

The Indianapolis Star

February 24, 2006

Live from Iraq, with love

Freedom Calls lets troops see families back home via videoconference

By Will Higgins

will.higgins@indystar.com



Hello! The videoconference with Army medic Spc. Bryan Enzinger was the first in Indianapolis between a soldier and his wife. - Charlie Nye / The Star

To arrange a videoconference, e-mail John Harlow II at jharlow@freedomcalls.org.

For more information on Freedom Calls, visit its Web site at <http://freedomcalls.org/>.

Due to the organization's limited satellite availability, video conferences can be arranged from only three bases in Iraq: Camp Taji, Camp Fallujah and Al Asad Air Base.

There was a two-second delay in the transmission, and her parents and in-laws were sitting right behind her.

Even so, Kendol Enzinger was thrilled.

She was about to talk to her husband, Army medic Bryan Enzinger -- and to see him for the first time since December, when he shipped out for Iraq.

He was still in Iraq and has two more years in the Army. This was a satellite videoconference, arranged by the New York-based Freedom Calls Foundation. The videoconference, the first in Indianapolis between a soldier and his wife, took place Thursday afternoon at Methodist Hospital, on equipment usually reserved for doctors talking with distant patients.

The Enzingers -- he's 29, she's 21 -- have been married eight months. He looked different when he came onto the screen. He'd shaved the sides of his head and left a little on top. She thought he looked great. The conversation took a moment to rev up.

"You got a haircut," she observed.

"Yes I did," he said.

Soon, however, they got comfortable and were left alone to get reacquainted.

"We talked about the changes that have happened, and the appreciation that maybe wasn't there as much before," said Kendol, a junior studying social work at IUPUI. "We talked about the future and our plans when he comes home."

While they talk on the phone several times a week and send e-mails, Kendol, who lives in Mooresville, said Thursday's exchange was different. "After today, I feel so relieved," she said. "I feel so much better. . . . It's hard to be away from someone you love. He really looked so well. That was the thing."

Freedom Calls, started in 2003, has so far arranged more than 3,000 videoconferences, said its founder, John B. Harlow II. There's no cost to the soldier or family.

Call Star reporter Will Higgins at (317) 444-6043.

Copyright 2006 IndyStar.com. All rights reserved