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Local activists protest war

Residents mark third anniversary of U.S. mission in Iraq with gatherings in Akron, Kent, Cleveland

By Beth Rankin

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Not all anniversaries involve ice cream cake and photo albums.

Sunday marked the third anniversary of the United States' military mission in Iraq.

Local activists rang in the fourth year of war with marches, rallies and public performance art.

In downtown Akron, about 150 protesters marched from the Akron-Summit County Public Library to the Federal Building.

Participants -- including Gary Kucinich, a Democratic candidate for the 13th District of Congress -- waved signs, flew banners, chanted anti-war slogans and expressed themselves through the beating of drums, paint cans, buckets and cookware.

Kucinich, brother of U.S. Rep. Dennis Kucinich, a former Cleveland mayor and 2004 presidential hopeful, said his passionate anti-war status is personal. His 19-year-old son, Gary Jr., serves in Iraq as a member of the Marine Corps.

"We support our son and we support the troops, but we don't support our government's way of handling this war," he said.

Protesters waved signs and banners listing the U.S. military death count at 2,300, just shy of the Pentagon's official number of 2,313. The military budget was also a source of outcry as protesters denounced the United State's \$250 billion price tag for Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"It's very important to show the movement support against the war in Iraq," Kucinich said. "People throughout the district must know my position as well."

In Kent, a smaller group of about 75 protesters met at the gazebo on the corner of Franklin and Main streets and held a rally followed by a march through downtown. The gazebo is a common meeting place for activists and is the home of the Portage Community Peace Coalition's weekly Sunday night anti-war vigil.

In Cleveland, the Northeast Ohio Anti-War Coalition held a "Music, Art and Words" program that featured music, spoken-word performances and art by Cleveland high school students.

At each anniversary event, the message was the same.

"There must not be a fourth anniversary," said Joe Mosyjowski, a Randolph resident and member of the Northeast Ohio American Friends Service Committee, the group that organized the Akron rally.

Mosyjowski said that while this year's protest was smaller than last year's, the message was certainly louder.

"Multiply this (protest) in countless cities across the U.S. and it's a start," he said. "We need to end this war."

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