



Winter 2024

Responder Newsletter

**Stony Brook World Trade Center
Health and Wellness Program**

In This Issue

TOPIC	PAGE NUMBER
Letter From Dr. Luft	Page 2
Member Spotlight: Glenn Tarquinio	Page 3-4
Beat the Winter Blues	Page 5
Nutrition Students/Recipe	Page 6
Current Research	Page 7-8
Have You Received a Medical Bill for a WTC-Authorized Service?	Page 9
Creating Art from Trauma/Responder Patch Wall	Page 10

Book your annual monitoring exam today!
Call to schedule today (631) 855-1200

Have you visited the Emergency Room or been hospitalized recently?

If you go to the hospital, whether it is an emergency department visit or you are admitted to the hospital, please contact Stony Brook World Trade Center (WTC) Health and Wellness Program at (631) 855-1200 as soon as possible.

Hospital coverage is based on your certified conditions. Our case management team will be able to help navigate the process, should you need assistance with your benefits.

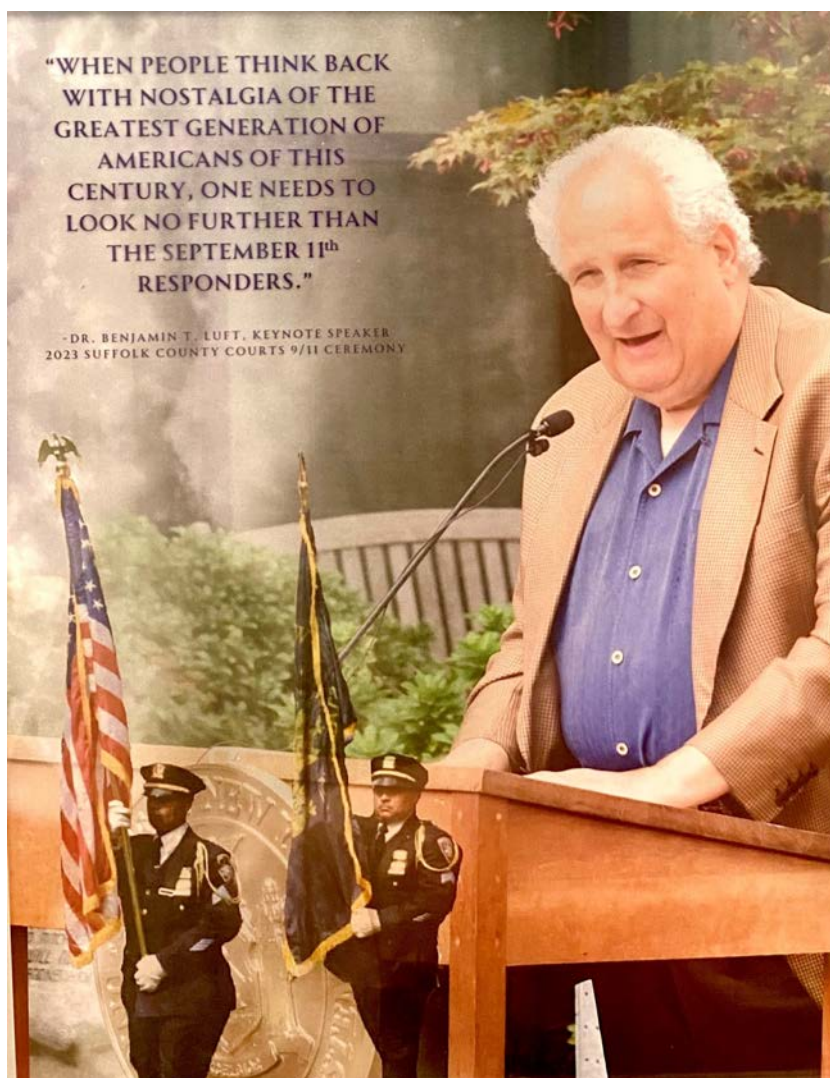


If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at **(631) 855-1200** to discuss further with our case management team.

Letter from Dr. Luft

Greetings,

I wanted to share with you the plaque that I received from a talk I gave to the United Court Services on 9/11/23. I thought the quote extracted from my talk embodies the principles upon which our clinic was developed. I want to wish you a happy and healthy New Year. Together we will continue to try to optimize your care and strive toward true health and well-being.



With great respect,

Benjamin J. Luft, MD

Director, Stony Brook World Trade Center Health and Wellness Program

Member Spotlight

Glenn Tarquinio

Glenn Tarquinio has been a part of the WTC Health Program since 2007 and responded to Ground Zero as a police officer on September 11, 2001. Although he was off duty that day, he knew what he had to do.

Glenn's Story

On 9/11, Glenn was sixty miles away and recalls seeing the smoke billowing in the sky. On his drive into the city on the Long Island Expressway, he was stopped by a Nassau County Highway Patrol Sergeant who had hash marks up his arms, which represent 5 years of service. This man had eight. At the time, Glenn had been on the police force for sixteen years. Glenn stated, "He stopped, stood at attention, saluted me, and said, 'God Bless You.' For him to give me that respect, I was totally taken back."

Glenn, a husband and father of three, called his family and said, "I have no idea what I'm walking into right now. I don't know if I'm ever going to see you guys again." He stated, "it was one of the scariest moments of my life."

By the time he got to Ground Zero, he remembers walking up to the 16-acre site, unable to tell which building was the pile of destruction. Glenn was on the pile off and on, 12-14 hours per day, for four and half months. He recalls being given a box of N-95 masks, but within an hour, his mask was black. He was given respirators from FEMA, but no clean replacement cartridges, so he decided to continue using masks. "Two 1250-foot buildings. I challenge anyone to tell me if they saw a desk, a chair, a phone, or a computer," he stated.

Mental Health

Four years later, while working on his lawn, he remembered construction going on at the Smithhaven Mall near his home in Nesconset. "I was outside and I kept hearing the buildings being taken down. As this is happening, I'm sweating, I'm trembling, I'm cold. I realized on the second day of this, I'm having flashbacks. The beeping of bulldozers, the bricks being torn down. This was my trigger to what I was experiencing at 9/11."

"I started seeing a therapist and then eventually, you come to realize your head isn't the only thing that's hurting. It's like when you go to the mechanic and they open the hood and find other things wrong with your car."

Glenn was later diagnosed with WTC-certified rhinitis, sinusitis, asthma, and PTSD. He joined the Stony Brook WTC Health & Wellness Program in 2007, and has gotten annual exams for over 15 years. He describes the Program as a "lifesaver," and notes that at first, he didn't understand why the physical was so long.

"I started to realize these are for long-term results and long-term issues. They have a goal in mind here. There's nothing like this that has happened before. You want to seize the moment in not just mental health, but in physical health."



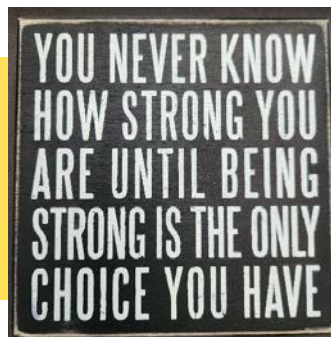
Glenn (right) and his son, AJ, who is currently in the NYS Police Academy

Glenn's Battle with Prostate Cancer

In November 2019, Glenn was referred to a urologist after having elevated Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) levels with his general practitioner for three years. He underwent an MRI in December, and his results indicated prostate cancer. Shocked and scared, he felt helpless knowing this information but having no treatment plan yet. All he could think of was what he would tell his kids at Christmas.

Not knowing what to do next, he reached out to social worker Deborah Ramos, who immediately put him in contact with an in-network oncologist. Since the inception of his cancer diagnosis, he has had the support of WTC, as well as Dr. Spaliviero and Stephanie Mason, PA-C. After numerous painful biopsies, with the support of his oncology team, he made the decision to take it out. "It's cancer, get rid of it," he stated.

He was scheduled for surgery April 1st, 2020, but due to the pandemic, his surgery was postponed indefinitely. As a police officer, he was used to having a tactical approach to a problem. "When you have cancer, you don't have that luxury," he stated. "You're at the mercy of the disease."



Glenn keeps positive mantras around his house to keep his spirits high. This is his favorite.

Member Spotlight

He took this delay as an opportunity to start working with his WTC Health and Wellness Program dietitian to lose weight and improve his overall well-being. He was also given sage advice from Tom Wilson, a fellow responder who had tongue cancer, “stay in the fight. Cancer loves weak people. No matter how tired you get, keep punching back. It’s not going to be easy, but just stay in the fight. No matter what you do, you need to stay in the fight.”

After surgery, he dealt with the rollercoaster of emotions associated with the effects of treatment, such as relationship issues, erectile dysfunction, and urinary incontinence. In addition to the brutally painful procedures, he describes having prostate cancer as “emotionally debilitating, embarrassing, and disheartening.”

He described the unavoidable after-effects of prostate cancer to be difficult to come to terms with, especially when you want to put yourself in a mentally better place, but your physical body won’t do it. “It’s so strange how it’s one of the most survivable cancers, but yet it leaves you physically, as well as mentally damaged for a very long time afterwards,” he stated.

When asked about lessons he has learned from his cancer battle, he stated, “health is wealth – it’s all in your mind. If you can buy an exercise bike with a screen for your house, do it. I cycle all over the world! I do it every day, even if it’s 30 minutes a day. Just keep moving.” He describes having cancer as his new threshold for completing difficult tasks. Having beat cancer, he feels he can do anything!

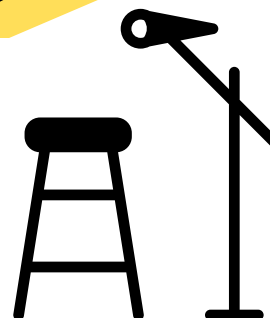
A Message From Glenn: Glenn would like to urge his fellow responders to get their PSA levels (prostate-specific antigen) checked by their primary care provider, as the WTC Health and Wellness Program does not currently cover this test.

Glenn feels strongly that if you want positive things to happen to you, put positive things out into the universe.

His outlets include mental health therapy, as well as writing comedy and public speaking.

A Joke from Glenn:

Being a Jets fan isn’t getting any easier this season. Last week, I accidentally forgot that I had left four tickets to this Sunday’s Jets game on the front seat of my car. When I left my house and got to the driveway to go to work the next morning, I noticed that someone had broken into my car and left four more tickets on my front seat!!



“I would like people to be able to open up and share,” he stated. “You’re not alone, especially here. I don’t care what type of cancer you have, whatever you’re going through. You are not alone. We all did the same thing. We all went to work that day. We didn’t ask for this, we didn’t plan on this, but we’re here. If you can make something good out of this, do it.”

Join A Prostate Cancer Support Group!



Call Geoffrey O’Connell Today to Join!

Phone: (631) 444-4343

Time: First Tuesday of Every Month at 7 PM

Location: 33 Research Way, Setauket, NY - Social Work Office

- *Must call ahead to confirm the group is meeting.
- *Must participate in a screening before attending.
- *Do not have to be a Stony Brook cancer patient.
- *Anyone with prostate cancer is allowed to join.

****Men ONLY****

(no spouses or women allowed)

Beat The Winter Blues



As the days get shorter, many people find themselves feeling sad. You might feel blue around the winter holidays, or get into a slump after the fun and festivities have ended.

Some people have more serious mood changes year after year, lasting throughout the fall and winter when there's less natural sunlight. What is it about the darkening days that can leave us down in the dumps? And what can we do about it?



Lift Your Mood: Activities

- Go to a movie
- Take a walk
- Go ice-skating
- Learn a new recipe
- Go bowling
- Have a home spa day
- Yoga
- Read a book
- Learn a new language
- Start an indoor herb garden



What is “Winter Blues” V.S Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

“**Winter blues** is a general term, not a medical diagnosis. It’s fairly common, and it’s more mild than serious. It usually clears up on its own in a fairly short amount of time,” says Dr. Matthew Rudorfer, a mental health expert at NIH. The so-called winter blues are often linked to something specific, such as stressful holidays or reminders of absent loved ones.

Lift Your Mood: Tips

- Get out in the sunlight or brightly lit spaces, especially early in the day.
- Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative.
- Eat nutritious foods, and avoid overloading on carbohydrates like cookies and candies.
- Be patient. You won’t suddenly “snap out of” depression. Your mood will improve gradually.

“**Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)**, though, is different. It’s a well-defined clinical diagnosis that’s related to the shortening of daylight hours,” says Rudorfer. “It interferes with daily functioning over a significant period of time.” A key feature of SAD is that it follows a regular pattern. It appears each year as the seasons change, and it goes away several months later, usually during spring and summer.



For more information visit:

<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2013/01/beat-winter-blues>

If you have thoughts of suicide, get help right away. Call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

Have You Met Our Nutrition Students?

Danny



Peter



Devin



Michelle



Ask to use the **body composition analysis scale** during your Commack Monitoring Visit!

Already did and want to learn more? Scan the QR code to watch the presentation our student scale technicians created!

Bell Pepper Nachos

Ingredients:

- 6 large bell peppers
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 2 tbsp taco seasoning
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup canned black beans rinsed and drained
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sweet yellow corn thawed
- 1 jalapeño sliced, optional
- $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 cup reduced-fat shredded Mexican cheese blend



Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375°F. Coat a large baking sheet with nonstick oil or line with parchment paper.
2. Use a small sharp knife to core the stem from the pepper. Then slice the pepper in half and then slice each half into 3 equal parts. Each pepper will create 6 “chips”. Lay the bell pepper chips on the prepared baking sheet in a single layer.
3. In a large heated skillet, stir the ground beef until its cooked through and crumbled. Add the taco seasoning, along with $\frac{2}{3}$ cup water and stir. Add the black beans, corn and jalapeños, if using. Mix until well combined and heated through.
4. Spoon the mixture over the bell pepper pieces. Sprinkle the cheese on top and bake until the cheese melts, about 10 minutes.
5. Serve warm with your favorite toppings

Current Research:

Discovering the Link Between Toxins and Responders' Health

Dioxin Exposure

Dioxins are a classification of persistent organic pollutants. They are commonly produced in chemical processes, such as bleaching and chlorine production. They can also be produced through the combustion of jet fuel, waste, and other materials. Previous research shows there were high levels of dioxins at Ground Zero and in the surrounding area. These toxins can remain in the body for over 20 years after exposure.

Our research team is currently collecting blood samples to measure the levels of dioxins found in our patients. We are interested in determining if dioxin exposure is related to the development of WTC related diseases such as cancer and neurological conditions.

If you are interested in hearing more about the **dioxin research** we are conducting, please contact **Onix Melendez**.

Email:

Onix.melendez@stonybrookmedicine.edu

Phone:

631-638-0728



Toxic Metals

In addition to dioxins, many first responders were also exposed to toxic metals at the site of 9/11. Some of these metals may still be found in the body. Previous studies on first responders have linked these substances with adverse effects on long term health.

Our research team would like to study the effect of these other metals by collecting urine samples during annual monitoring visits. This allows us to examine the metals that may be found within the body. These findings can then shed light on the effects of these metals on mental health, respiratory conditions, and other illnesses.

If you want to hear more information regarding the research we are conducting about **metals in your body**, please contact **Cassandra Kroll**.

Email:

cassandra.kroll@stonybrookmedicine.edu

Phone:

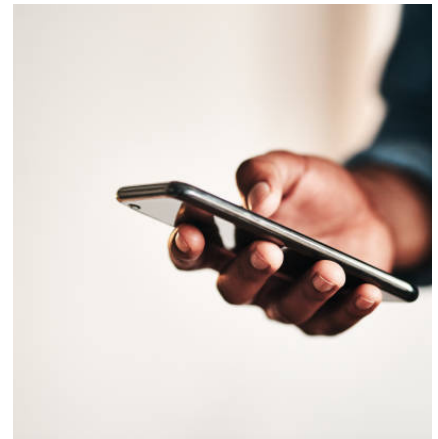
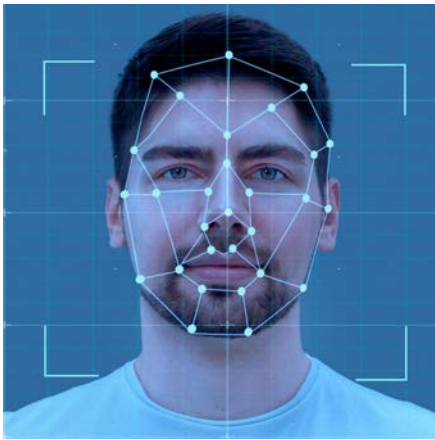
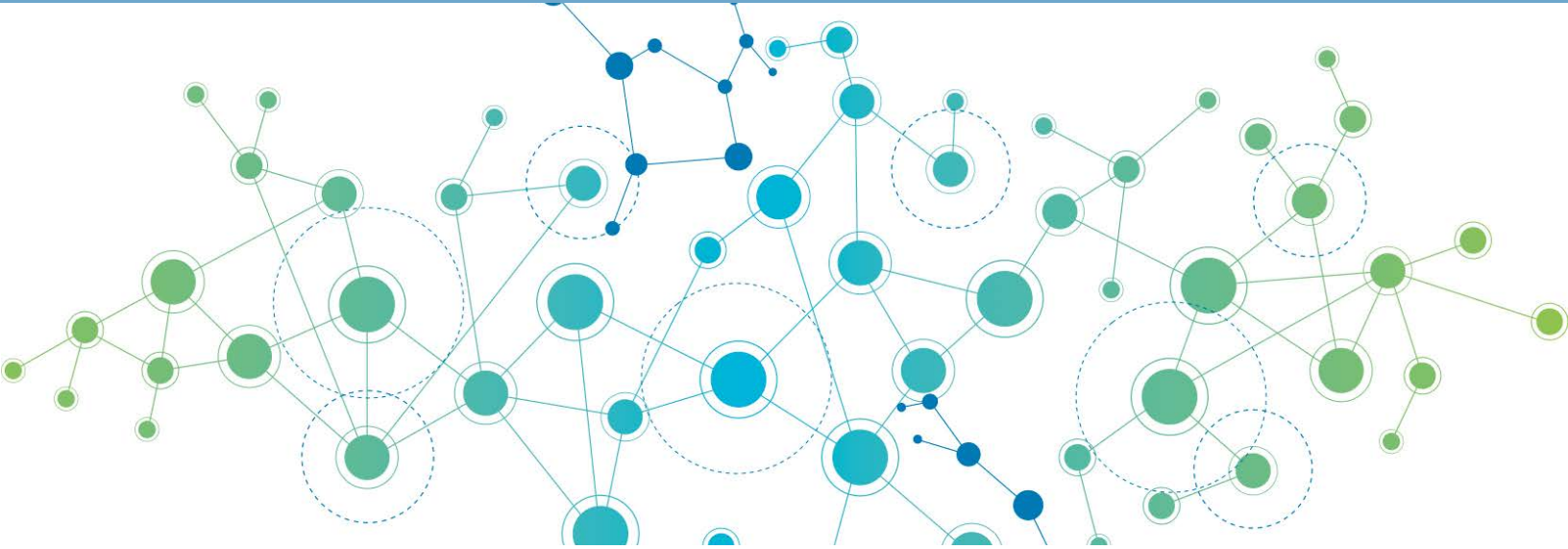
631-216-8841



References:

1. Bernadette Royce, Ira S. Richards, "A Review of the Toxicants Found in World Trade Center Dust". American Research Journal of Public Health; 1(1): 1-9.
2. Huang, C., Kritikos, M., Sosa, M.S. et al. World Trade Center Site Exposure Duration Is Associated with Hippocampal and Cerebral White Matter Neuroinflammation. Mol Neurobiol 60, 160–170 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12035-022-03059-z>

Stony Brook WTC Health and Wellness Program Study on Mood and Stress



Many WTC responders are affected by stress and mood problems. We are conducting a study to better understand who is at risk for such difficulties and what stressors causes them. This information will be used to develop diagnostic tools with cutting-edge technology that can improve the well-being of people faced with stress-related problems. For this study, participants complete a brief daily survey and a video diary about events of the day. Participants conduct the study on their smartphones. Study participation lasts 3 months.

If you experience mood problems or often feel stressed,
please consider participating in our study

If interested, **email us at wtcdailystudysbu@gmail.com or call 631-638-0298** to complete an initial screening. Your participation would be a crucial step towards helping your fellow Stony Brook WTC responders!

Have You Received a Medical Bill for a WTC-Authorized Service?



Option 1
 Call the providers office noted on the bill and request that this be re-billed to the Stony Brook World Trade Center Health and Wellness Program.

Option 2
 Fill out the back of the medical bill with your Stony Brook WTC Health and Wellness Program insurance information and return to the address on the medical bill received.



Please Fill Out Your bill With the Following Information:

Insurance Company: World Trade Center Plan
Insurance Company Address: P.O. Box 11064, Charleston, WV 25339
Insurance Policy or Contact No: Insert your 911 Number

Example of Bill

Name: _____ Account No: _____ Phone: _____
 Address: _____
 Business Phone: _____ Employer: _____
 Employer Address: _____
 Insurance Company: _____ Effective Date: _____
 Insurance Company Address: _____ Phone: _____
 Insurance Policy or Contact No: _____ Group No: _____
 Policy Holder's Name: _____ Phone: _____
 Policy Holder's Date of Birth _____ Policy Holder's Gender: M F Policy Holder's Social Security No: _____
 Patient's Relationship to Insured: Self Spouse Child Other _____

If you have any questions or concerns, please call us at **(631) 855-1200** to discuss further with our case management team.

Additional information is also available at: www.cdc.gov/wtc/billing.html.

We Want to Feature You!



Creating Art from Trauma



We are aware that many of you create impactful pieces of art including, but not limited to woodworking, books, paintings, plays, music, poetry, comedy, etc., inspired by your time serving our country on 9/11/2001, and in the recovery efforts thereafter. We are interested in knowing how you've coped using art throughout the years, and we'd like to feature your creations to assist and inspire other responders.

The art would be shared in our newsletter to display some helpful outlets to the community. We would also be interested in featuring your creations in our newsletter, Commack and Westbury clinics.

If you are interested in sharing what you've created, contact:
Camile Arnone, Communications Coordinator
 (631) 638-0323 or Camile.Arnone@stonybrookmedicine.edu

Responder Patch Wall

If you would like to donate a patch to our wall,
please follow these steps:

With your patch, attach your name and the name of the organization that your patch is affiliated with, then follow **one of these two** options:

Drop off your patch at the Commack Clinic:

Stony Brook World Trade Center Health and Wellness Program
 500 Commack Road, Suite 160
 Commack, NY 11725

or

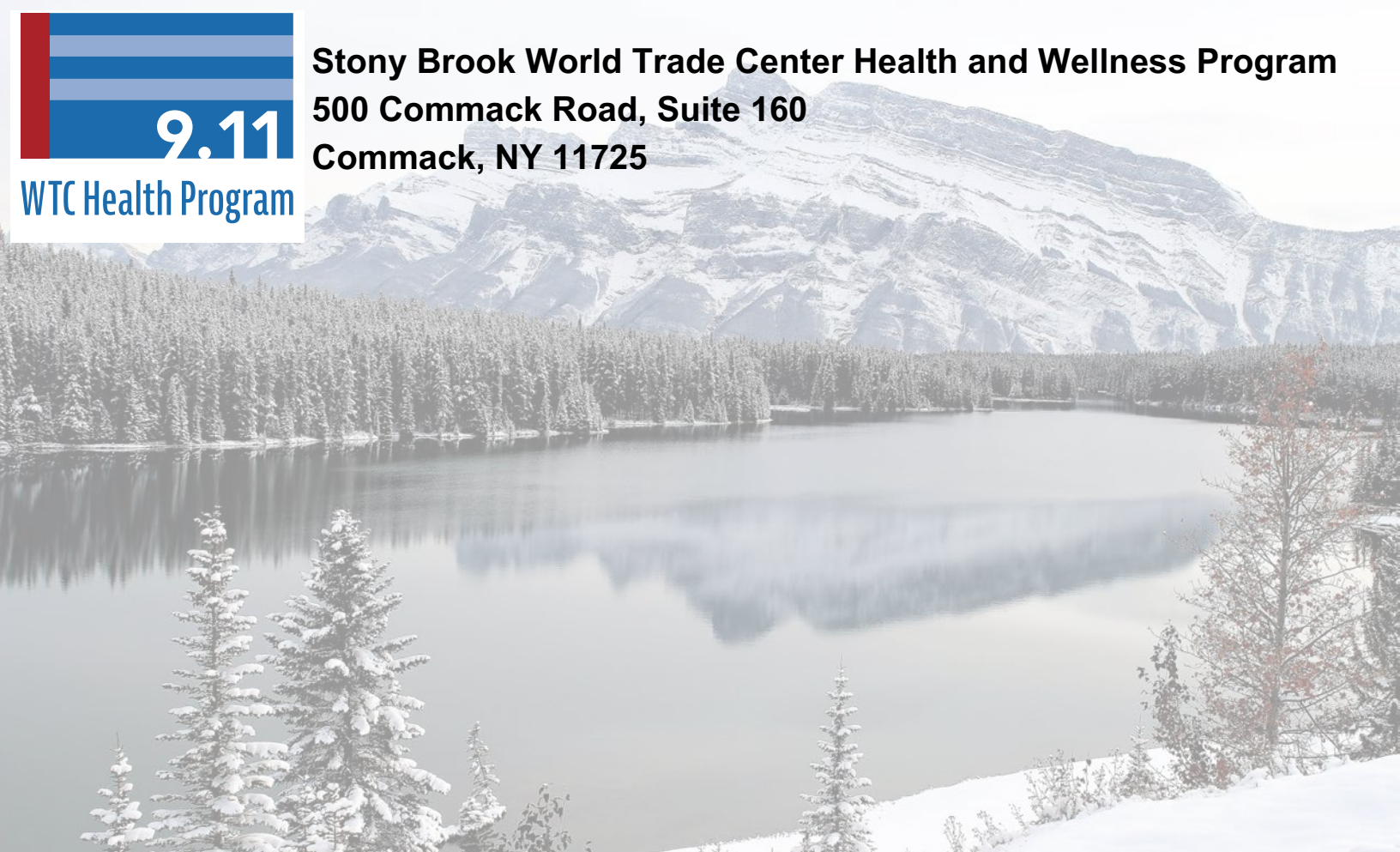
Mail your patch to the Commack Clinic:

Attention: Communications Committee
 Stony Brook World Trade Center Health and Wellness Program
 500 Commack Road, Suite 160
 Commack, NY 11725





Stony Brook World Trade Center Health and Wellness Program
500 Commack Road, Suite 160
Commack, NY 11725



Locations:

Commack Clinic

500 Commack Road, Suite 160
Commack, NY 11725
(631) 855-1200

Westbury Clinic

1600 Stewart Avenue, Suite 220
Westbury, NY 11590
(631) 855-1200



www.facebook.com/stonybrookwtc



www.stonybrookmedicine.edu/WTC