



Are You Ready?

By Nancy Fawson

I hadn't really thought about what to do in case of a disaster before September 11, 2001. On that bright and beautiful Tuesday morning, I was in my studio apartment in downtown Manhattan getting ready to leave for work. I had recently graduated from law school and was eager to start my career as an attorney. It was my fourth day as a first-year associate at a boutique law firm located at Two World Trade Center.

Just as I was getting ready to walk out the door, my fiancée called to tell me about an accident that had just taken place at One World Trade Center. I turned on the television and saw thick clouds of black smoke pouring out of the tower. The news was reporting that a plane had accidentally crashed into the tower but not much else was known about what had occurred. I told him not to worry; it wasn't my tower that had been involved in the accident and since it was my first week at work, I thought it best that I head over to the office, if only to check in.

Though first-year associates straight out of law school are qualified to do little more than copying and filing, they are notoriously eager and I was no exception. I hurriedly walked to the subway station and hopped on a downtown train. I got off a few stops later and ran up the stairs. I stepped out into the street and was enveloped by a large crowd of people, all of whom were looking apprehensively toward the sky. I was shocked to see plumes of black smoke billowing from both towers now. During the short time I had been underground the second plane had crashed into Two World Trade Center and both towers were now on fire.

Paper fluttered through the sky. It rained down over our heads like confetti and a sharp, acrid smell filled the air. There was chaos and confusion; no one knew yet what had really happened and I, along with throngs of others, continued to walk slowly toward the burning towers. As I turned a corner a block away from the site, I looked down and saw the cornice from a nearby building on the ground. The sight of an object so large that only a few moments earlier was forty stories above my head jolted me out of my haze. I turned around and quickly made my way back into the subway station. I was lucky and made it safely home on one of the last trains to leave from downtown that morning.

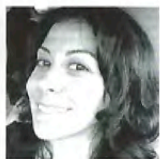
Coming out of that subway, back up and into the sunlight, I was overwhelmed by sadness, loss and confusion. How does one get through the hours when everything familiar is broken? I was woefully unprepared. Emotionally I was a wreck and logistically I had no idea what to do. As a typical twenty-something single girl, my refrigerator contained little more than a few bottles of beer. I didn't have a single band-aid in my apartment let alone a supply of food and water.

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I rushed to the corner store to try and stock up, but everything was gone - those shelves had been cleared in an instant. In the days following, I relied on friends and family to get by. We all stayed close to home and took care of each other. We shared what we had and helped as we could. My best friend came over with a deck of cards and a few bottles of wine. My brother brought family photo albums and some of his favorite CD's. In between watching the near constant news coverage, we passed the time looking at old photos, playing cards and listening to music. Though the sadness never left us, those simple activities brought us immense comfort in the sea of gloom that engulfed the entire city.

These days, with two young children in the house we have no shortage of band-aids and we have a well-stocked disaster kit ready. But thinking back to that awful time after 9-11, I've added a few extra items to our emergency stash: a cozy blanket for my daughter, some Legos for my Ninjago-obsessed son, favorite books for everyone, as well as a few bottles of wine. After all, a good emergency kit should contain all of the items that you and your family will need for survival, but a great one can provide comfort, cheer and hope in a scary and uncertain time. And that can make all the difference.



For great ideas on how to prepare your family for an emergency, visit Get Ready Marin's Household Disaster Preparedness website ("getreadymarin.org") and download their Get Ready manual.

Nancy Farson is a former attorney turned writer and blogger. She recently moved to Belvedere with her family after living in NYC for over two decades. You can read

more of her writing on her blog, www.nycgirlbythebay.com.

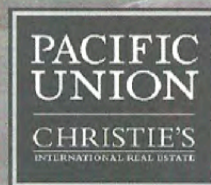
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Experience Counts

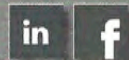


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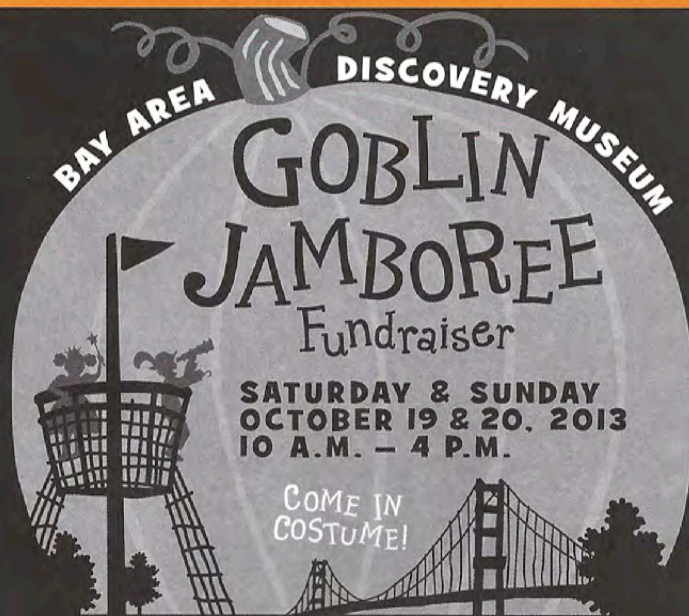
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