanding how the lives that were impacted by the attacks themselves could help teach others regardless of their background. We all experience grief and trauma, and Project Rebirth has worked to help others find ways to pass through the pain and meet the challenges in ways that might hurt a little less, or grow and become a bit more stronger than without learning from these stories.

Thanks to everyone who has helped us share these stories.

Sincerely,



Brian Rafferty

Board Chair

## Board Notes

After almost 10 years, **Stuart Shorenstein** has decided it’s time for him to retire from the Project Rebirth board. We thank Stuart for the enthusiasm and dedication he has brought to the Project Rebirth organization and we wish him all the best for the future.

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