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## Activist shares firsthand experiences of Iraq

by Lois Vidaver  
Staff writer

Eileen Padberg went to Iraq for six months and stayed 22.

"I ended up staying, because there was so much to do," she said. At the end of that time, she was glad to be able to return home to her family and her life, but remains grateful for the experience.

She shares her story with Chautauquans at 3 p.m. today in the Hall of Philosophy as part of the Contemporary Issues Forum.

"Iraq is one of the most important issues of our day," Padberg said. "Everyone should have the opportunity to learn firsthand from someone who was there for 22 months about what we are doing, what we are not doing, what my life was like, what Iraqis' lives were like."

As a community activist and consultant to an international organization, Padberg ran a groundbreaking women's development program designed to allow Iraqi women who worked for the Iraqi government to advance in their careers. It included topics such as leadership, management, budget and finance.

She provided more than 64,000 career development training hours to more than 1,500 Iraqi women and created a small business development program, resulting in a database of more than 300 Iraqi women-owned businesses. These entrepre-



Padberg

neurs were winning contracts and building a future for themselves, she said.

One of the joys of Padberg's experience was how warmly she was welcomed. "People are very caring. I learned how they want their lives to be different," she said.

Frustration came when she learned how inefficiently the U.S. government operates and "how we failed the women of Iraq. We never followed up to make sure people were doing this or we were doing that."

There is so much more work to do, she said. "Mine was just a pebble in an

ocean."

Padberg has managed public affairs and political campaigns for more than 25 years from her Orange County Office. She also provides strategic planning and corporate communications for some of the nation's top corporations and organizations, including several of Orange County's most prestigious businesses and industries. Clients have included a 6,000-member employee association, three law enforcement associations and a large school district that included nine high schools, several non-profit organizations and several local developers.

Padberg is a former officer of the American and International Association of Political Consultants. She has served as a political consultant and strategist to elected officials at all levels of government, including managing the 1986 campaign of Clint Eastwood for mayor of Carmel and serving as regional political director of the 1988 presidential campaign for George Bush for California, Hawaii and Nevada, as well as two statewide ballot campaigns, according to a news release.

A resident of Laguna Niguel, Calif., Padberg came to Chautauque Institution about 10 years ago and, while here, will visit with longtime friend Pat Goldman. Sponsored by the Chautauque Women's Club, a question and answer period will follow the lecture.