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Cindy Sheehan to Receive Spine Award

HOUSTON: Cindy Sheehan, the mother of a US soldier killed in Iraq, will be presented with the Spine Award after she returns to Crawford from California, where she has been with her mother who suffered a stroke.

The Spine Award is a component of the Backbone Campaign (<http://backbonecampaign.org>) and is given to citizens who demonstrate the courage to fight for their principles and a future worthy of our children.

The Progressive Action Alliance (PAA) <http://progressiveactionalliance.org/> has chosen Cindy Sheehan for a Spine Award in recognition of her resolute pursuit of a meeting with President George Bush for him to explain to her the "noble cause" for which her son and over 1800 other soldiers have been slain in Iraq. Members of the PAA will present the award to her at Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas.

The inscription on the award reads: "Cindy Sheehan and All the Camp Casey Supporters . . . Thank you for standing up for those who volunteer to defend our country, and for insisting that we be told the truth about why the US chose to invade and occupy Iraq."

The Progressive Action Alliance, based in Houston and southeast Texas, promotes progressive candidates, ideas, and issues through action, advocacy, education, and networking. It includes Democrats, Greens, and Independents who concentrate on issues of common interest.

Bill Crosier, representative of PAA, said "We want to give Sheehan this award because of her courage and leadership in supporting the US troops who put their lives on the line for our country, while she endures ridicule, harassment, and threats from those who don't like her asking the tough questions concerning why we are in Iraq. She has forced us to remember that the public justification for invading Iraq was invalid, yet we're still there while US and Iraqi casualties continue to climb. We're not accomplishing our stated mission. "

Crosier added, "Reconstruction in Iraq is virtually non-existent. Worldwide resentment and hatred towards the US are on the rise. But we're told we should stay in Iraq. Cindy and other military families deserve a truthful answer to her question of why this is so, not vague and misleading statements about a noble cause, Al Qaeda, and international terrorism that have nothing to do with our invasion of Iraq."

Mrs. Sheehan started out as a lone grieving mother, accompanied only by her sister, on a trip to Dallas to address the Veterans for Peace Convention on Aug. 5. It was then she knew she had to go to Crawford to seek an audience with the President vacationing at his ranch, to ask him "what is the noble cause my son died for."

Cindy Sheehan and her sister, along with members of Veterans for Peace <http://www.veteransforpeace.org/>, Gold Star Families for Peace <http://www.gsfp.org>, and Military Families Speak Out <http://www.mfso.org/>, went to Crawford and established Camp Casey (named for her son). She had no way of knowing that she would evolve into a household name, a symbol of American grief over US actions in Iraq, and an icon for all

who choose peace over war--just as Rosa Parks never realized on that day in Alabama in 1955 when she refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white person that she would become the spark that ignited the Civil Rights Movement.

Previous Spine Award recipients include Medea Benjamin (co-founder of Code Pink and Global Exchange), Dahr Jamail (unembedded journalist), Bert Sacks (Voices in the Wilderness), and others working in different regions of the U.S.