



## Local family sees son thousands of miles away

**University of Illinois Extension, Freedom Calls make long-distance reunion reality for Hillier family**

By [Tegan Orpet](#)

Tuesday, July 11, 2006

MACOMB, IL -- For families across the United States and right here in the Tri-States it's hard when they can't see their loved ones who are stationed overseas.

But, one local family got to talk to their soldier even though they are worlds apart.

Normally Brandon Hillier's family communicates with him through letters, emails and the occasional phone calls.

But with the help of the University of Illinois Extension and Freedom Calls, Brandon got to see and talk to his family via a teleconference.



*Photo by Tegan Orpet*

The Hillier family got what they last expected: a chance to see and talk to their son stationed overseas.

For about an hour they got to talk with him about anything and everything.

Not having seen him since December of last year Brandon's mom and dad could not believe how great he looked and were very happy to see his face.

"It's totally tremendous...one of those things you never expect. Thank God they have the technology. We just had a ball," Brandon's dad, Harry, said.

"I'm still walking on air. It was good to see him and see that he's doing well. It means a lot," Brandon's mom, Vickie, said.

Brandon's mom, dad and sister weren't the only people there, his grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins all showed up which was a big surprise.

But it's hard to believe that his reunions almost didn't happen.

All the paper work was completed on time in the U.S., but over seas things took a little longer to get finalized and the deadline was almost missed.

"This was almost not possible," Vickie said.

As the family said good bye one last time, they can't wait until they can reunite with their son and be able to put their arms around him.

The University of Illinois Extension hopes to hold another teleconference with the soldiers and their families sometime this fall or winter.