

## Long- distance call from Marine

By [Judy Kroeger](#)

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Technology has brought a number of Marines face to face with their loved ones for the first time in months.

Sarah Bitner of Connellsville hadn't seen her boyfriend, Lance Cpl. Jeremy Pegg of Greensburg, since he shipped out in August. Pegg serves as a military policeman with Company B of North Versailles and is currently on his second tour of duty in Iraq.

He was one of the lucky Marines whose name was drawn recently to receive a 15-minute video phone call with his family.

The calls were made possible by the Freedom Calls Foundation of New York and took place at Heinz Field Thursday.

The families also received free tickets for Sunday's playoff game.

At halftime during the Steelers/Patriots showdown, the families will take to the field and their relatives' photos will appear on the stadium's Jumbo Tron.

There were about 30 to 35 families, says Sarah Bitner. She got to see and speak to Pegg, as did his parents, Terry and Cheryl Pegg and his little brother, Steven. "He was the same old Jeremy," she says, smiling at the memory of the call. "It was so good to see him and he got to see us."

He is able to call her using a conventional telephone about every two weeks. He is also able to send an occasional e-mail.

Bitner says that Pegg's first tour started in February of 2002 and lasted seven months. His second tour is also supposed to last seven months, "but you never know," she acknowledges.

"It wasn't as hard to say goodbye the second time. I'm still worried, but the brunt of the war is over," she says.

Pegg remains philosophical about the war and about his second tour in Iraq. "He says, 'That's what I signed up for.' He feels there's a purpose," Bitner says.

The two have been dating for four and a half years. Pegg has been in the Marine Reserves since August of 2001.

Bitner is "a big Steelers fan," but Sunday's game will be her first at Heinz Field. "The Steelers were so generous to us. When we got to Heinz Field Thursday, they gave us free hats and Terrible Towels, along with the tickets. I'm not sure what all will happen during halftime, besides showing the pictures and reading the names, but it will be a nice tribute."

She is not predicting who will win.

In addition to Pegg, two other local Marines, twin brothers, Joe David and Allen David, participated in the video calls, Bitner says. Their mother, Lori Lape, teaches at Dunbar Borough Elementary School.

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