

Dad participates in son's

BIRTH *via* VIDEO

Birth via video: Satellite link enables father in Iraq to see, talk to family

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KEARNEY — A room full of family members, hospital staff and media professionals stared hopefully at a wide screen picturing Camp Taqaddum, Iraq.

After waiting 90 minutes for the lance corporal's appearance, the room erupted with cheers: "Kyle! There he is!"

Kyle Gilliland of Shelton took his seat and grinned into the camera. "I guess I've entered in style," he said.

The U.S. Marine had just traveled 10 miles from his base, about 74 kilometers west of Baghdad, to participate in the conference call. "These are all news people?" he asked incredulously.

His family members — including his wife, parents, grandparents, two brothers, and two sisters — nodded and smiled.

"Our baby is famous," exclaimed Patty Gilliland, Kyle's wife and the new mother of Kyson Wayne Gilliland, the couple's son.

Kyle witnessed the birth of the couple's first child Monday at Good Samaritan Hospital through a live video conference call. The Marine was present on a 20-inch monitor that allowed Patty and medical personnel to see and talk to him in real time.



Hub photo by Brad Norton

Patricia Gilliland looks at her son, Kyson, as his dad, Kyle, watches thanks to a satellite link from Iraq Tuesday at Good Samaritan Hospital. Kyle witnessed the birth of the couple's first child Monday at Good Samaritan Hospital through a live video conference call

Kyson was born at 3:30 p.m. Monday and weighed 8 pounds, 9 ounces.

The call was possible thanks to special equipment provided through Good Samaritan Hospital's telemedicine department and the work of a non-profit organization, Freedom Calls.

Freedom Calls provides free video conference calls to soldiers serving in Iraq for important life events, including births, graduations, birthdays and other family events.

The family united by video conference again at 11 a.m. Tuesday. The call was connected through Good Sam's telemedicine equipment to a satellite uplink, giving Kyle the chance to see his wife and baby for the second time in two days.

"How are you doing, babe?" Kyle inquired from the screen.

"We're doing well. He sleeps a lot. It's harder to get him to eat," she said. "Everyone says he looks like you, Kyle. He even has your receding hairline."

"I'm happy to see he's in the camouflage outfit I bought him," Kyle said. "We match. I love it."

Patty told the crowd she'd enjoyed having her husband present via satellite for Kyson's delivery. "It was so good to have him there. I cried a couple of times, and so did Kyle. I'm very pleased with Freedom Calls."

"It was emotional to watch the birth of my son," Kyle said. "I wish I could've been there in person, but I'm glad I at least had the opportunity to see him being born."

"You'll have six months to influence him," he said to his wife. "After that, I'll be back, and I'll have my time."

Until then, Kyle will be able to view his new son six times a month through Freedom Calls.

"Keep him small until I get there," Kyle urged.

"I love you both very much," he said. "It feels good to be a dad. I'm ready to get home and spoil him."

This week's conference calls mark the first time the hospital has participated in Freedom Calls.

Dale Gibbs, director of telehealth services at Good Sam, said he was glad the Marine had been able to watch his son's birth.

"It was instantaneous. It's almost science-fiction stuff. I'm very proud of Good Samaritan Hospital's strong telehealth network," Gibbs said.

The Freedom Calls satellite service is paid for by donations to the Freedom Calls organization. Donations may be made at www.freedomcalls.org