

The Gardner News

Overseas video enables families to stay in touch

By Ernie King - News Staff Writer
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GARDNER — When the Larson family arrived at Mount Wachusett Community College on Tuesday morning, they were all smiles as they made their way down to one of the college's TV studios to hold their second hourlong video teleconference with their son, U.S. Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Matthew Larson, who is currently serving in Falujah, Iraq.

The excitement on the family members faces was evident as they sat in the studio looking at a TV monitor with a camera mounted on top while they were waiting for Sgt. Larson's image to appear on the screen.



Photo By Ernie King

Marine Corps Gunnery Sgt. Matthew Larson speaks with his family at a video teleconference held Tuesday morning at Mount Wachusett Community College.

“What’s going on?” the sergeant asked his parents Lisa and Kenneth Larson, his sister Dayna Dunham and her daughters, 14-year-old Makayla, 10-year-old Kacie and 8-year-old Olivia. “Is everyone all right?”

“Not much,” and “yes,” the group replied in unison.

His sister asked Sgt. Larson what the weather was like where he was, and the sergeant told them it was hot.

“It’s six o’clock in the evening, so it’s probably down to about 100 right now,” Sgt. Larson said. “But, it’s not that bad once you get used of it. It’s very dry. Last month it was in the 120s, so it has cooled off a bit.”

The sergeant told his family that he had called his 5-year-old son Aaron in North Carolina and congratulated him for entering kindergarten.

“His sister (3-year-old) Isabella is very upset,” Sgt. Larson said. “She has been with him every day of her life.

“He went for a preschool interview and they put him right into kindergarten because he knew too much; he knew his numbers and he knew his colors. I told Izzy, ‘When they ask you to count from 1 to 10, say blue.’”

Sgt. Larson’s father asked him if the promotion list had come yet, and the sergeant told him it would be coming out at some point in December.

“I will keep my fingers crossed,” his father said. “You’re going to outrank the old man.”

His niece, 8-year-old Olivia Dunham, said Sgt. Larson asked if he could see the necklace she made for him with dog tags she bought at a New Hampshire amusement park.

“It says, ‘I love uncle Matthew, USMC, keep him safe,’” she said and then went on to explain to the sergeant about the shopping trip she went on to buy new school supplies. She also asked if he had seen any camels while he was in Iraq to which he said no, but he had seen a lot of donkeys and dogs.

His sister informed him that Ms. Posco at the Helen Mae Sauter School would probably be working with the students to prepare more CARE packages for him and others stationed there.

The sergeant said he would appreciate that, because the last batch of Triscuits he received was gone.

He said although he works on a computer all day in a plywood shack, he still manages to get in a five-mile run and some exercise every day to work off the calories that came with the CARE package.

After talking to the sergeant for about an hour, his father said it was great to be able to speak with his son again.

“We were the first people in Gardner to do this,” he said. “This is our second time. I think that there should be more places that can do this. I was amazed that the picture was much better this time.”

Family members said the time delay involved in the phone call takes a while to get used to.

“You have to wait for him to stop talking, pause for a minute and then start talking,” his father said. “They certainly didn’t have this in Vietnam.”

This is the sergeant’s first deployment to Iraq.

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