

## Arlington Midwest

The Huntington Woods Peace group had a grand vision. We wanted to bring Arlington Midwest to Detroit. Even better, it should be presented at Grand Circus Park, in the heart of the city. But how could a small community based group accomplish something so huge. Arlington Midwest is a temporary display of 4,000 + tombstones which represent the deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan; memorials to foreign soldiers and civilians; and memorials for each of the known soldiers who have committed suicide. This seemed a daunting task. Thankfully, the HW Peace group is part of a larger coalition of organizations, the Detroit Area Peace and Justice Network (DAPJN). We brought the idea to DAPJN and the network members embraced it and made it happen.



On September 20 the truck arrived just after noon from Toledo, Ohio. The Northwest Ohio Peace Coalition owns this display. They came armed with a plan. They had come the day before and studied the space. Grand Circus Park presented many challenges; it was not like setting up the markers in a large field. Grand Circus Park flanks two sides of Woodward Avenue and has many walk ways and smaller areas of grass.

The volunteers listened to those who brought the display and were more experienced. Volunteers came to set up. Some stayed for the duration; others came and went as time permitted. By 7:30 p.m. the display was completed. The

tombstones for the soldiers killed in Iraq were arranged by state. Names were displayed on each tombstone and arranged by date of death. The display remained until 8:00 a.m. the following Tuesday when tear down began.

Comerica Park and the Tigers last six home games of the season were very near by. Therefore, thousands and thousands of people were witness to the display as they walked through the park on their way to the ball game. Some walked through with blinders on; some asked what this was about; others engaged in conversation; others came specifically to see the display and meditate, reflect and mourn.

The memorials to the civilians remind us that those who have suffered most are the Iraqis. I walked around the display and pointed to my daughters (ages 9 and 14) that there were so many children just their ages who had been killed because of this war. Lancet, the magazine of the British Medical Assn. has done a statistical analysis which says that about 1.2 million Iraqis have died violently since March 19, 2003. The number of internal refugees has been estimated at 3 million, the number of refugees who have emigrated around 1 million, and the number who have died of water born diseases, cancer from depleted Uranium, and other non-violent causes undetermined. The population of Iraq was around 25 million on March 19, 2003. Mournful observers asked, "if this isn't a crime against humanity, what is?"

Members of the Huntington Woods Peace group were honored to be a part of such a significant event. We would like to thank the Detroit Area Peace and Justice Network and the tireless volunteers of its member groups for making a vision a reality.

Read the words on the sign below:

*Arlington Midwest –*

*In a manner similar to permanent war  
memorials is a place to  
mourn, reflect, contemplate, grieve, meditate,  
and to honor and acknowledge  
those who've lost their lives  
and to reflect upon the costs of war.*

*Arlington Midwest –*

*Also is intended to draw public attention to,  
and to open a discourse on the subject of  
both military and civilian deaths  
during the invasion and occupation of Iraq.*

