

The Repository

Marine in Iraq, baby son 'meet' via videoconference

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Canton, Ohio

Anthony J. DeSarro was on duty in western Iraq when his girlfriend, Kelly Yeagley, gave birth Wednesday in Canton to the couple's first child.

But early Thursday morning, the 31-year-old Marine corporal got close enough via videoconferencing to take digital pictures of his dark-haired son and namesake, Anthony Jr.

The couple can thank Freedom Calls Foundation and Mercy Medical Center for the videoconference set up in Yeagley's room Thursday. Freedom Calls is a public charity communications network designed to maintain family communication during wartime.

Yeagley made the initial contact, and the wheels were set in motion.



Kelly Yeagley cuddles newborn Anthony DeSarro Jr. as his father gets a videoconference glimpse of their first child Thursday. The senior DeSarro is in Iraq. Mother and baby were at Mercy Medical Center.

"This is a dream come true for Tony to be able to be here for the birth of our first child," said Yeagley, 25.

DeSarro's first telephone call found Yeagley in labor at Mercy Medical, and he did his best coaching from afar. By 8:45 Wednesday morning, the mustachioed Marine was a father.

When DeSarro's face appeared on the screen in Yeagley's room Thursday morning, her face lit up. The couple made awkward small talk while technicians, journalists and hospital personnel stood out of camera view.

The Marine sniffled almost imperceptibly when he asked Yeagley to hold up the newborn while Dad snapped away with a digital camera.

"These are just to show the guys," he told her. "That doesn't mean you can't send some."

DeSarro's sisters, Theresa Pritt of Canton and Mary DeSarro of Massillon, and Pritt's 5-year-old son, Gregory, also had a chance to see the face they hadn't seen up close in six months. Yeagley's mother, Robin Conner of New Philadelphia, also was there to join in the family reunion.

"This is wonderful," said a glowing Yeagley as the minutes of the hour-plus videoconference ticked away.

The Freedom Calls Foundation is funded through corporate and private donations. The foundation's Web site is: www.freedomcalls.org