

# The spirit of Ground Zero is on display at Pelco

By Barbara Swarm  
Sentinel Reporter

CLOVIS - More than a thousand items - such as a U.S. flag flown by the New York Fire Department at Ground Zero, debris recovered from the World Trade Center site, along with poignant photographs and artwork reflecting the emotional aftermath of Sept. 11 - are on display in the lobby of Pelco, a Central Valley-based company that makes video security systems.

"Everything in here is a gift," said Sue Okenyi, Pelco's literature service clerk

Each item on display is a symbol of how this country was brought together by the tragedy, she went on to say. "It was our country that was attacked," she said. "It changed us all."

The tragic events of Sept. 11, 2001, "were for most Americans a profound call to action," said David L. McDonald, Pelco president and CEO. "Nearly everyone across this great nation felt compelled to do whatever they could to express newfound patriotism and help in any way possible. We have all been brought closer together by our common losses and collective grief." At Pelco, McDonald's call to action meant building the California Memorial, a permanent monument in memory of all the victims of Sept. 11 and to honor the fallen heroes.

On Dec. 8, 2001, more than 1,000 New York City firefighters, police and Port Authority officers traveled across the country to take part in the memorial dedication.

In the parking lot next to the granite monument, 403 empty white chairs were set up with a yellow rose on each seat as a reminder of the missing heroes. By day's end, a number of pictures were left taped to the monument.

While it was a day of emotional healing for many, a concern had also arisen. How were the photos and personal messages left on the monument going to be preserved?

After the dedication, McDonald felt something more permanent was needed where locals may go to remember and pay tribute to the victims of 9/11.

The photos were carefully removed from the monument and placed in a large frame that is now hanging in the lobby. One by one, more remembrances began pouring in, from T-shirts to badges, hats and pins.

On April 26, 2002, the California Memorial Museum officially opened. The special connection between California's Central Valley and New York was renewed.

"So many friendships have been made," said Okenyi.

The memorial and museum has now become a popular field trip destination for many area schools.

"We have tours going on all the time," said Okenyi. "Customers and noncustomers come through all the time."

The museum is at 3500 Pelco Way, off Ashlan Avenue, and is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

Admission is free

Information: 292-1981.

To learn more visit [www.pelco.com/memorial](http://www.pelco.com/memorial).