

Soldier sees granddaughter for first time

By Valerie Gritton/The Daily Times
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FARMINGTON — There were no tears Saturday, only smiles and laughter when United States Army Sgt. Glen Mortensen saw his granddaughter for the first time.

Mortensen, who is stationed in Baghdad, Iraq, was able to see his 1-month-old granddaughter, wife and children via teleconference from San Juan College. The conference was made possible by the Freedom Calls Foundation.

During the 40-minute conference, Mortensen and his family talked about Thanksgiving, his new granddaughter, his children and his experiences overseas.

Mortensen and wife, Cynthia Penrod-Mortensen live in Aztec and have been married 21 years. They have five children ages 12 to 19, one daughter-in-law and two grandchildren.

The teleconference was the fourth time the family had seen Mortensen in 11 months.

Glen Mortensen said it was great seeing his granddaughter for the first time, along with his family.

“I wish I could reach out and hold her,” he said. “It was neat to see (my children), see how they’ve grown and to see what they look like.”

Despite the distance in miles, 14-year-old Cameron said seeing his father on the television screen was “still better than e-mail.”



Dave Watson/The Daily Times
Andre Mortensen, 19, holds up his one-month-old daughter Joseleen for his father, Sgt. Glen Mortensen, who is stationed in Iraq, to see for the first time during a video conference between Sgt. Mortensen and his family at San Juan College Saturday. The conference was the first of its kind for the Farmington area and was made through Freedom Calls.

Mortensen tries to e-mail his family at least once a day and he calls them whenever he can.

His absence has been hard on his wife and children, who say they miss “just being around” their dad.

“It’s amazing how fast the kids have grown,” said Cynthia Penrod-Mortensen.

His oldest daughter, 13-year-old Kaycee, has started playing the piano.

“Mostly, I just feel sorry for him because he’s missing out on us growing up and stuff,” Kaycee Mortensen said. She still wears a chain around her neck given to her by her dad two years ago.

Said Andre, 19, of his father’s absence, “It’s lonely, it’s hard. You just have to deal with it even though you don’t like it.”

Mortensen is in a transportation unit, but for the last two months he has been in the guard towers protecting the base.

He also protects some of the Iraqi civilians who work on the base, said Cynthia Penrod-Mortensen.

Twelve-year-old Sandra said her father is an artist who sends the family cartoon drawings of life in Iraq.

“He makes things out of paper maché,” she said.

Added Cameron, “Yup, he’s awesome.”

From a wife and mother’s viewpoint, Cynthia Penrod-Mortensen said it was nice having her husband around when the children needed discipline or things around the house needed to get done.

“You understand the deployment part, but it doesn’t make it any easier,” she said. “He’s a very good father. It’s nice to have that relief.”

If a child needs a lecture, Glen Mortensen will send them a long e-mail.

Out of all the children, 14-year-old Roger receives the most, the family says with a laugh.

Cynthia Penrod-Mortenson said when her husband returns, the family will have a huge party.

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