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## Allies in a war against apathy

Sept. 30, 2007 12:00 AM

On the surface, Dan Frazier and Beth Pearson should have nothing in common. Nothing good, anyway. Nothing positive.

Frazier is the Flagstaff T-shirt maker whose best-selling item features the words "Bush Lied, They Died" set into a block of print listing the names of each member of the military killed in Iraq. The Arizona Legislature passed a special law trying to prevent Frazier from being able to sell the shirt, arguing that it was an insult to the dead and their families.

Pearson and her husband, Robert, are the parents of Sgt. Brice Pearson, a 32-year-old paratrooper from Avondale who was killed in Iraq on April 23. His name is on the T-shirt.

advertisement  
On the surface, Frazier and Pearson should have nothing in common. Nothing good, anyway. Nothing positive. But they do. They each desperately want us to look *beneath* the surface.

"What something like that (the T-shirt controversy) does is to put the war in the public view," Beth said. "When Brice was home in March on leave, his biggest comment was, 'Gee, you'd never know that we're at war.' People like to argue about the war. But it's all very clean. If you don't have a loved one over there fighting, it's as if it doesn't exist. You can ignore it."

Not if someone comes walking by in one of Frazier's in-your-face T-shirts.

Last week, U.S. District Judge Neil Wake issued a preliminary injunction that prevents the law aimed at Frazier from being implemented. Among other things, Wake wrote, "The nation's



E.J. MONTINI  
The Arizona Republic

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debt to its fallen soldiers may not be paid by giving their families a toll on free speech."

Beth Pearson agrees.

"We need to have this war in our faces, not someplace where we get to ignore it," she said.

She had written an e-mail to me earlier in the week, talking about public apathy toward the war and particularly toward the soldiers fighting it. She said Brice and his father were big Arizona State University football fans, adding, "Why not have a moment of silence at every game? Every public event? At the beginning of every school day? . . . If you want to express your political views, fine. But also send a care package to our troops. Tell them you are proud of them and that you appreciate their service. It's the least we can do."

The lack of connection that most of us have to the war, the apathy, is something that Beth notices every day. And it's one of the reasons that Frazier says that he makes his T-shirts.

"I don't think there is enough emphasis placed on the human cost of the war," Frazier told me. "We want people to stop and think about that."

A dollar from each of the T-shirts that he sells (the company is carryabig sticker.com.) is donated to organizations that assist soldiers.

"It's not about what you say; it's about what you do," Beth told me. "After his death, when we collected Brice's things, we found that he'd saved every single piece of mail sent to him while he was in Iraq. All the cards. Everything. He treasured them. They all do."

She suggests that people look to organizations like Packages from Home and anysoldier.com, or take a moment to contact the Army, Marines or National Guard and ask how to help.

The day that we spoke, I'd read an article on the newswires about the millions of viewers who were watching Ken Burns' World War II documentary *The War*.

"Everybody had a stake in that war," Beth said. "It's not that way now. But to me, that's even more proof that the soldiers who volunteer today are even more deserving of our support."

And to a family still in mourning, it's even more ironic, and more than a little sad, that a TV show called *The War* appears to have generated more interest than the war.

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