

Tribute to soldiers 2,000 candles line street in vigil to troops

by Maggie McKinley, Staff Reporter
news@buchtelite.com

The military death toll in Iraq hit 2,000 on Tuesday.

About 50 people gathered outside the federal building at Market and Main streets Wednesday night to commemorate the fallen soldiers.

Cars and pedestrians alike slowed down. Some even stopped.

Onlookers viewed signs which read "Tell Congress not one more death. Not one more dollar."

Looking past the anti-war signs, there was a much deeper message.

The sidewalk in front of the federal building was lined with 2,000 white tea-light candles, a candle for each soldier killed in the Iraq War.

The candles, as well as pictures of local soldiers, civilian shoes and anti-war signs, were all part of a vigil held to bring attention to Iraq War issues.

The demonstration was held to raise awareness and pressure Congress to stop funding the effort.

The American Friends Service Committee, which sponsored the event, seeks to carry out service, development, social justice and peace programs throughout the world.

The organization was founded by Quakers in 1917 to aid civilian war victims. The American Friends Service Committee supports the partnership of people of different races, religions and cultures.

Although there was a relatively small turnout, University of Akron freshman Maureen Farris was happy with the number that showed up.

"I think this is very meaningful," Farris said. "It's disgusting that we have to see this many people die from an unjust war."

Farris' views were shared by those in the crowd, some expressing their frustrations with war.

Vietnam War veteran Jack Colman said the Iraq War brings back memories of his service.

"It brings back bad memories for me," he said. "We know this is not going to end quickly, we need to start getting our troops out."

Colman said he feels the only reason America is still losing troops is because of politics. "Sen. Kerry said that if Iraq achieves democracy by the end of the year, we need to start pulling our troops out. Once they have a democracy established, it is illegal to have our troops there."

Whatever the reason supporters had for attending the gathering, they were happy to get the word out.

"It doesn't take mass amounts, just consistency," Farris said.

Akron's was one of about 400 vigils held Wednesday night in memory of military casualties in Iraq.

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University of Akron student Maureen Farris lights candles to remember the 2,000 soldiers who died.