

# Helping to Ease the Pain

Clare Stenstrom and fellow financial planners offer support to 9/11 victims' families



LEFT WITH NO other way home following the tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, Clare Stenstrom drove from San Diego to New York. The Brooklyn-born financial planner passed the time listening to news on the radio and thinking of ways she could help those in need.

Stenstrom was a driving force in the establishment of the FPA 9/11 Financial Planning Relief Services, the first formal program to bring pro bono financial planning to Americans in times of disaster or crisis. "I couldn't touch those who had been hurt," she says. "But I felt I could do something unique to help. I found many other planners who felt the same way."

Three hundred planners signed on to learn how to deal with grieving families' unexpected financial challenges. Then they began seeking partnerships with relief agencies. Stenstrom offered the Salvation Army a creative solution to overcome its caseworkers' questions about what financial planners do: "Why don't we do plans for *you*?" To date, 500 planners have volunteered to work with 9/11 families, helping those

who have lost a loved one, a job, or a business.

Stenstrom and her fellow volunteers partner with Friends of Firefighters, a support group in Brooklyn. "Many firefighters have second jobs or small businesses to make ends meet," says Stenstrom, a CFP® professional with Bourne Stenstrom Capital Management in Bedford Hills, N.Y. "They put in so much overtime after 9/11, many lost their second incomes." Planners assist firefighters with debt management, ways to replace lost income, and maximizing pension benefits.

Stenstrom's work with 9/11 families has been difficult but rewarding. "They don't necessarily need money; they need money *skills*," she says. "My comfort comes from showing them how to use money – to protect their children and secure their future, and let them spend time repairing their hurt."

## HOW A FINANCIAL PLANNER CAN HELP YOU

FINANCIAL PLANNING is the process of wisely managing your finances so that you can achieve your dreams and goals — while at the same time helping you negotiate the financial barriers that inevitably arise in every stage of life.

Managing your personal finances is ultimately your responsibility. However, you don't have to do it alone. A financial planner can help you make decisions that make the most of your financial resources.

Financial planning can help you:

- Set realistic financial and personal goals
- Assess your current financial health by examining your assets, liabilities, income, insurance, taxes, investments and estate plan
- Develop a realistic, comprehensive plan to meet your financial goals by addressing financial weaknesses and building on financial strengths
- Put your plan into action and monitor its progress
- Stay on track to meet goals based on changing personal circumstances or changing stages of your life.

PHOTO BY CHUCK SOLOMON



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