



Soldiers Make Christmas Connection

Hometown Link Helps Soldiers See, Talk To Their Families

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MADISON, Wis. -- Gail Mortier got an early Christmas gift this year. She was able to see and talk to her daughter all the way in Iraq.

"It's nice to see you all," said Spc. Jeanette Mortier.

"We got some short notice and decided, we're not going to pass up this chance," said sister Julie Mortier. The Mortiers haven't seen Jeanette since she was deployed in September with the 826th Ordinance Company.

The online connection was called Hometown Link. It's set up through the Freedom Calls Foundation and MATC's distance learning network.

That network allowed eight families to see and talk to their deployed soldiers for 30 minutes--time, for them, that is priceless.

"When you're seeing her it's like knowing that visually that she's fine and how their spirits are," said Gail Mortier. "You can hear it in their voices."

The Mortiers allowed News 3 to witness their call.

"It's good to see you, sweetheart," said Gail Mortier. "That's good; I'm glad you can see me. You look pretty happy."

In the short time, the Mortiers were able to catch up on what Jeanette has missed while she's been away.

"I've got some other news for you, girl," said sister Sheri Gruss. "You're going to be an aunt again!"

The family even made plans for Christmas.

"We're having Christmas for you at the end of July," said Gruss. "No, we're not having it on the 4th of July weekend. We'll do it, have it the last weekend in July. We'll celebrate Christmas and your birthday at the end of July, and we'll go camping."

That 30-minute connection was all the present for which Mortier could ask.

"It's a pretty good Christmas gift," said Jeanette Mortier. "I'm very happy to see them. I'm getting more excited to go home."

"OK, sweetie, love you," said Gail Mortier. "Stay safe. Behave. We're counting down the days, too. Bye-bye."

Officers say they're trying to set up more video conferences for other members of the company stationed throughout Iraq.

For more information on the [Freedom Calls Foundation](#), or to make a donation, check out their Web site.