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By Charles D. Allen

This Monday marks the 16th observance of Patriot Day as the National Day of Service and Remembrance following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

On that day, nearly 3,000 people were killed at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in a field in Shanksville Pa.

The victims were not only those in the planes and buildings targeted for attack; they included first responders from police and fire departments. Crisis response and emergency medical teams also answered the call of service to others in that time of chaos.



The diverse collections of first responders did not care about the nationality, ethnic background, race, or religion of those in need. In fact, 372 non-Americans from more than 90 countries perished in those 9-11 attacks.

The Oxford Dictionary defines patriot as "A person who vigorously supports their country and is prepared to defend it against enemies or detractors." To be a patriot requires the understanding that our country--The United States of America--has its founding principles clearly presented in the preambles of two documents.

From the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." And the U.S. Constitution begins "We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America."

A true American patriot embraces the values of our nation, which are based on "unalienable Rights" of individuals, irrespective of their origins. A patriot seeks "Justice" in accord with the rule of law and strives for the "general Welfare" of those who pursue Life, Liberty, and Happiness in our society.



As I contemplated the events of this summer, and especially August, I have seen and heard of many who claim to be patriots. With the devastation and still unfolding

consequences of Hurricane Harvey, we are witness to true patriotism displayed by first responders as well as members of the US military (active and reserve components with about 200 members of the Pennsylvania National Guard) as they provide defense support to civilian authorities.

The more compelling examples are the patriots, who without official titles or credentials, were integral to search and rescue operations and continue to be essential to recovery operations.

Whether they are Texans, American citizens or not, they are vigorously supporting those in need and prepared to defend our country's values through their actions.

Across the nation, we will pause for moments of silence this Sept. 11.

In remembering the victims of that horrific day, consider how you will be a "patriot" and, through your service to others, enact the values upon which our nation was founded.