

Mother 'thankful' for Freedom Calls

Foundation puts soldiers, families in touch with each other.

By Megan Gildow
Staff Writer
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Sgt. Ryan Wills wasn't home for his 24th birthday Sunday and he's not home for Christmas.

The 2003 Lebanon High School graduate has been stationed at Camp Fallujah in Iraq since August on his second tour of duty. But his family saw his face as they sang "Happy Birthday" to him a little early on Dec. 13.

Eleven members of the Wills family took part in the Freedom Calls Foundation holiday calls to soldiers at Edgewood City Schools. Skyline Chili provided lunch for the families participating.

"It was just wonderful," said Nancy Wills, Ryan's mother. "It was just nice really, to get to relax for a little while and just know that he was okay because we were talking to him.

"It was just a joy to see him."

As nice as it was for the family, the visit lifted the spirits of their Marine just as much, she said.

"I know that he gets kind of down at times and homesick and it really picked him up and boosted his spirits. It was just really comforting," she said.

Ryan, the oldest of the Wills two sons, joined the Marines in September 2003, just after he graduated from high school.

"This is actually his third birthday and Christmas away," said his mom.

Ryan and his wife, Jessica, are expecting their first child in May.

The Wills family has spoken to Ryan through Freedom Calls twice this year, she said.

"Having something like this available... you can't even describe it," Nancy said. "I just think it would be wonderful if all (families) could do it at least once when they were away.

"I'm very thankful for Freedom Calls."