

DOCUMENTARY DETAILS COUNTY NATIVE'S LIFE AND DEATH

SEE THE DOCUMENTARY

Keith Famie's "One Soldier's Story" is on a seven-city tour throughout Michigan.

The remaining schedule of showings:

■ 7 p.m. Monday at Emagine Theatre, Rochester Hills

■ Sept. 8 in Lansing, location to be determined. See www.mikiesminutes.com for updates.

■ 7 p.m. Sept. 13 at Uptown Theatre, Birmingham

The final leg of the tour will be a special "Coming Home" premiere in Monroe at 7 p.m. Sept. 26 in the Meyer Theater at Monroe County Community College, 1555 S. Raisinville Rd.

The cost is \$20 at each premiere with proceeds benefiting Mikie's Minutes. Friendly Ford and Merkle Funeral Home, sponsors of the local premiere, are selling tickets.

The film also will be shown at 2:30 p.m. Sept. 11 on WTVS-TV, Detroit Public Television. Locally, the station is located on channel 56.

Sponsors still are being sought for the Monroe premiere. To become a sponsor, call Keith Famie at (248) 869-0096.

MIKIE'S MINUTES

The nonprofit organization Mikie's Minutes was established in honor of Sgt. Michael Ingram Jr.

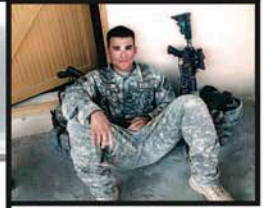
Privately funded and run solely on contributions, Mikie's Minutes provides calling cards to soldiers.

The calling cards connect troops serving overseas with their families and friends with free pre-paid calling cards.

Since forming the fund a year ago, more than 19,000 calling cards have been delivered to troops. Army Special Forces is helping with the distribution of the cards across Afghanistan.

For more information, visit www.mikiesminutes.com. A trailer for the documentary also can be found on the site.

For those wishing to make a donation to Mikie's Minutes, call (248) 869-0096. Checks can be written to Mikie's Minutes Fund, 28345 Beck Rd., Suite 404, Wixom 48393.



■ A chance encounter led to a film about **Sgt. Michael Ingram Jr.** and his Newport family. It will be shown Sept. 26 in Monroe.

'One Soldier's Story'

BY MICHELLE SWARTZ

mswartz@monroenews.com

WARREN — Army Sgt. Michael Ingram Jr. was a born leader, his platoon's staff sergeant in Afghanistan says.

"He motivated others to follow his path," Staff Sgt. Israel Arroyo said in a documentary about Sgt. Ingram's life.

If his path was to inspire others, then consider it mission accomplished for Sgt. Ingram.

On April 17, 2010, while on patrol in Kandahar, Afghanistan, Sgt. Ingram was killed when an improvised explosive device detonated near him. He was 23.

When the fallen soldier returned home at Selfridge Air National Guard Base, filmmaker Keith Famie of Novi was filming the Patriot Guard Riders as part of a documentary about Vietnam veterans. A chance encounter was the start of the documentary "One Soldier's Story."

"The film happened on accident. I just happened to be at Selfridge when the Ingram family was there waiting for Mikie to come home," said Mr. Famie, executive producer of Visional Entertainment Productions in Wixom. "A few days later, I sat down with the Ingram family. We talked and shared stories for hours. We agreed that a film like this would have a positive impact."



— Evening News photo by MICHELLE SWARTZ

An audience gathers in Warren to watch a screening of "One Soldier's Story," about Sgt. Michael Ingram Jr. and the impact his death in Afghanistan had on his family, this community and his fellow soldiers.

He received permission from Sgt. Ingram's parents, Mike and Julie Ingram Sr. of Newport and Trish and Ron Kitts of Monroe, for a project that he hopes helps viewers understand how a soldier's sacrifice impacts a family.

"It's a roller coaster of emotions," said Mr. Famie, director and producer of the film and a nine-time Michigan Emmy Award winner. "It's

about the brotherhood of soldiers and what a family goes through after a loved one dies in war. For them, it's not just a blip on the news. The film offers a better understanding about the lives of the family and the ups and downs of war. It's something rarely seen."

The emotional documentary is on a seven-city tour throughout Michigan. The final showing will be a special "Coming Home" premiere in Monroe at 7 p.m. Sept. 26 in the Meyer Theater at Monroe County Community College, 1555 S. Raisinville Rd.

On Sunday, the film was shown at the Andiamo Showroom in Warren. Beforehand, members of Chapter 154, Vietnam Veterans of America, performed the posting of the colors. Karen Newman, singer of the Detroit Red Wings, performed "God Bless America." Guest speaker was Retired Brigadier Gen. John Kuhlavi, a Vietnam veteran Huey pilot. Singer and songwriter Steven Pichan also performed.

After a brief introduction by Mr. Famie, the 75-minute film was shown with the parents and sister of Sgt. Ingram in the audience as well as other family members.

The documentary offers a look at a family facing the loss of a child at the hands of war. It also offers a glimpse into the life of Sgt. Ingram, best known to his family and friends as "Mikie." On screen, his friends, colleagues

See **FILM**, Page 9A

From Page 1A

Film (cont.)

and family are interviewed about Sgt. Ingram's journey through life.

From his Newport home, his father talks about his son's decision to become a soldier, his childhood, his hobbies and life after his son's death. The film shows several still pictures and short video clips of Sgt. Ingram while family and friends talk about the fallen soldier.

Fellow soldiers also talk about Sgt. Ingram and his impact in Afghanistan. A reporter from Rolling Stone, who reported on the duties of platoons, also speaks about the realities of war and what Sgt. Ingram and his colleagues were up against.

Rarely seen footage of an actual gunfight is shown. The short clip gives audiences a front-row seat to an intense battle between soldiers and the enemy. Fighting from a trench, troops in Sgt. Ingram's platoon return gunfire as they find themselves in an attack. Sgt. Ingram recorded the battle from a camera he secured to his helmet.

The documentary also follows the days leading up to his death on April 17, 2010, told by his father who spoke about how unusual it was for his son to call three times in a short period of time. His fellow soldiers, on patrol with him that day, give details of that day's mission. As they walked along their patrol,

they came up to a compound when the IED went off only 300 yards from the platoon's safe zone.

"The last thing he told me was 'Just let me go. Just let me go,'" Staff Sgt. Arroyo recalled in the film as he performed first aid after the bomb went off. "I felt like I lost a brother. It was one of the hardest days of my life ... our little brother isn't here anymore."

Reliving the day of his son's death obviously isn't easy for Mr. Ingram to watch. During the viewing Sunday, Mr. Ingram briefly stepped out of the room.

"Each time I see it, I have to step out and gather myself," he said that day. "It's hard to watch sometimes, but we're doing this for the men and women fighting for us. That's the bottom line. It makes me feel good that we can carry Mikie's name on through the film."

The film also tells of the weeks before his death, when Sgt. Ingram was given the chance to go home because of an injury that required surgery. But he refused to leave. Mr. Ingram described one of his last phone conversations with his son about the injury and his decision to stay.

"He wanted to stay," he recalls in the film. "He said 'I'm not leaving my boys.'"

The documentary also shows footage of Sgt. Ingram's funeral, the family's reaction to a headstone ar-

iving nearly a year after his death and interviews of family and friends talking about his passion for music, including Elvis Presley. His father takes viewers on a tour of his son's shrine of Elvis, an impressive collection of albums and other memorabilia in his room. It also shows clips of a memorial service held by his platoon members in Afghanistan days after his death.

Hometown friends also weigh in on their reactions to his death, with such comments as "... It sucked the breath out of me. ..." The City of Monroe Mayor Robert Clark talks about how the Monroe community stepped up to honor the brave soldier's desire to serve his country.

It also delves into the second purpose of the documentary, which is to support the nonprofit organization established by the Ingram family called Mikie's Minutes. It provides calling cards to soldiers overseas. It was inspired by Sgt. Ingram's frustration that he had to pay to call home while serving in Afghanistan. So far, more than 19,000 calling cards have been delivered to troops. The documentary shows the impact the foundation has had on troops.

Even though the documentary is just 75 minutes, it leaves a lasting impression on those who see it. The images and videos of Sgt. Ingram goofing around with friends and pictures of him

in his fatigues while in Afghanistan leave you wanting more of his infectious grin.

"I wish I had the chance to know him. I feel cheated," Mrs. Newman said after watching the film. "A big part of who he was lives on through his dad. It's obvious they had a special bond."

Others who watched the film were just as impressed with the film.

"People can learn a lot from this. It hits right here," said Vietnam veteran John Yates of Mount Clemens, putting his hand over his heart. "It shows the real deal of war. It shows exactly why we have our freedom today."

All proceeds from each premiere benefit Mikie's Minutes. Knowing the film is helping other troops makes it a little easier for Mrs. Kitts.

"It's tough for us to watch, but we try to stay strong because we know he's right here with us," she said before the showing.

Mrs. Ingram, Sgt. Ingram's stepmother, said their family always receives a positive reaction from viewers after the film is shown. She is hoping for a big turnout at the Monroe premiere.

"The theater seats 500, and we're hoping it sells out," she said about the Meyer Theater at MCCC. "I think we'll get a good response. Mikie loved Monroe and Monroe loved Mikie."