

# Anti-war activism continues to escalate

by Suzan Erem

Support for the war in Iraq continues to wane locally and nationally, with the latest CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll showing that 54 percent of Americans believe sending troops into Iraq was a mistake.

In the Centre Region, anti-war sentiment grows with each soldier sent off to war, and each one who returns injured or dead. A visit by George W. Bush to State College earlier this summer drew hundreds of protesters. More recently, a large crowd turned out on short notice for a candlelight vigil to support Cindy Sheehan, the mother of a soldier who died in Iraq. Sheehan camped outside Bush's estate in Crawford, Texas to talk with the president.

"I don't know anybody over there, but I am just so against this war!" Beverly Gilbert of Bellefonte tearfully exclaimed at the beginning of the vigil. "I am tired of being called unpatriotic. I love this country!"

"This is the last place I ever expected to find myself," said Christine Varner, who served 10 years in the Marines. "But as this war goes on, I see how very wrong we are."

The crowd included many locally known anti-war activists, but also many new faces drawn to the demonstration by Democracy for America and the online organization Moveon.org.

"It was definitely my turn to stand up," said organizer Rosa Eberly. Eberly collected letters and petitions of encouragement to send to Sheehan.

"I love Cindy Sheehan," said Willie Menta, visiting from Michigan. "She's liter-

ally camped out on this person's lawn, and she can't get him to listen to her... I think that's just the whole country in a nutshell. They're just pretending we're not here." Menta heard about the event from Moveon, which reported that nationally more than 100,000 people attended 1,627 vigils on Aug. 17 in support of Sheehan.

Erika Dillon, whose ex-boyfriend was killed in the war, was drawn to the gathering after seeing it from the window of a local restaurant.

"Regardless of whether you're for or against the war, she was there for so long, and he won't even go out to speak to her?" she said of Sheehan and the president. "He can't just come out and say he's sorry for her loss?"

As darkness fell and the candles grew brighter, a group of international students approached.

"Yeah, I believe in that!" said one, pointing to a sign that read, "Peace Is Possible." The students, from Egypt, India and Turkey, stayed for the vigil and expressed relief that such actions were occurring around the country.

George W. Bush's approval ratings continue to hover around 45 percent, the lowest of any second-term president since 1957. Hundreds of people continue to travel to Crawford, and the group is planning a national bus tour to build support for bringing the troops home.

Two buses are going to Washington D.C. from State College Sept. 24 for a national peace demonstration sponsored by United for Peace and Justice. Contact Peter 237-1216, email pbs@psu.edu or Phil 231-0694,



Photos by Suzan Erem

Young families, veteran peace activists, international students and visitors from out of town helped make up the crowd of almost 100 who came out to support anti-war activist and mom Cindy Sheehan as she waited to speak with George Bush outside on his estate in Crawford, Texas in August.

email pbfurnas@earthlink.net for the Peace ad below. Buses leave from N. Atherton Center bus. For the Unitarian Universalist Weis lot and Unitarian Universalist parking lot 6 a.m. and return late the same day.

**End the War on Iraq!**  
**SEPT. 24-26**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
 united for peace & justice ★ www.unitedforpeace.org

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Buses leave from State College  
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Reservations are required.  
 \$40 per person.  
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Email Per10ki@aol.com  
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Vigil organizer Rosa Eberly addresses the crowd, which grew to almost 100 as night fell at the corner of Allen Street and College Avenue Aug. 17.