



Northern HORIZONS

WINTER 2005

THE MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF NORTHERN UNIVERSITY

John Truitt '85 BS
A front row seat to history.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

It all adds up...

At the beginning of the fall semester, the NMU Dean of Students Office helped nearly two dozen Northern students withdraw from the university because they had been called to active military duty.

If you ask around campus, you'll find that most NMU students—and probably all faculty members—know someone who is in the military and is currently serving in Iraq, has served in Iraq, or is scheduled to serve there.

NMU economics professor David Switzer did his part to support American troops serving overseas, and he invited students in his fall 2004 EC 201 Microeconomic Principles class to join him.

In the spirit of making a little go a long way, Switzer approached his students with the idea of pooling together their contributions into one, large donation to the Adopt-a-Platoon program (AAP), a non-profit organization managed by volunteer mothers to ensure that deployed U.S. service members in all branches of the military are not forgotten. Switzer asked students who were interested to contact him outside of class.

The response was more than he could have imagined. Not only did about one third of his 150-student class contribute, many more offered to take part in AAP's pen pal program. Word spread, and Switzer began getting calls from other students, asking if they, too, could participate. With donations ranging from five to 50 dollars, the students in Switzer's class donated just over 300 dollars. Switzer matched their collective contribution and used the money to purchase items for a care package that was then shipped off to a platoon stationed in Iraq.

The Adopt-a-Platoon program doesn't give contributors specifics about their platoon, but Switzer said the soldiers that he and his students had adopted were finishing up a one-year tour in Korea and were scheduled to return home when they found out they were being re-deployed to Iraq. AAP seems to select those troops who could use an added level of moral support.

Switzer said that as an undergraduate and graduate student, he had always wanted to contribute to a cause or charitable organization, but never thought he had the means. He said that if one of his teachers had ever asked him to donate five or ten dollars, he would have done it. Those who participated in Switzer's endeavor also seem glad to have been asked.

Sarah Gondek, an NMU sophomore from Painesdale, Mich., mirrors the sentiments of many of the students who helped with the project.

"When David told our class about supporting the troops that are overseas, I immediately wanted to be a part of it," she said. "I can't imagine what they are going through right now. They had to give up so much of their life in order to fight for us. I just want to show them that we care and offer any kind of support or help that I can. It might not be much, but if I can make one soldier happy by donating money or writing a letter, I am happy to do so. It's the least we can do."

—KW

CORRECTIONS: In the fall 2004 issue of *Horizons*, we printed the wrong photograph with the Northern Perspective column, "Leading by Example," by Greg Rathje (pg. 32). We regret the error and have corrected it in our on-line edition, which can be found at www.nmu.edu/horizons.

Also in the fall issue, we mistakenly reported that Lynn Emerick was the executive director of the Retired Senior and Volunteer Program in the article "Turning a Passion into a Profession" (pg. 26). Kathy Herralta of Negaunee is the director of that program.



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When the United States went to war in Iraq, CBS News photographer **John Truitt '85 BS** volunteered for the assignment. Even though he felt the hostile environment training he was provided didn't adequately prepare him for what he experienced, he said he'd gladly do it all over again. Truitt shares some of the images he captured in Iraq along with his commentary on the war, his experiences, his career, and the role that NMU played in his success.

12 Courage under fire: Expanding women's rights in Iraq

As a foreign services specialist with the U.S. State Department, **Kristi Gruizenga '99 BS** was assigned to take on humanitarian and democracy projects related to women's issues. For months she worked side by side many Iraqi women who inspired her with their bravery, but Gruizenga didn't realize the impact she had on their lives until she almost lost her own.

14 Bombs to building blocks: Laying the foundation for a new generation

Major Paul Phillips was deployed to Iraq shortly after he was hired as a professor in the NMU Military Science Department. Charged with overseeing the renovation of schools, Phillips and his battalion quickly discovered that the damages weren't just cosmetic or structural. These schools and the school system had suffered from years of neglect.

ON THE COVER AND ON THIS PAGE

John Truitt stands in front of a tank in Baghdad. On this page, Truitt stands at the Jordan/Iraq border in front of one of many bronze statues of Saddam Hussein on a galloping horse. Photographs courtesy of CBS News.