

## **Transforming Tragedy Into Hope**

On September 30, 2001 a memorial service was held at the Central Unitarian Church in Paramus to celebrate the life of my son Todd. The church was overflowing with many standing outside to stand with us in an hour of personal and national grief. All of our lives were transformed on that horrible day when the planes became missiles.

One of the speakers at the memorial service was Dr. Donson a psychiatrist who had treated Todd as a child. Todd was unable to go to school from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup> grades because of what was termed “panic attacks.” For the first year Todd was treated by medication but that was a total failure. We then turned to Dr. Donson who believed that the first approach should be psychotherapy. For the next 18 months Todd saw Dr. Donson four times a week until he was able to return to school. In fact with home schooling and other support Todd kept up with his class and graduated with them. He never looked back.

My family was continually asked by many as to what they could do to remember Todd. After the memorial service a relative suggested that in Todd’s name and memory we should create a Foundation which helped children who suffer from anxiety disorders and depression. So was born the Todd Ouida Children’s Foundation (<http://www.mybuddytodd.org>).

To date we have raised over \$750,000 and a recent fundraising event at Yankee Stadium was reported in the Bergen Record (<http://www.northjersey.com/print.php?qstr=ZmdiZWw3Zjd2cWVIRUV5eTY5NTAyNTkmeXJpcnk3ZjcxN2Y3dnFIZUVFeXkz>).

Our work includes Todd’s alma mater the University of Michigan where an endowed lecture and research grant has been funded. The University’s Web site is a host to six minute video about our work [http://med.umich.edu/depression/ouida\\_foundation.htm](http://med.umich.edu/depression/ouida_foundation.htm).

Meadville Lombard Theological School has created a video of the ministry my family received from the Rev. Dr. Justin Osterman, who graduated from that school in 1999. We are in his debt and that of the warm and supportive love of the CUC congregation. The video helps Meadville Lombard tell its story, of how the school shapes Unitarian Universalist ministers to meet the theological and pastoral needs of those they serve--even in unimaginable situations such as the events of September 11, 2001.

On that dreadful day I was also in the building on the 77<sup>th</sup> floor. I served as Executive Vice President of the World Trade Centers Association. The Association is dedicated to promoting the World Trade Center concept all over the world. I gave up that position to devote time to Todd’s Foundation and serve as President of CUC. I finished my term and am now a trustee of the Endowment Trust Fund.

The foundation’s work is very important to staying connected to Todd. Many heap praise on us for our work Truth is that it is an important part of healing and going forward.

If anyone is interested in learning more about Todd’s Foundation please feel free to contact me, Herb Ouida, at [houda99@aol.com](mailto:houda99@aol.com).