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Major Donohoo welcomed home

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BY MICHELLE SHAW | COMMUNITY PRESS STAFF WRITER

OWENSVILLE -- High school football season is still a few weeks away, but Owensville already had a homecoming celebration of sorts last weekend.

Friends and family of Major Bo Donohoo came together to celebrate his return from Iraq at the Clermont County Fairgrounds Aug. 6.

Donohoo is a Clermont Northeastern and Xavier University graduate who now lives in Georgia with his wife and four children.

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But, Sunday the major took time to indulge in cake as well as the company of his friends and family in Ohio, while inviting them to ask away about his experience overseas.

"Most of my experience over there was good," he said. "The Iraqis we met were very friendly. Most of the people we met just wanted to live in peace. Most of them just wanted to have electricity every day



ZOOM

MICHELLE SHAW/STAFF

Major Bo Donohoo hugs his wife, Sherry, after speaking with friends and family who gathered at the Clermont County Fairgrounds to welcome him home from Iraq Aug. 6.

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and not get blown up. Most of them don't hate Americans, they just need money."

Donohoo worked with both the haves and have nots while serving in Iraq. The major worked as an advisor to Iraqi commanders, helping them to organize the most efficient ways to run their armies.

"So (soldiers) are learning and getting better," he said. "They don't have to be as good as (the United States military). They just have to be good enough to be better than the insurgents."

Donohoo believes that in certain regions of Iraq the troops are ready to defend themselves, but he does not see a withdraw from Iraq anytime soon.

He thinks major issues will continue until the separate groups that form the Iraq army and Iraqi police can reach an understanding.

But, Donohoo believes it is most important that the Iraqi people start to see strength in their leaders.

"They really disliked Saddam and Saddam was bad, but they think he was a great leader because he was strong," he said.

And if the people are only as strong as their army, Donohoo said there is much left to be desired.

"There is a lack of patriotism there, and that will take years to form," he said. "Basically, they are there because they need money. So they put in a few weeks of work, get paid and never come back."

There are no contracts involved in signing up for the army in Iraq as well as 10 days leave each month. Twenty percent of the soldiers never return after their leave without any consequence.

Lack of money has led many Iraqis to stealing to make ends meet, which has led many U.S. troops to have a lack of trust for the Iraqi people.

"Just as they have their shortcomings, just as Americans do, they're very kind and forgiving people," Donohoo said.

His wife experienced a change in her perception as well based on the time her husband served.

"When he first went, I was like, don't trust anybody," Sherry said. "But, when it came down to it, they were calling him their brother and me, their sister."

Some went as far as to put together what they had to send presents to the Donohoo's four children at their home in Georgia.

"They are definitely loving and willing to take you in as family," she said.

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While the gifts sent home were greatly appreciated, it pales in comparison to the way Donohoo felt receiving gifts from home.

"All the support from Americans was overwhelming," he said. "It was very motivating and inspiring to get stuff from home."

He received everything from letters and cards to peanut butter and jelly, at his request, from students at St. Louis Elementary, where his mother, Phyllis Allen works.

"I guess you need to spend some time in a place like Iraq to appreciate what you have," he said.

And his mother hopes that just because Donohoo is back, that his family and friends will not stop showing their support for the troops who remain in his place.

"I wish that all of you who wrote would continue to write," she said. "You can write to any soldier. Please continue to write and send packages while we are on our special mission."

For more information on writing to troops in Iraq go to www.anysoldier.com.

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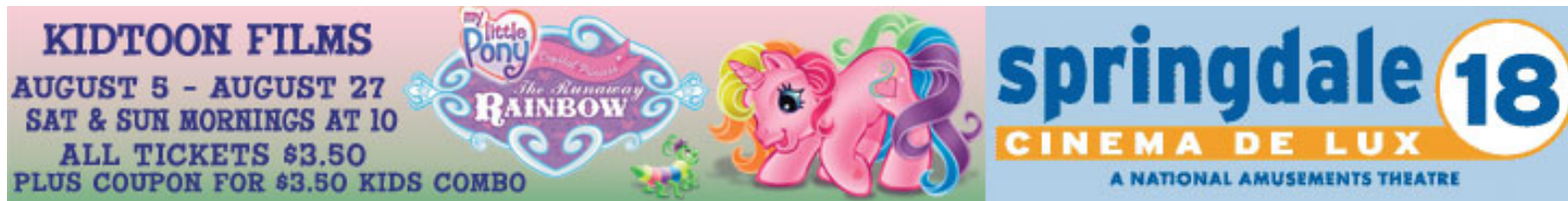
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