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Metro Customer Information Agent Marie Tervalon pays tribute to close friend and commuting companion Donna Remata at dedication, Saturday, of the Metrolink Memorial Plaza.

*Photos courtesy of
Tervalon family*

Metro Storekeeper Donna Remata Remembered at Simi Valley Memorial

By Laura Kloth
Staff Writer

A ceremony held at the new Metrolink Memorial Plaza in Simi Valley, created to honor the 25 people killed in the Sept. 12, 2008, Metrolink crash, turned out to be an "emotional, yet beautiful tribute," said Metro Customer Information Agent Marie Tervalon.

Metro Storekeeper Donna L. Remata was among the 25 killed that day when a Metrolink commuter train collided head-on with a Union Pacific freight train in a tragedy that injured 135 others and garnered national headlines.



"It was more beautiful than I thought it was going to be. It was just so peaceful," said Tervalon, who attended the ceremony to pay tribute to Remata, her close friend and commuting companion.

Soon after the event, Tervalon remembered telling Remata on the morning of the crash that she might be taking the 3:26 p.m. train home with her, and might need a ride since they lived near one another in Simi Valley.

Tervalon said she had taken the

Image of friend and co-worker Donna Remata was displayed in a floral wreath near her office following Metrolink tragedy on Sept. 12, 2008. She is remembered today with a permanent tribute at the Metrolink Memorial Plaza pictured below.



same train the previous day, but on Sept. 12, she missed it. As the day unfolded, Tervalon said she was grief stricken when she heard confirmation that her friend had been involved in the fatal crash.

Some 600 people attended the dedication of the memorial, which stands at the southeast corner of the Metrolink station on Los Angeles Avenue and was designed by Simi Valley City Architect Jerry Clark. Ten Simi Valley residents died in the tragedy.

Simi Valley officials began designing the memorial – which also commemorates those killed in the 2005 Metrolink crash in Glendale – with input and contributions from the victims' families and the community, said Asst. City Manager Laura Behjan.

"It's a nice peaceful place with landscaping," Behjan said.



After holding several workshops, Clark compiled everyone's ideas and created the \$150,000 memorial, which features large lava columns, one for each victim, surrounded by beautiful native landscaping and individual hexagon-shaped markers engraved with the names of those who lost their lives.



Tervalon said that in addition to city officials, attendees at the memorial one-year anniversary service included an unidentified female survivor who sustained extensive burns in the crash, and several students who tearfully placed a class picture at the stone of a former teacher, who died in the crash.

Emotions were sometimes so overwhelming, at one point, Tervalon said she left the service with her husband, but returned the following day to place flowers on Remata's stone.

Referring to the charcoal colored stone which reads:
Donna L. Remata, She was a



Marvelous Person, "It got to [me] especially when I was by her name," Tervalon said.

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