

York Daily Record

Dallastown's Class of 2005 got an international graduation

By BARB KREBS
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Heather Nicole Neubaum was one of 340 seniors to graduate Friday from Dallastown Area High School.

More than 6,000 miles away, her father, Sgt. John C. Neubaum, who is stationed just north of Baghdad, Iraq, was able to watch the ceremony through a live Internet video conference made possible by Freedom Calls Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps connect families with relatives in the military.



Bil Bowden - YDR

Heather Neubaum, right, shows her diploma to her father, Sgt. John C. Neubaum, through a live feed while sisters Ashley, left, and Jessica and their mother, Wanda, join in the chat.

Having a link between Dallastown and Iraq on such a special night seemed to add to the excitement for Heather and all who attended the graduation.

As the evening began, high school Principal George W.W. Jones Jr. told the overflowing crowd about the live feed being beamed to Iraq.

He told the members of the audience that it was possible Chris Botterbusch, who is stationed in Iraq and is the brother of another graduate, Lauren F. Botterbusch, could be watching the feed, too.

Earlier in the day, getting the feed had been iffy because the generator in Iraq was not working. But at 12:46 p.m., the call came that the

problem had been fixed and all systems were go, said high-school network administrator Donna Ahearn.

Heather said she was excited about the video conference and would have been disappointed if it had not worked out. Her mother, Wanda Neubaum, had planned to videotape graduation just in case.

When Heather received her diploma, Jones asked the audience for a round of applause for Heather and for her father. The crowd responded with a standing ovation.

"I want you to know everyone in this gym stood up not only for Heather but in appreciation for the work you and all the guys and gals are doing in Iraq. Keep up the good work. We're proud of you," Jones told John Neubaum.

When Lauren received her diploma, Jones took a moment to say "hello to Chris in Iraq. I hope you picked up the feed." The comments were followed by another round of applause from the audience.