

Filmmakers make documentary of "Flat Daddies"



Gene and Becky Lourey, George and Judy Langhorst, Lynn Vongroven, Cathy Nummela, Nara Garber, Betsy Nagler, and Carla and Lyle Giersdorf.

Nara Garber and Betsy Nagler are documentary filmmakers from Brooklyn, New York, who are working on a film about "Flat Daddies" - life-size photographs of deployed service members designed to help families stay connected during deployments. Flat Daddies (and mommies, sons, and daughters) are usually cut out and mounted on cardboard. They are growing in popularity in all branches of the military, particularly among families with young children. In Minnesota, where at the State Fair "you can get everything on a stick", the St. Paul chapter of Blue Star Mothers decided to mount the cut-outs on sticks, giving rise to the Gopher State's take on Flat Daddies: "Heroes on a Stick".

The filmmakers first visited Moose Lake in September, after

John Ziton of Bayport Printing House, Inc. directed them to the local chapter of Blue Star Mothers, who had ordered several Heroes on a Stick for a July 4th parade. During their first visit, they interviewed Cathy Nummela, Carla Giersdorf, and Lynn Vongroven at Giersdorf's home, and outside of the *Arrowhead Leader* where the Heroes on a Stick are on permanent display. They also visited George and Judy Langhorst, whose son Moy was one of the three young men from Carlton County to have been killed in action in the spring of 2004.

Says Garber, "In the circles in which we move in New York, Betsy and I don't often encounter people in active service or families directly affected by combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. This is a large part of what

drew us to this subject matter. We've filmed in other parts of the country as well, but we were particularly struck by the fact that everyone we spoke to in Minnesota - from gas station attendants to motel desk clerks to random people we've met along the way - seemed to have a relative serving overseas. This puts a very different face on the war, and we hope the film will provide a voice for all the families we've met."

Garber and Nagler returned to the Moose Lake area in December to film with Becky and Gene Lourey, whose son Matt was killed in 2005 when the helicopter he was piloting was shot down north of Baghdad. They expect to continue filming through the spring of 2008, and hope to complete the film by early fall.