

Local band cheers up U.S. troops

BY ERIKA COTTON
Examiner Staff Writer

A group of Washington-area musicians put their personal lives on hold and took leaves of absence from their jobs to go overseas and cheer up U.S. troops.

Jenny Boyle, a 26-year-old Springfield resident, and her band returned Thursday from a 21-day tour that was part of the Department of Defense's Armed Forces Entertainment program. The Jenny Boyle band played popular rock and country songs for troops in Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti, Afghanistan, Qatar and Bahrain.

Boyle said she's glad to be home, but she wishes they'd had more time with the soldiers. "This is the first tour I really felt like they needed the entertainment. These places were a lot more remote than the other places we've been to," she said.

The five-member band — composed of Boyle, who is the lead singer; drummer Mike Kuhl, 28, of Baltimore; bass guitarist Jeff Reed, 27, of Baltimore; guitarist Jesse Daumit, 30, of the District; guitarist/saxophonist Russell Kirk, 25, of Baltimore; and tour manager Gabe Gawen, 26, of Fairfax City — embarked on the musical journey last March.

Boyle said she applied for a tour with AFE shortly after the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. She didn't hear back right away, but in March



Brig Cabel/Examiner

The Jenny Boyle band returns from their tour. Left to right: Mike Kuhl, Russell Kirk, Jenny Boyle, Bobby McIntyre, Jesse Daumit and Jeff Reed clear customs at Dulles International Airport.

ROCKING OVERSEAS

- AFE sends about 130 celebrity and non-celebrity groups overseas each year.
- The five-member Jenny Boyle Band, based in the Washington area, completed its fourth tour Thursday.
- To learn more about the band, visit www.jennyboyle.net.

2004, the band headed to Guam for its first tour.

Capt. Jesse Davidson, AFE Southwest Asia circuit manager,

said that "from listening to her music, we were pretty impressed with what she could do."

"The purpose is to bring a little bit of America to the troops that they can sing along to and remind them of home," Boyle said.

And if her Web site is any indication, the soldiers seem appreciative.

"You'll never know how much it meant to have you visit and bring a little joy to a bunch of guys stuck a long way from home," wrote a soldier who signed his name "Steve."

ecotton@dcexaminer.com