

Sept. 11 effects linger

Firefighters, medical workers turn to counseling

NEW YORK (AP) — Hundreds of firefighters and emergency medical workers who responded to the World Trade Center attack have reported nightmares, sudden anger and other psychological symptoms so severe that they were taken off active duty. The 14,000-member Fire Department said it has about 350 people with stress-related problems on light duty or medical leave since Sept. 11.

Nearly 2,000 more firefighters, fire officers and workers in the department's Emergency Medical Service unit have seen a counselor since Sept. 11 through the FDNY's counseling services unit.

The number is unexpectedly large for an institution that traditionally prefers to handle problems within the close-knit firehouse fraternity.

"Few people would have predicted as many firefighters would come forward looking for help," said Terence Keane, a counseling unit consultant who heads the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Boston.

Firefighters say the staggering losses of Sept. 11 changed perceptions of the counseling unit, once seen as only for those with drug or alcohol prob-

lems. The department lost 343 members when the twin towers collapsed.

"Before this, guys would not even dream of going to counseling," said 10-year firefighter Vinny Picciano, who sees a counselor once a week. "Now, the guys that are coming down, they realize something is wrong. Guys are hurting."

Of the 350 placed on light duty or medical leave, 100 remained off the active roster as of Wednesday. Many others have retired and some have returned to work.

The department is working firefighters overtime to absorb the loss. The department expects to spend as much as \$170 million on overtime this fiscal year, roughly double its previous amount, spokesman Frank Gribbon said.

The counseling unit saw approximately 600 people in 2000. Its staff, which had 11 counselors and clinicians, is now five times larger.

About one-fifth of those in counseling suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder, a severe reaction that can require intensive counseling and medication, counseling services unit director Malachy Corrigan said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Beauty pageant turns ugly

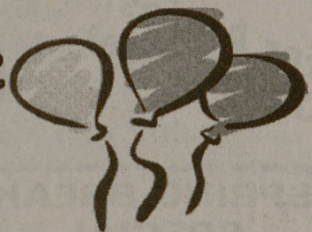
GEORGETOWN, Ky. (AP) — A college beauty pageant turned ugly when a dress rehearsal ended in a scuffle between "Miss Congeniality" and a school official.

Georgetown College freshman Keaton Lynch Brown, who had earlier been voted Miss Congeniality by the contestants, claims in a complaint that the student activities director grabbed her by the arm during a talent rehearsal Friday and dragged her down some steps until she hit a door.

The school official, Kathy Wallace, was charged with assault.

Contestants in the annual Belle of the Blue pageant said there was some tension between the two women over Brown's chosen talent — a dance segment that drew on her love of horses and included a lasso routine in which she roped a stuffed pig.

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Investigators uncover plot to kill law officers

KALISPELL, Mont. (AP) — Investigators say they have uncovered a plot by a militia group to kill law enforcement officers, judges and officials in this northwestern Montana community.

A group calling itself "Project Seven" collected "intelligence files" on the officials and their families, Flathead County Sheriff Jim Dupont said Wednesday.

"We believe that there was a plan to assassinate some police officers and officials in the county, including judges," he said. Dupont said charges were expected, though it was unclear how many people may belong to "Project Seven."

"Traditionally, these militia cells keep their numbers down to six or 10 people," the sheriff said. "But what we're not sure of is how many people within the cell were going along with this plan."

The plot was uncovered following the arrests earlier this month of David Burgert and Tracy Brockway, the sheriff said.

Burgert, 38, had jumped bail after being charged with assaulting a police officer. Brockway, 32, was charged with obstruction of justice for aiding Burgert.

Investigators said a search of property the two were sharing turned up automatic rifles, thousands of rounds of ammunition, explosives and booby traps.

Authorities say they also found lists containing the names of local enforcement officers, a prosecutor and judges. The list included addresses, phone numbers and information on spouses and children. Dupont said he was among those on the list.

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