

The Forum

of Fargo-Moorhead

Army sergeant in Iraq watches birth via video conference

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U.S. Army Sgt. Heathe Poston participates in a MeritCare news conference Thursday from Iraq with his wife, Kati, and newborn daughter, Jaxon, in Fargo. Erin Hemme Froslic / The Forum

Army Sgt. Heathe Poston says if he had trouble seeing clearly during the birth of his first child, it wasn't because of the satellite coverage from Iraq.

"I think I was crying so bad," Poston said about participating via video conference while his daughter was born in Fargo. "It's the most beautiful thing I've ever seen."

Catherine "Kati" Poston, 21, of West Fargo, gave birth to Jaxon Elizabeth on Tuesday afternoon at MeritCare. Jaxon weighed 8 pounds, 14 ounces, and came out with her eyes wide open, Kati said Thursday during another video conference with her husband.

"We were able to talk back and forth the whole time, so that was really nice, especially in the beginning when I was more paying attention to my surroundings," Kati said.

"And I was pretty nice the whole time," she said, laughing. "He was a lucky husband."

Peggy Getzloff, Kati's nurse, said it was "very comfortable" to have Heathe on the video monitor.

"It was just like he was in the room," Getzloff said. "We talked, conversed with him as if he was part of the whole family that was there."

The event was made possible through the Freedom Calls Foundation, a public charity that began as a service to provide free telephone connections for military service personnel. Heathe was on call for about two weeks at the Freedom Calls facility at Camp Taji Airbase in Iraq.

He fought back tears Thursday as he described the experience.

"When we finally found out she was getting induced it was a lot easier," Heathe said. "Before then it was kind of just an on-call thing with the sergeant. He knew where I was at and I would check in with (Kati) on a daily basis."

"Like every five minutes," Kati interjected, laughing.

"Pretty much," Heathe said, smiling.

Heathe, 24, originally from West, Texas, is in his sixth year in the Army and on his second tour of Iraq. He's scheduled to return to his base in Hawaii in two months, where he will join his wife and new daughter.

"It's a pretty scary transition, I guess, for lack of better words," he said. "I'm hoping I go on the path and do the right thing to raise that baby and get home safe. This place can be kind of crazy sometimes."

Looking at a video close-up of his daughter while she slept in his wife's arms, he said, "I think that's the first woman president right there."

Heathe and Kati were introduced by long-distance, as well. His best friend was dating her best friend and they essentially set up Heathe and Kati over the telephone during Heathe's first stint in Iraq. They were married on April 11.

"We actually met in an airport when he came home for his two-week leave," Kati said. "And that's how he's going to meet his little baby girl, too."