

Tuesday's Children still a force in 2011

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Photo credit: Alex Trautwig | Mets pitcher Chris Capuano at [Citi Field](#) with kids from the Tuesday's Children organization. (July 19, 2011)

It's a little bit easier now than it was 10 years ago -- time and patience and having kids to look after will do that -- but in those first few months after the towers fell Sept. 11, 2001, and Mary Perez lost her husband, it was all she could do to brave the world outside.

"The first year after my husband, I was oblivious," she said from around swarms of children at a [Mets](#) ' meet and greet at [Citi Field](#)

Tuesday. "I was afraid to come out of the house . . . They got us out of the house."

The "they" in question is Tuesday's Children, a non-profit organization dedicated to helping the families of those who died during the 9/11 attacks. A decade later, they're still at it, and a decade later, the Mets are still involved.

About 100 children and family members were on hand to hobnob with the likes of [R.A. Dickey](#) , Chris Capuano and Bobby

[Parnell](#)

Tuesday to kick off the first responder alliance mentoring program, which will look to help the children of parents who have died as a result of 9/11.

"I think it's great," said Parnell, whose fire-chief father has been with the [North Carolina](#) fire department for 35 years. "I grew up around the fire department and you feel like you can relate to them."

Relating, of course, is one of the greatest concerns for surviving parents and events like yesterday's, said Michelle Pegno, makes it feel possible.

Pegno, a Manhasset resident who lost her husband, Michael Lunden, on 9/11, said the organization "provides a lot of physical, psychological and emotional support" for her and her 10-year-old son, Matthew.

Perez, who has three children -- a 16-year-old son, a 14-year-old daughter, and a 20-year-old stepdaughter -- and lives in Locust Valley, added that programs like these helped the kids feel special without feeling too different.

"It makes me feel normal," her daughter, Alexis, said. "They understand us."