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The Lima News



Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2008

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KELLI CARDINAL • The Lima News

Al Forte, of Brooklyn, N.Y., walks down Lincoln Highway on Monday for his "Pray for Peace" campaign. Forte is walking from Yankee Stadium in New York to Wrigley Field in Chicago, handing out small cards with a picture of soldiers praying together.

## Walking a piece for peace

### Crusader treks through Lima on interstate journey

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DELPHOS — Moses had his burning bush, Saul his great light, but for Al Forte, catharsis came in the form of an overzealous printer.

The Brooklyn-born Forte has spent the past two months walking across the Midwest and spreading the simple message, Pray for Peace. But years before he took his first step, Forte's trek had already begun.

"I can tell you it goes back to 9/11. My kid's mother worked at the World

Trade Center. She was late to work that day and wasn't there, but we didn't know that. She didn't get home until 10, 11 o'clock and I just remember my son and her embracing, just clinging together. That's where it started," Forte said.

It was a couple of years later, while writing a speech for the Toastmaster's group, that the idea of praying for peace came to him. He printed off some small business cards with the image of a group of soldiers gathered in prayer and the words "They pray for peace, will you" on the front. He handed out the cards and figured

he was done.

Then he discovered he had some cards left over, so he handed those out too. Awhile later, he was working with a printer on another project and asked if he'd print out a couple of sheets as a favor. The printer liked the cards so much he made him 1,000 of them. And with that, Forte's path was set.

"I was hoping for maybe 100 and he gave me 1,000. Then it struck me, I had to give all these out," Forte said. "It was more than just getting the cards free, it was like a confirmation for me, someone else figured

it mattered."

He'd run out of friends and acquaintances to hand the card to, so he started giving them out in public. He gave them away at New York Yankees games and airports, even public streets. Over time, the idea began to grow.

One day, he was sitting in church and, out of nowhere the image flashed in his head of a Muslim mother and father standing over the body of a dead child. The picture wouldn't go away.

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