

Guide to Setting up a Vigil for Cindy Sheehan

Our vigils will be simple and dignified. We'll gather at 7:30 P.M. on Wednesday, August 17, and stand in a circle, silently, for 45 minutes or so, holding candles -- safely away from anything that could catch fire.

Together, we'll acknowledge the sacrifices made by Cindy Sheehan, her son, Casey and the more than 1,800 brave American men and women who have given their lives in Iraq—and their moms and families. It is a time to stand with her and silently honor our fallen soldiers. We will reflect on the situation in Iraq where 138,000 American troops are now serving, and the events and decisions that led us to war there.

This is not a rally. Although we may be moved emotionally by our shared reflection and acknowledgement, this is not the place for speeches or announcements. This is simply a moment to stand with Cindy Sheehan and military families everywhere and show our support for the brave work she is doing.

The ground rules are important. We ask that you only attend the event if you agree to abide by them.

This event will be most powerful if it takes place on the same evening all over the country. In the interest of simplicity, our sign-up tool does not have a way to schedule a different time or date.

1. Pick a location and register.

The very first step in coordinating a vigil is to pick a location. Depending on the place you choose, it's possible you may need a permit. Call your local police department or town hall to find out. Please DO respect the local laws and regulations. In some rural and suburban areas in the country, a local mall, supermarket or other big store is often the most desirable place to reach a lot of people. However, public gatherings are usually not permitted at those privately-owned places. If you want to hold your vigil at such a location, make sure to call the management in advance and get permission.

As soon as you have picked a suitable location, register your event with us at this link:
<http://political.moveon.org/event/cindyvigils/>

This will help us keep track of how many vigils are being organized and it will also help your neighbors find your event in the event that they cannot hold their own. We'll invite other MoveOn members to your vigil if you register it.

2. Invite Others to the Vigil for Cindy Sheehan

Use the vigil host pages to invite friends, family, colleagues and others:
<http://political.moveon.org/event/cindyvigils/hosts>

You can also track who has RSVP'ed.

3. Print out the placards and bring those and pictures of your children to the vigil

We've created some downloadable placards that you can print. These signs will indicate to people passing by what this vigil is all about. Pick the one that most suits why you feel moved to join this vigil and hold the sign during the vigil.

They will be ready by Sunday, August 14, 2005 and available here:

<http://political.moveon.org/cindyvigils/materials.htm>

We're also asking that you bring pictures of children. Cindy continues to vigil for her son Casey. Regardless of whether or not you have a child serving in the military, her actions reminds us all of the deep love we have for our children. Since most of the vigils will likely be silent, the placards and pictures can be used in place of speeches and words. The images of members holding placards at past vigils have been incredibly moving and are why we continue to use them. We added the pictures because this is really about all of our children – sometimes images are more powerful than words. They will also help others looking on to see you and join your vigil. As the event coordinator, you should also print out half a dozen extras, in case some people don't bring their own.

4. Invite the press

We want to make sure that the press continues to pay attention to Cindy's story. If you have time, please send an advisory about your vigil around to your local media. We will make a customizable one available to you and all you will have to do is fill in your local information.

If you don't have time to contact the media about your event, please be prepared to talk to reporters if they show up at your event. If a reporter does come to your vigil, it is important to deliver a clear and consistent message. When talking to reporters, it is OK to keep repeating the same message over and over. It may feel strange to do that, but the reporters are used to it. They can only print (or show on TV) what you say. So only say what you want them to print. We understand that talking to the press can be somewhat intimidating – but don't let it be! Know what you want to say and practice it before hand and we've included a few talking points that might be helpful.

The talking points and customizable press release are available here:

<http://political.moveon.org/cindyvigils/materials.htm>

You can find the phone numbers and other contact information for some of your local media here:

<http://www.moveon.org/r?r=811>

If you are short on time, here is a quick way to prioritize who and where to call:

Outlet	Info You Need	Why You Want to Include Them
The Associated Press (AP)	The general phone number and e-mail for the local office in your state.	They are a syndicate, meaning other outlets often pick up their stories. They also keep a "daybook" or list of events in the area that other media outlets use when deciding what to cover. You definitely want them to know about your event and post it in their daybook!
Your Local TV Station that covers local news daily.	The phone, e-mail, and fax number of the newsroom or assignment editor.	Since they are local, they are going to be interested in what is going on in the area. Most people get their news from tv.

Your Local Daily Newspaper(s)	The general phone number and e-mail for the newsroom. You will also want to find the number of the news editor at the metro/city desk if possible, since that editor will decide whether to cover your event	Since they are local, they are going to be interested in what is going on in the area.
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5. Bring some extra candles and a way to light them.

We'll be asking people to bring their own candles, but as a coordinator you should always have some extra on hand just in case. Hardware stores often sell inexpensive "Plumber's Candles" that will work well.

6. Bring a digital camera and take lots of pictures.

This event will only impact politicians and the press if we can show them what happened. Send your best photos to vigilphotos@moveon.org. Put a title for the photo (or photos) in the subject line, and a description that includes the location of your vigil (place, city, state) in the body of the email.

If you don't have a camera, consider emailing those who have signed up for your vigil and ask them to bring one – you can email them from your event page, under "Host Tools:" <http://political.moveon.org/event/cindyvigils/hosts>

7. Be gracious and courteous and make sure the ground rules are followed.

These events are meant to show support for Cindy Sheehan and the incredible sacrifice that her son Casey and more than 1800 other brave American men and women have made. An important part of your role as a coordinator is to help ensure that the vigil remains quiet, dignified, respectful, and safe. This may include showing leadership in the unlikely event of a conflict. Of course, you can also ask for help from others in your group if you need it.

Arrive a little early. When you get there, start gathering everyone in a circle and start distributing candles and links to people who need them. Let people know that we'll be starting at 7:30 PM and that we'll stand together in a circle, with our signs and candles, in solidarity with Cindy Sheehan. If you have music or something planned for your event that's great – but make sure people know that this is not a place for speeches or policy discussions, it's a vigil to show support. There are some helpful tips on talking to reporters in step 4 of this guide.

After your event is over, see if anyone can help you clean up. Make sure you take your candles, placards and other materials with you when you leave.

8. Fill out a quick post-vigil survey

The surveys are really important – they help us understand what works and what doesn't. We want to make our future events better and easier for you. This is the best way to let us know how to do that. The survey link will be available by the time your event is over.