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Press Release

Plano mother and daughter to join anti-war hunger strike July 4th in front of the White House

Pair will join Cindy Sheehan, Dick Gregory, Willie Nelson and others in "Troops Home Fast"

Plano, TX, June 30, 2006: Staff Sergeant Aaron Dean White was killed in action three years ago when his helicopter went down south of Baghdad. His death put his aunt, Julie Cuniglio, and cousin, Brooke Beasley, on the road to peace activism.

"In August of 2005 my mom and I read about a woman, the mother of a fallen soldier, who was sitting in a ditch in Crawford, Texas, asking for a meeting with George Bush," said Ms. Beasley. "A few days later Bill O'Reilly said she was guilty of treason. My mom and I began packing our backpacks.

"Soon, we were on the way to Crawford, Texas."

It was the beginning of a long trail seeking an end to the Iraq War.

"In the past year," Ms. Cuniglio said. "I've traveled with Cindy Sheehan, Gold Star Families for Peace and CODEPINK (CODEPINK: Women for Peace) to 40 plus US cities, London, Ireland and Madrid, helping to shed a light on the madness that has become the war in Iraq."

The day of fasting

On July 3, 2006, the 43-year-old Plano database consultant and her 24-year-old daughter, a Collin County Community College music major, will join CODEPINK: Women for Peace, Global Exchange and Gold Star Families for Peace at the Gandhi memorial statue at Massachusetts and 21st NW at 3 p.m. From there, they will march to in front of the White House, where they will eat their last meal and hold a press conference. They will begin the fast at the same location July 4th at 10am.

Organizers say hundreds of celebrities, veterans, mothers, and concerned citizens across the country will participate in a rolling fast. Strikers include musicians Willie Nelson and Michael Franti, actors Danny Glover, Sean Penn and Susan Sarandon, Gold Star parents Cindy Sheehan and Fernando Suarez, legendary faster and comedian Dick Gregory, environmental activist Diane Wilson, Iraq war veteran Geoffrey Millard and Gulf War vet Michael McPherson, labor leader Dolores Huerta and CODEPINK cofounders Medea Benjamin, Jodie Evans and Gael Murphy.

The organizers plan to add their names to a long list fasts for political purposes, claiming a place among the Suffragettes, Mahatmas Gandhi and Cesar Chavez. In other parts of the country, people will engage in rolling fasts, passing the fast from person to person every 24 hours.

For Immediate Release

"People ask me how I can fast. I laugh," Ms. Cuniglio said. "As citizens of the richest country in the world, most of us have never known a day of hunger."

"One of the Gold Star mothers told me that her son, in his last letter home before he died, was asking for food; a large young man, the military was rationing him, in the desert heat, to one meal and two bottles of water a day," Ms. Cuniglio recalled. "As I fast, in the comfort of Washington, DC, with a Starbucks on every corner, I'll remember him and other soldiers who, even as we speak, are fighting to protect us and shamefully accept the truth: that we haven't protected them, that we haven't kept up our end of the bargain - to send them into harm's way only as a last resort."

Her daughter says the troops also will be on her mind during the fast.

"I met so many veterans as we crossed the country who have been damaged beyond measure by their time in Iraq," said Ms. Beasley. "I watched them stand up and tell their stories, go back to the bus, fall to pieces, then stand up and tell their stories again the next day, in the next city."

"I learned the real meaning of courage and they are my heroes."

"I will fast for them, for all of the families who spend every day in agony, wondering if their child or husband or wife will ever come home, for all of the Iraqis who have been killed and maimed in this illegal and senseless action and for all of the children, in both countries, who will go to bed hungry because of the bad choices of our leaders and the countless billions we're spending to fund this war of shame."

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