

Edwards returns to stump in Tar Heel State

BY CARLY TRICHE
STAFF WRITER

RALEIGH — Hyped supporters arrived at a Democratic rally Friday not only to support hometown Sen. John Edwards, but to cheer on a trio of Johns: Edwards, John Kerry and Jon Bon Jovi.

Buoyed by Bon Jovi's hits and his political rhetoric, Edwards — Kerry's running mate in Tuesday's presidential election — returned home to the Tar Heel state in an event meant to acknowledge the people who have pushed him toward his current heights.

"I didn't come here to give a political speech. I came here to say thank you to all of you," Edwards said to thousands of supporters inside the J.S. Dorton Arena at the State Fairgrounds.

Edwards did address the concerns of people in the audience who had heard about a tape released by al-Qaida mastermind Osama bin Laden regarding the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, promising to hunt the leader down.

"We will win this war on terror together," he said.

But he quickly lightened the mood by talking about his North Carolina childhood in a speech that related to the people of the state.

Edwards said his family and fam-

ily values are important to him.

"Like many of you, we went to PTA meetings. We went to wild football games," he said.

But Edwards said the current administration is not listening to America.

"They do not hear the voice of the mother who is waiting in the ER with her child, worried sick about how she is going to pay the bill.

"They don't hear the voice of the mother who asks, 'Why did you send my son over there?'" he said of the war in Iraq.

Edwards said one of the benefits of living in the United States is that people can make changes.

"It's you that can create an America where we can once again have well-paying jobs that can support a family."

Before Edwards' speech, his wife Elizabeth spoke to the crowd about elections issues and why everyone should vote.

"She's toured this country more on behalf of her ticket than (Vice President) Dick Cheney has toured on behalf of his," Bon Jovi said.

Elizabeth Edwards greeted the crowd with a warm smile and enthusiasm before launching into her critique of the Bush administration.

"The president says we need responsible leadership, and I couldn't agree with him more," she said. "This president doesn't take any responsibility."

She talked about hot-topic issues, such as health care, the flu vaccine shortage and the problems in Iraq, which she said Bush blames on lawyers and the troops.

"Shame on him," she said. "Shame on Bush! Shame on Bush!" the crowd responded.

Elizabeth Edwards also said Bush broke a promise made to troops before he took office by charging returning soldiers a \$250 enrollment fee to enter hospitals.

"John Kerry knows those men and women pay their enrollment fee when they put on that uniform," she said, asking everyone to help make sure Kerry and Edwards win on Election Day.

"I promise you, if you work for the next four days for John Kerry, John Edwards and (U.S. Senate candidate) Erskine Bowles, we will work the next four years for you," Elizabeth Edwards said.

The Edwards' daughter, Cate, also spoke about the importance of voting. "There's so much energy, so much excitement," she said. "It's



DTH/LAURA MORTON

Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards shakes hands with supporters inside the J.S. Dorton Arena at the N.C. State Fairgrounds on Friday night while Edwards' 5-year-old son, Jack (right), looks on.

tremendous."

"We only have four more days," she added. The audience responded by enthusiastically chanting, "Four more days!"

"We're doing everything we can to change this country. ... We can't do it alone," Cate Edwards said.

John Edwards also said young people are an important part of the democratic system and have changed the country before.

"This is your moment," he said. Edwards said he does not agree

with the way Bush has handled the war in Iraq or with his treatment of U.S. troops.

He also told everyone to write to family and friends overseas and to those who are struggling with job loss or inadequate health care. "You tell them, in four days, hope is on the way."

He did not leave without making one more promise to the diverse Southern audience:

"The family you are born into and the color of your skin, in our America, will never control your

destiny."

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