



## September Vote Is Personal for AAEI Field Director

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Americans Against Escalation in Iraq will launch its "Iraq Summer" tonight in Des Moines under the guidance of Director Sue Dinsdale. Iowa native Dinsdale understands it's an important step for the organization, but for her it's one more stop on a long journey.

"When you have a child in the military you expect them to be gone during family celebrations, birthdays and Christmas," Dinsdale said when asked about her son's two tours in Iraq. "I come from a military family, but it still killed us when he was there. It's such a reckless and senseless war."

Jesse Dinsdale, who received his separation papers from the military this past February, joined the Army National Guard while he was still in high school.

"This is what he wanted to do and we talked to him about it, but didn't consider it a bad thing," she said. "Because of his age, we had to sign papers to allow him to enlist."

Jesse completed basic training between his junior and senior years of high school. Once his time in the National Guard was complete, he switched to regular Army duty and served in Kosovo before being deployed to Kuwait in early 2003.

"I still remember the night we invaded Iraq," she said. "We were watching television because we just felt something was going to be happening soon. There was some Bob Barker special on and when it ended I felt relieved like maybe nothing was going to happen. I went upstairs and had the television on up there when programming was broken into with a special report."

Dinsdale says she picked up the phone and called her son who was stationed along the Iraq-Kuwait border. He and the soldiers with him had no idea the invasion had started.

From the beginning, she says, she didn't think this conflict was one our nation should be pursuing.

"At that time, I didn't really speak out against the war," she confided. "I was more concerned about him being deployed there, getting myself through the next day and keeping our family stable."

Once her son had completed his second tour of duty and was closing in on his last days in the military, she found her voice.

"I was watching television and saw a breaking report about Ana Nicole Smith's death," she said. "That was right before the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq and it really set me off. I looked at all of what was going on in Iraq and was very upset a celebrity's death was breaking news."

Active in the Story County peace community, Dinsdale helped plan their recent large peace rally and served as one of the speakers. She met Iowa Citizen Action Network Program Director Phillip Cryan and he asked her to speak at U.S. Rep. Tom Latham's office. From there she was contacted by AAEL organizers and eventually invited to sit down with U.S. Sen. Harry Reid and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi to offer her first-hand perspective.

While she's still shocked that she sat down with "two of the most powerful people in our nation," Dinsdale says another meeting is keeping her focused.

"I came home this past Thursday and there was a vehicle I didn't recognize in the driveway," she said. "I came in and Jesse introduced me to a soldier he had served with while in Iraq. That soldier came over and hugged me and thanked me for all I was doing. There are some people who believe that when we hold vigils and peace rallies here that we are demoralizing our troops there. I asked this soldier about that and was told the soldiers over there talk and ask each other if the people back home really care about them and wonder why we aren't working to bring them home."

The AAEL is a non-partisan national campaign currently focused on the upcoming national debates on troop escalation -- a project

dubbed "Iraq Summer." Iowa partners include ICAN, Iowans for Sensible Priorities and AFSCME.

"The organization nationally has targeted over 40 members of Congress in about 15 states," she said. "We want to let those legislators know the American people are watching them and will know if they vote with Pres. [George W.] Bush against the will of the people."

Roughly 100 organizers have been hired and sent to hot spots throughout the U.S. In Iowa, there are five organizers on the ground with U.S. Sen. Chuck Grassley and Rep. Tom Latham in their sights.

The state launch takes place tonight, June 30, at Old Fire Station No. 4 in Des Moines. The event will begin at 7:30 p.m. and will coincide with a birthday party for the facility. The group hopes this will be the start of a very hot summer for Grassley and Latham.

"When September comes -- the time when Congress is expected to decide whether or not Pres. Bush's escalation strategy has worked, and vote to change course -- Sen. Grassley and Rep. Latham will have little doubt about how Iowans view their continued votes to authorize the president's endless war," Dinsdale concluded.

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