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Buddy Kocher, right, relaxes with his friend, Coral Stredny, at a party in his honor while he was home on leave from military training in Texas. The Dallas man will leave for Iraq in December.

JONATHAN J. JUKA PHOTOS/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Answering the call

Dallas man parties with family, will report to Iraq soon

By REBECCA BRIA
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Frank "Buddy" Kocher and Ryan May didn't like each other in high school. Kocher attended Dallas High School and May went to Lake-Lehman, causing a school rivalry between the two. They also developed hard feelings over a girl.

That all changed the day Kocher arrived at Fort Hood Military Reservation in Fort Hood, Texas and saw May. Kocher asked a mutual friend for May's phone number, called him and the two have been friends since.

"Anyone that's going to fight for their country, you're doing the same thing," May said. "You're not going to hold a grudge from something that happened four years ago. We both ended up in the same spot."

Kocher, 21, of Dallas, was home July 3 through July 9 from military training in Texas. His mother, Beth Harris, threw a party in his honor on July 5 in her Dallas backyard. About 150 of his high school classmates, their parents, and other family and friends attended the shindig that lasted into the wee hours of Sunday morning.

Kocher joined the United States Army 1st Cavalry



Buddy Kocher hugs his mother, Beth Harris, at a party she threw for him while he was home on leave from military training in Texas. Kocher will start a 12-month tour in Iraq this December.

Division in September 2007 after taking a few classes at Luzerne County Community College and working several jobs since graduating from Dallas in 2005. Joining the military was always something he wanted to do.

The military first took Kocher to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri for five months. He then spent a month in Georgia before going to Fort Hood. In September, he will be in California for 27 days for more training before departing in December for a 12-month tour in Iraq.

Kocher was out in the field more than on base while stationed in Texas. A typical day involved waking up at 5 a.m. and working until 9:30 or 10 p.m. He often slept in the field in his journey to fully

prepare for war.

May, 21, of Lehman, graduated from Lake-Lehman High School in 2005. He served in Iraq and returned to the United States in January. After spending some time at home, he returned to Texas. He was discharged from the Army and returned home for good about a month ago, hoping to land a state job.

Having been in Iraq, May talks to Kocher about what he can expect there.

"You give him what you saw, what you did, words of wisdom, what to bring," May said. "It's an ongoing process. You work seven days a week, 24 hours a day. You give advice but you don't give all the de-

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LIBRARY AUCTION ENDS TONIGHT



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

These chairs will be filled tonight as the 62nd Annual Back Mountain Memorial Library Auction comes to a close. The auction, held on the library grounds on Huntsville Road in Dallas, began Thursday night and will run from 6 p.m. to midnight today, the last day of the event. Still up for bid tonight will be a quilt made by children of the Back Mountain communities and a painting of auction action by local artist Sue Hand. Shuttle bus service is available from the site of the former Bonanza Steakhouse, next to Senator Lisa Baker's office on Route 309.

Spare change offers air time for soldiers

By REBECCA BRIA
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All of Susan Brandt's efforts to raise money for the Change for the Troops program were worth it when she met a soldier's wife.

The woman delivered a baby while her husband, Patrick Finney, was serving in the military away from home. Through the Change for the Troops program, which gives phone cards to soldiers to call home, Patrick Finney was able to hear his baby cry for the first time. Brandt met the young mother and her two children in April at a Change for the Troops fundraiser at Sam's Club in Wilkes-Barre Township.

"It just made me feel so good that I was a part of this," Brandt said.

Change for the Troops was started by Stephen Gardner, Right Worshipful



JONATHAN J. JUKA/FOR THE DALLAS POST

Susan Brandt wears a personalized Change for the Troops shirt. Brandt and her granddaughter, Kristen Cirilo, are raising money for the organization which collects spare change to aid military personnel to call home.

Grand Master of the Freemasons of Pennsylvania. Brandt heard about the program through her husband, Wil-

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CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/FOR THE DALLAS POST

The Rev. Dr. William Lewis, pastor of the Dallas Methodist Church, greets George Taylor, of Forty Fort, an old friend, at Lewis' retirement service. Rev. Earl Roberts will take over as pastor of the congregation.

DUMC congregation says good-bye to pastor

By REBECCA BRIA
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After 43 years as a United Methodist pastor, Reverend William D. Lewis retired on July 1. Lewis has served as the pastor of the Dallas United Methodist Church for the past 10 years.

Following a morning worship service, a surprise retirement program was held for Lewis at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, June 29, at the Dallas United Methodist Church. The church congregation, along with members of churches Lewis previously headed, attended in support.

"It was a joy to look out from the pulpit and see all those people there," Lewis said.

Lewis, 65, of Dallas, was ordained as a pastor in the United Methodist Church in 1965. But he didn't always know he wanted to be a pastor, having started college as a pre-med major.

"When I was younger, I spent a lot of time at the church camps as a counselor, then working full-time as a resource person," he said. "I associated with a lot of reverends. It sort of rubbed off. I wasn't going in that direction, but they said, 'You really ought to think about it.' And I did."

Lewis' career has taken him to many churches. He first served as assistant pastor at Elmpark United Methodist Church in Scranton. He later worked as a pastor at Narrowsburg United Methodist Church in New York, Camptown United Methodist Church, South Sterling United Methodist Church, Moscow United Methodist Church, Honesdale United Methodist Church, Forty Fort United Methodist Church and, finally, Dallas United Methodist Church.

Being a pastor took Lewis beyond Sunday worship and preparing sermons. He officiated at baptisms, weddings and funerals, interacted with families and was in charge of youth groups, counseling and administration of church property he served.

"There is no way you are really closer to people than to be their pastor," Lewis said. "You deal with their joys, you deal with their sorrows. It's tremendous satisfaction and a great responsibility to be the spiritual mentor to families and individuals."

The most challenging part of Lewis' occupation as a pastor was that he never ran out of work.

"A pastor deals with people who have great spiritual needs and mainly because their lives are challenged; people are hurting," he said. "I'd love to work myself out of a job but it's ongoing. The need is so great. The Bible puts it so great when it says 'the harvest is great but the laborers are few.'"

In addition to being a pastor, Lewis was also a chaplain in the United States Army for 22 years. He retired as a lieutenant colonel.

He and his wife, Sharon, have two children, Abram, 28, and Ethan, 25.

Former Senator Charles Lemmond, a member of the Dallas United Methodist Church, and Reverend James Wert, a personal friend who officiated at the

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