

Lioness plays Pittsboro

By Bill Sommers

An intent audience of more than 70 watched the award-winning documentary *Lioness* on September 28 at the Pittsboro Senior Center. The evening showing was sponsored by the Friends of the Pittsboro Library.

This documentary film by Meg McLagan and Daria Sommers tells the story of the first group of female Army support soldiers – mechanics, clerks and engineers – to serve as *Lioness*. While posted to Iraq from 2003-2004, these young women ended up as combat soldiers in some of the bloodiest counterinsurgency battles of the Iraq War. They returned home as part of our country's first generation of female combat veterans. Yet they are rarely mentioned in news stories on the war. *Lioness*, however, makes public for the first time their hidden history.

The showing also underlined the Friends announcement that a copy of the documentary is now part of the Library's collection and is available for borrowing to card-carrying members of the Library.

Daria Sommers, a *Lioness* co-director and producer, came from New York to attend the showing, conducting a lively post-showing question and answer interchange with the audience. One feature of the documentary that



Sergeant Michelle Brookfield Wilmot on guard duty in Ramadi, Iraq, in April 2005.

PHOTO BY SPC. MIRANDA MATTINGLY

was emphasized by Ms. Sommers is the emphasis the two producers put on having the five representative *Lioness* in the film — along with the military and supporting organizations — tell their story without editorial comment or narration. She said that by doing this "it is the viewers, not the producers, who are foremost in defining the meaning and the value of the documentary."

This showing of *Lioness* puts

Pittsboro in good company. On September 14 the documentary was featured in India's International Film Festival at New Delhi and the day before the Pittsboro showing, *Lioness* was screened in the Las Vegas Hilton, sponsored by the Veterans Administration's Women Veterans Health Division. Back in New York on October 26, *Lioness* was shown to the Association of Independent Filmmakers as

an example of successful outreach. Then it goes to Alaska under sponsorship of the Alaskan National Guard, showing in four cities. The list continues into 2010.

For more information on *Lioness*, click on www.lionessthefilm.com

Bill Sommers, a Ferrington Village resident, is a contributor to Chatham County Line. He is also Daria Sommers dad.

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