



**Ben Head**

**Student, Class of 2004**

**Interviewed by Amelia Tavarresi  
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*Benjamin Head grew up in Westport, Connecticut, and graduated from Staples High School in 2004. He then attended Eckerd College in Saint Petersburg, Florida, and is now a beer specialist for Whole Foods. In the fall of 2001, Ben was a sophomore at Staples and was in health class when he heard the news.*

***How did you hear about the attacks?***

On September 11, 2001, I was sitting in health class when Laddie Lawrence, my health teacher, made an announcement. Laddie said that a plane just hit the twin towers, and I could see how visibly shaken Laddie was. I remember first thinking that it was a freak accident. When I found out there was another plane, I started to get worried. That day, my mom was on a plane, so I started to worry about her. I called her and she did not answer, which made me even more worried. However, when I called my dad, he told me that he had talked to her and that she was OK.

***How did Staples provide support to the students?***

There was great support at Staples. I remember that I went home and watched the news, just like everyone else. In the coming days, there were assemblies to deal with grief and the guidance counselors' doors were always open. While I myself did not know anyone directly who died that day, I knew there were many at Staples who lost family and friends. This tragedy was very close to home for everyone. This caused the Staples community to respond strongly.

***What were you thinking?***

It did not seem real. The day went from being a "tragic mistake," to America is "under attack." No one knew what was going on, so the only thing to do was watch the news. To me, it was unbelievable. There were many emotions, including shock, grief, and sadness.

***How was the rest of that school year affected?***

That school year felt different from other years. For me, it changed my outlook on life because there was this new danger present. However, at Staples, there was a feeling of collectiveness and it was very strong. People came together through communal and interfaith mornings, yet the feeling of fear and insecurity was always there the rest of the year.

***Before 9/11, what had you learned in school about terrorism and how did that change?***

I learned about terrorism abroad mainly. There was some focus on terrorism in America, however it was nothing large scale like 9/11. Afterwards, we students at Staples learned that terrorists were

trying to target the U.S. at home, and we learned much more about foiled plots. To me, it was a scary thought.

Also, I remember it being very hard to learn because of fear. I remember seeing the color-coded Bush terror threat level, and how it was often in orange or red because of the widespread fear.

*Would you like to make any additional comments?*

The counselors and the teachers were there for all of Staples. Everyone at Staples was affected and upset, so teachers and students reflected on it for weeks.