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## Nanuet man dies at 46; Ground Zero-link suspected

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**THE JOURNAL NEWS**

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Robert Williamson had just come off a night shift when terrorists flew planes into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

Without being called, the New York Police Department detective headed down to Ground Zero and began two months of 16-hour days with no days off.

Williamson, a father of three, died Sunday of pancreatic cancer that has been linked to his time at Ground Zero. He was 46.

"My kids - they were telling him not to go, and he said, 'I have to go,' his wife, Maureen Williamson remembered yesterday.

His three children are now 15, 12 and 10.

Maureen Williamson and a friend of her husband's, New York police Sgt. Mike Kelley, remembered "Bobby" as someone who always wanted to help other people, whether it was at his job or around his Nanuet neighborhood.

And he was very funny.

"You meet the guy one day and you'll never forget him," Kelley said. "He was cracking jokes until hours before he passed away."

Kelley first met Williamson in 1998, when Williamson came to the Manhattan South Street Crime Unit after spending 15 years in Chinatown's 5th Precinct.

"I automatically took a liking to him," Kelley said.

With Williamson living in Nanuet and Kelley in Pearl River, the two men saw each other often, even outside of work.

Kelley was already in New York City when the Sept. 11 attacks occurred. He said it was quite a sight to see Williamson digging for survivors. At about 6 feet 4 inches and between 260 and 280 pounds, Williamson was a "monster," Kelley said.

"Emotionally he was pretty quiet about it," Kelley said of Williamson's reaction to the terrorist attacks. "It was emotional for everyone."

Williamson was part of a lawsuit filed on behalf of about 10,000 people who say they are sick because New York City didn't give them proper protection at Ground Zero and surrounding sites.

Lead attorney David Worby of Worby Groner Edelman in White Plains said yesterday that Williamson was at Ground Zero for 127 days. He was Worby's 126th client to die from "toxic death."

Besides cancer, Worby's clients also suffer from lung disease, heart disease and immune suppression.

Williamson, who retired in 2002, "was one of the first people we got medical reports on," Worby said.

He said the fight will stop "when the government steps forward and says, 'We blew it and we're going to take

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Donations may be made to the Lustgarten Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research, 1111 Stewart Ave., Bethpage, NY 11714.

care of you.' "

Until then, the Detectives' Endowment Association Inc. will work to get Williamson's family his continued pension and health benefits, union Vice President Victor Cipullo said yesterday.

Cipullo had know Williamson for about five years.

"Even when he was sick, he would ask what he could do for us," he said.

Visiting hours are from 3 to 5 p.m. and 7 to 9 p.m. today at the Wyman-Fisher Funeral Home in Pearl River. A Mass of Christian burial will be held at 10 a.m. Wednesday at St. Anthony's Church in Nanuet.

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