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Wounded Antioch Marine will get hero's welcome May 9

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Special to The News-Sun

Last Modified: May 5, 2011 02:24AM

Antioch's hometown hero, Marine Cpl. John Peck, returns home this week and will attend a blood drive in his honor at the Antioch VFW on May 9.

Area residents are urged to welcome him home by lining up along the route to the blood drive, starting at the intersection of routes 83 and 173 at 10:45 a.m. that will take him through downtown Antioch to North Avenue and west on North Avenue to the VFW at 75 North Ave.

"He will be escorted by the police and fire departments along with the Patriot Guard," said Village Trustee Dennis Crosby. "A strong show of support would mean a lot to him."

Crosby has been in close touch with the family of the injured Marine for almost a year, since a fund at State Bank of the Lakes was established for his benefit. Crosby said the fund now totals \$95,000.

After serving one term in Iraq, the then 24-year-old Antioch High School graduate was deployed to Afghanistan in April of last year and less than two months later, on May 24, he stepped on an improvised explosive device. He lost both of his legs and both of his arms.

During 27 surgeries, Peck received 41 pints of red blood cells, 35 units of plasma and five units of platelets. His mother, Lisa Krutyholowa, works for LifeSource and arranged for the replenishment blood drive in his honor and to benefit all wounded warriors, she said.

She and her husband, Zenio Krutyholowa, her son's stepdad, are driving from Washington, D.C., to Antioch this week in a van donated by the Semper Fi Fund, an organization that supports wounded Marines.

While he is home, Peck will visit with friends and relatives, and attend a concert by actor Gary Sinese's Lt. Dan Band at Joe's Bar in Chicago after a dinner courtesy of Semper Fi on May 6.

Lisa said she is encouraged by her son's progress over the past 11 months.

He was in a medically induced coma for two and a half months, underwent multiple surgeries and recovered from a life-threatening infection. He has made amazing progress and for the most part has a positive attitude, she said.

"I have no doubt he will recover and will succeed in life. It may not be as easy for him as for others, but he is making great progress."

"Last night, he sat up on his own for the first time. He is still anticipating a hand and forearm transplant, but his nerves need further repair and he needs to build more strength in his upper arms," said Lisa. "I believe he can overcome all obstacles. Together we can get through anything."

He is continuing his recovery at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., where he daily undergoes several hours of physical therapy, including lifting weights, stretching, standing up, and concentrating on building strength in what is left of his arms and legs.

He continues to be optimistic about his future. When he was interviewed earlier this year about his injuries and recovery, he said, "I can't understand why I am positive when something so negative happened to me."

The hardest part of dealing with his loss of limbs has been his dependency on others. His mother confirmed that she raised him to be independent and to make the decision to either go to college or enlist in the military.

"We supported his decision to enlist, and after he was injured and returned home from Iraq I was very proud of him, and was more proud when he re-enlisted and went to Afghanistan."

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