

May Day

CCMR hosts father of slain soldier.

by Aria Seligmann

He's become a quiet hero, a man who has turned his pain into a cry for truth. Fernando Suarez del Solar, the father of a U.S. soldier killed in Iraq, is on a nationwide tour to speak against the war in Iraq. He speaks at 8 pm May 1 at Cozmic Pizza.

On March 27, 2003, Fernando's son, Jesus, died while fighting in Iraq. The military told his family that Jesus died from gunshot wounds in battle, but they later discovered that Jesus stepped on a U.S. cluster bomb and bled to death in the remote Iraqi desert near Diwaniya. He left behind a wife and a 1-year-old son.

Since then, Fernando, 48, who immigrated from Tijuana with his wife and children in 1997, worked at a 7-11 store and delivered newspapers, has been traveling around the country with Military Families Speak Out (MFSO) and Global Exchange calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq.

Like his son, Jesus, many lower income and minority young men and women are being recruited into the military to wage its campaign. The military spends approximately \$11,000 per recruit convincing them to join. Of those minority recruits, who comprise approximately one third of the armed forces, fewer than 20 percent will become officers. Many of the students are high school and college age. Most of the students sign up for the prospect of college tuition. Yet, of the "\$50,000" often promised by recruiters for college, less than 6 percent of recruits get the full amount and only up to 50 percent get part.

In addition to tuition, the military promises technical training and in turn, high-wage jobs upon completion of duty. Yet those promises are seldom met. Only 12 percent of men and 8 percent of women report learning a skill that transferred to civilian life. In 2000, there were more than 421,000 unemployed vets. The military also promises a comprehensive benefits package, but in that same year, 72 percent of veterans believed their pension was unfair.

That was before the Iraq War. Now,

recruits may get no benefits if they come home in a body bag.

The Committee for Countering Military Recruitment (CCMR), a local organization that is an arm of both Eugene Peaceworks and CALC, is sponsoring Suarez's visit.

CCMR offers information to counter the false promises the military is making to students, including alternative ways to pay for college.

CALC's Carol Van Houten visits schools in Lane County at the same time military recruiters are there to offer such information. Like the military branches, she arrives with banner and brochures to hand out. In addition to information on college financing, Van Houten offers information on AmeriCorps and Job Corps, as well as how to talk to military recruiters, and information on the delayed entry program.

Van Houten says many people are unaware of the fact that between the time they sign the recruitment contract and before they go to boot camp, it's "very easy to get out of it," even without giving much of a reason. However, once a recruit has been to boot camp, "this is the only job you can't resign from," she says. Once you've sworn in, says Van Houten, "You're in military justice and it's very difficult to get out." She adds that's one of the "key things we want people to know and not everybody does."

Some recruiters will be relatively honest, she says, but some are not. For example, some will write into a contract that you might be stationed in Portland, when once you're in, you can be shipped anywhere.

Almost all young people say they sign up because they want to go to college, and some have some patriotic feelings, says Van Houten.

"If someone really has thought about it and really wants to make the military their career, we're not going to talk them out of it, but for those who think this is the only way they're going to get a life," Van Houten says CCMR can offer some alternative ideas.

"Once you're in, you're in. You are an item, you are a GI, general inventory. They

have to do what they have to do to accomplish their goals. It's not for the recruit's benefit," she adds.

In addition to Fernando's talk, CCMR is sponsoring a "Stop the Violence" poster-art contest "to help youth to develop a political critique of the violence inherent in a culture of war and the controversial means by which the military fills its ranks."

Students' work will be shown and prizes will be awarded. Dance music by Azuquita follows the talk. A performance by Joanie McGowan precedes the event. See accompanying story. **EW**



Still Saving the World Joanie McGowan returns to Eugene.

by Aria Seligmann

Stop playing the blame game, have a good laugh, and go out and save the world. That's the message Ashland playwright Joanie McGowan is bringing back to Eugene through her play, *It's Never Too Late To Save the World*, at 7 pm Saturday, May 1 and Sunday, May 2 at Cozmic Pizza.

Formerly titled *Rude Awakening*, McGowan's play opened for Molly Ivins at the McDonald Theatre last October. She has since added new material to the show, including an opening piece titled "Vote! It's Sexy!" and a new closing for the show that includes bizarre, yet practical, steps we all can take to save the world.

McGowan will also present the world premiere of her new stand-up comedy routine at 3 pm Sunday, May 2 at Tsunami Books. Using articles from the newspaper to inspire people to "start living like we've been talking about living since the summer of '69," she calls her routine "reminiscent of Mort Sahl channeling Joan of Arc."

Tickets are \$7 for *It's Never Too Late to Save the World*, advance ticket purchase is available at Tsunami Books. Proceeds from the Saturday performance will benefit the Kitty Piercy campaign, Sunday's performance will benefit the Bonny Bettman and Betty Taylor campaigns. The play is family friendly.

McGowan's performance at Tsunami Books is a fund-raiser for the Bettman campaign and for McGowan's national tour. It is free, but donations will be accepted. The Sunday show at Tsunami contains adult themes and language.



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