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Vigil honors war's victims

American Friends also have message: 'Not one more dollar, not one more death'

By Bill Lilley, Beacon Journal staff writer

Freezing drizzle on a dreary New Year's night wasn't about to keep Shelley Boyett inside her Kenmore home.

Boyett was simply a woman on a mission when she showed up at Monday night's American Friends Service Committee event.

The march and 24-hour vigil commemorate the more than 3,000 American soldiers and what organizers called the 650,000 Iraqi civilians killed in the U.S. war with Iraq.

"I want my boys home," said Boyett, who wore two sets of dog tags around her neck to honor Garfield High School graduates David Boyett and John Life as she helped hold the group's large primary banner.

"I didn't care what the weather was, I was coming out here to support my boys."

Boyett was joined by about 50 others at the event's starting point shortly after 7 p.m. in a vacant lot on Locust Street, across from the main gate to Glendale Cemetery.

"I don't mind the military," Boyett said, "but I do mind the Iraq thing."

Boyett's son, David, a U.S. Army man, was awarded a purple heart.

"He was blown up in Iraq," she said.

David Boyett survived the explosion and is currently serving stateside in Kansas.

"He loves it," she said. "He was supposed to be out this year in June, but he re-upped for four more years in the Army."

Boyett's "other son," John Life, is in the Marines. Life, who has a bedroom at the Boyett house, is currently serving in North Carolina.

Monday's opening ceremony consisted of several speeches and the reading of letters from dead soldiers. It lasted 35 minutes. A procession that included 40 people at the opening ceremony then walked the banner a half-mile in 12 minutes to the Federal Building at Main and West Market streets in downtown Akron.

The marching group was accompanied by a single drummer, Akron attorney Farhad Sethna.

“It didn't matter what the weather was, the people here are committed,” said Sethna, a native of India. “They are committed to ending the war, to ending the killing of soldiers and civilians.”

Sethna's son, Cyrus, and a friend, Tom Dooner, sophomores at Nordonia High School, also helped to carry the banner.

AFSC leaders had set up a small canopy in front of the Federal Building and had scheduled volunteers in two- to four-hour shifts at the 24-hour vigil.

“The main purpose of this event all over the country is to put a human face on the war,” said event organizer Greg Coleridge, an AFSC regional director. “We wanted to honor and commemorate all of the victims of this war. And we wanted to get out the message to everybody: not one more dollar, not one more death.”

There will be a candlelight vigil in Kent starting at 7 p.m. today in front of the gazebo at Main and Franklin streets to commemorate the victims of the war in Iraq. The Portage Community Peace Coalition is organizing the event.

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