



Okinawa Marine families connect with loved ones deployed to Iraq

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CAMP FOSTER — The holidays are usually a joyous time, but many military families miss the chance to spend them together because of deployments.

The Fishers didn't get to spend their Christmas together, but the day after Christmas, Yuki Fisher took her two children Lita and Tyson to the Camp Foster Library for a special surprise.

In a small room sat a single computer with a webcam and microphone. Yuki guided Lita and Tyson over to the computer, sat in a chair and lifted them onto her lap. On the screen looking back at them was their father, Staff Sgt. Daniel Fisher, whom they hadn't seen since he left for Iraq in August.

Smiles stretched across their faces and laughter filled the room as the family had a virtual face-to-face after five months of only speaking on the phone, which was not very often, Yuki said.

"It was really exciting for all of us because it has been so long since we have seen each other," Yuki said. "This is his second deployment and actually having the chance to see him this time made a huge difference."

The chance for the Fishers to make their holidays a little more cheerful was made possible by Marine and Family Services. Using the Freedom Calls Foundation satellite network, they provided Marines of Combat Logistics Battalion 4, 3rd Marine Logistics Group with the capability to connect to their families via video conference free of cost from Dec. 21-26.

Marine and Family Services have held two scheduled sessions for the families of CLB-4, and each time there have been a lot of smiles, according to Riley Flynn, a librarian who helped set up the calls. This is great technology and it can make a huge difference for a family.

During this session a Marine got to see his child for the first time and without this technology he would have had to wait until his unit returned to see his newborn, Flynn said. Giving families the opportunity for moments like this is the whole reason the Marine and Family Services team conduct this program.

So far the only unit Marine and Family Services have linked to using the satellite network is CLB-4, but they are trying to expand the capability to other units, said Bill Linnehan, the Marine and Family Services chief. He said he believes every service member deployed in harms way should have the means to stay in close touch with their families back home.

"It is important for the families to stay in touch during these tough times, and we will do everything we can do to help them do that and have a little more peace of mind," he said.