

Sarah 'Sally' Goodrich mourned

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BENNINGTON -- A Bennington woman whose son was killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks and who later established a foundation to promote education in Afghanistan, died Saturday after a battle with cancer.

Sarah "Sally" Goodrich's humanitarian efforts reached across national borders through the Peter M. Goodrich Memorial Foundation, which she and her husband Donald established in memory of their son. Peter Goodrich was aboard United Airlines Flight 175 when it was hijacked and flown by terrorists into the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001.

The foundation has built two schools in Afghanistan and funded the construction of a water reservoir. It also provides assistance in a number of other ways to children of the country and supports exchange students.

"It's rare you have a local person who has had such a global impact," said Rick Derby, who has gotten to know the Goodriches well since he began producing and directing a documentary about the family's efforts in 2004.

Goodrich was an educator with the North Adams (Mass.) Public Schools system and was a founding and advisory board member of Our Voices Together, a nonprofit network founded in 2005 by 9/11 families and friends to promote people-to-people

efforts around the world.

Derby, of Hinsdale, Mass., said he became close with the Goodrich family after shooting more than 450 hours for the documentary, "Axis to Good: A Story From 9/11," which includes recent clips

from Sept. 11 this year.

Much of the time with the family was somber, but the way in which the Goodriches were able to turn sadness into a driving force to help others is what made the story as powerful as it is, Derby said.

"There was a lot of sadness and upset, particularly with Afghanistan and the whole reason for us knowing Sally was because of 9/11 and the loss of her son, but it was where she went with that, and we were so happy to go along with her," Derby said. "It's rare in your life when you can meet somebody who can take you somewhere where your humanity lives, and it was like we went on this magic carpet ride with her."

The last time Derby said he saw Goodrich was Thanksgiving weekend. At that time, when her health had already taken a turn for the worse, Derby said she was in high spirits and working hard to ensure the Afghan schools had a solid foundation in place for after her death. "It was sad, but again, it was inspirational," he said.

Derby said the strength of the Goodrich family to reach out with helping hands after losing their son is something most people, including himself, couldn't do, but it has been an inspiration to those who came in contact with them.

"I could never be Sally, but I could support her," Derby said. "She provided me with an avenue to join her. She gave my humanity an opportunity to reflect, or to join in."

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Derby said that in addition to her determination to help others and leave the world a better place than she found it, another characteristic that always stood out was her stubbornness. That stubbornness may have been what was needed to keep Derby's film crew in the Goodrich home for countless hours and days in order to finish what was started, when others may have found it a nuisance, Derby said.

"Here we are, running around with those cameras, tripping over ourselves, intruding, yet Sally knew she was going to support that because she believed in what we were doing," Derby said.

A 3 p.m. funeral service for Goodrich will be held Thursday at Old First Church in Bennington. The complete obituary is on Page A3 in today's Banner.

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