

The Sentinel

Marine in Iraq sees newborn child via videoconference

By Pamela Wells
pwells@hanfordsentinel.com
June 22, 2008

A Marine father serving in Iraq met his 1-day-old son on Friday via a videoconference from Central Valley General Hospital in Hanford.

Ethan Apollo Avalos was born at 8:51 a.m. on Thursday, weighing 9 pounds, 14 ounces, and the videoconference happened just 27 hours later in a hospital board room, about 10 p.m. Iraq time and noon in Hanford on Friday.

"He has my hands and dark hair," Sgt. Samuel Avalos said as he saw his son, Ethan, and wife Mindy Avalos from halfway around the world.

"He got to see his baby," Mindy Avalos said.

The hourlong get-together was set up through the efforts of hospital technology staff and the Freedom Calls Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to making technology available to unite service members with their families.

Samuel Avalos, who grew up in Corcoran, has been serving in the Marines for five years and is based in San Diego. He was deployed shortly after Christmas and expects to return home in August.

Freedom Calls contacted the hospital on June 9 about the possibility of the videoconference. Adventist Health network engineer Cheri La Rue worked with the foundation for several days to make sure the hospital network would make a stable connection halfway around the world to a satellite link in Iraq.

"It was very rewarding to give back to a family that is giving so much for our country," La Rue said.

Central Valley General Hospital contributed to this article. The reporter can be reached at 583-2423.



Mindy Avalos, left, and Samuel Avalos, on the screen at right, a U.S. Marine sergeant serving in Al Asad, Iraq, celebrate their 1-day-old son, Ethan Apollo Avalos, who was born Thursday morning at Adventist Health/Central Valley General Hospital.