

9/11

★
NEVER FORGET

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER IN REMEMBRANCE OF SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

Twenty-five years have passed since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, one of the most painful and unforgettable chapters in the modern history of the United States of America.

I do not write these words as someone who merely learned of those events through television, newspapers, or history books. I lived through that moment. I was in the United States when the unimaginable occurred, and I remember with absolute clarity the shock, disbelief, silence, and profound anguish that descended upon an entire nation.

I witnessed a country wounded, but not defeated. I witnessed families devastated by irreparable loss. I witnessed ordinary citizens helping strangers, firefighters entering buildings from which thousands were desperately attempting to escape, law enforcement officers advancing toward danger, and emergency personnel fulfilling their duty without knowing whether they would ever again embrace their families.

I shall never forget.

On that September morning, nearly three thousand innocent lives were brutally taken. Each victim had a name, a family, a story, dreams, and aspirations that were forever interrupted. Their memory must never be reduced to a statistic or recalled only during an annual ceremony. It belongs to the moral conscience of America and of the entire civilized world.

We also remember the firefighters, law enforcement officers, emergency personnel, members of the Armed Forces, and all those citizens who, when confronted with terror, chose courage. Many gave their own lives to save people they had never met. Others survived that day but succumbed years later to illnesses caused by exposure to the toxic substances present at the sites of the attacks.

In paying tribute, we must not forget the K-9s and their handlers, who worked tirelessly amid the rubble, smoke, and debris, searching for survivors and helping to locate those who had lost their lives. Those extraordinary animals confronted dangerous, unstable, and contaminated environments, guided by loyalty, training, and a silent courage that requires no words to be understood.

Many of those dogs suffered injuries, exhaustion, and subsequent health problems resulting from their service. Their mission offered a profoundly moving demonstration of the bond between human beings and animals, as well as the indispensable role performed by K-9 units in search, rescue, and recovery operations. They, together with their handlers, also occupy a place of honor in the memory of September 11.

To all of them, we owe a debt of gratitude that time can never extinguish.

Summit Nutritionals International Inc. was incorporated in 2001. For that reason, the year holds a particularly significant place in my memory, both personally and professionally. The birth of our company coincided with a period during which America endured one of the most severe trials in its history. Yet we witnessed that unity can arise from sorrow, that determination can emerge from suffering, and that a great nation is defined by the manner in which it rises after being wounded.

The years have passed, but our duty to remember remains undiminished. New generations, many of whose members had not yet been born on that day, must understand what occurred, who attacked America, why they did so, and the price that was paid for freedom. To forget the facts or soften the truth would constitute a grave injustice to the dead, the survivors, and all those who risked their lives in defense of others.

To remember September 11 is not to perpetuate hatred. It is to honor the truth. It is to preserve memory. It is to recognize heroism. It is to reaffirm that freedom, security, and peace must never be taken for granted.

As Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Summit Nutritionals International Inc., and as someone who personally lived through that historic moment, I bow my head respectfully before the memory of every victim. I likewise pay tribute to the families who learned to live with an absence that can never be filled, and to all the men, women, and K-9s who served with courage and selflessness on that day and throughout the months that followed.

May the sirens, the images, and the silence of that day never fade from our collective memory.

Twenty-five years have passed, but there are moments that time cannot erase.

I lived through that moment.

I remember.

I shall never forget.

And no one should ever forget.

■ CÉSAR DEPAÇO

Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Summit Nutritionals International Inc.®

