

Live feed lets father in Iraq view Dover graduation

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DOVER — Throughout the years, Army Sgt. 1st Class Dave MacEwen's work has forced him to miss several memorable moments.

So when he found he would not be able to delay his deployment to Iraq to see his daughter, Leslie, graduate from Dover High School, a flurry of phone calls and e-mails followed to make sure he would be there — even if only virtually.

With the help of the Freedom Calls Foundation, the Navy Junior ROTC and the University of New Hampshire Audio-Visual Department, MacEwen was able to watch his daughter cross the stage through a live video feed from Baghdad.

"It's amazing," Leslie MacEwen, dressed in a white cap and gown, said before the graduation. "He really wanted to be here."

But Sgt. MacEwen, who is currently serving on the front lines as a fire support sergeant in Al Taqaddum, Iraq, not only was able to see his daughter graduate, he became part of the ceremony as he led the packed crowd of Lundholm Gymnasium in the Pledge of Allegiance following an extended standing ovation.

Leslie said the news that her father would be on a live feed changed her experience completely.

"On top of being able to see him, there is a lot of recognition for the family," she said.

During the month leading up to her graduation after her father deployed, Leslie never thought it would be possible to put together such a coordinated effort, and had considered having her mother hold up a laptop with a webcam so he could see her walk across the stage.

In fact, it was not until the test was done Monday that she was sure the live feed would be possible.



Barrington Superintendent Michael Morgan recites the Pledge of Allegiance as lead by Sgt. Dave MacEwen from Iraq via satellite feed during Dover High Schools 2008 Commencement at Lundholm Gym in Durham Tuesday evening. MacEwen's daughter Leslie MacEwen graduated.

(John Huff/Staff photographer)



John Huff/Staff photographer Leslie MacEwen shows her father, Sgt. Dave MacEwen, her decorated cap via satellite feed to Iraq during Dover High School's 2008 commencement at the University of New Hampshire's Lundholm Gym in Durham Tuesday evening

"The stress finally came off yesterday (Monday)," Julie Trask, Leslie's mother, said. "I was sweating it out until then. When it finally all came to blossom, it was a relief."

As news spread through the school about the unannounced guest, Leslie said several friends and classmates came forward with their support.

"A bunch of people were saying, 'It's so cool your dad is coming through the live feed,'" she said.

Following the graduation, Leslie was also able to speak one-on-one with her father and she proudly displayed her cap, adorned with green writing and a picture of a shamrock.

But even with all the pomp surrounding Sgt. MacEwen's presence at the graduation, for Leslie MacEwen, it all came down to something very simple.

"I really miss him," she said.