

# Technologies Across Nebraska Newsletter **tangents**



## **Connecting from home**

### ***Videoconferencing from home brings smiles, bunny ears***

*By Anne Byers, Nebraska Information Technology Commission*

This is a personal story for me. My husband, John, who is in the Nebraska National Guard, was deployed to Iraq in September. Through Freedom Calls, my two children and I have videoconferenced with John twice from our home and are looking forward to another on Sunday. My daughter, Katie, will be able to show her father her smile—for the first time after the completion of three years of orthodontic work. My son, Steve, is looking forward to talking about the Super Bowl and showing his father his new Pittsburgh Steelers blanket. John will be able to see me wearing the earrings he sent me for Valentine's Day.

"Freedom Calls is providing a great service to military people," said Lieutenant Colonel John Byers, with the Nebraska National Guard's 67th Area Support Group. "Videoconferencing is not the same as being home, but it surely lifts your morale to see and talk to your family in real time."

Videoconferencing from home is far more intimate than videoconferencing from an armory or hospital videoconferencing room. John can see the kids and our aging dog, Lady, in their normal early morning state—which is bright-eyed for Katie and not-so-bright-eyed for Steve and Lady.

I am amazed at the quality of the video and audio over a DSL line. All it took was a \$50 Web cam from a local retailer, the Polycom PVX software provided by Freedom Calls, and a few calls to the Alltel DSL help desk. Well, maybe it was more than a few calls, but it has been well worth the effort.

“Videoconferencing is better than a phone call because it lets you see expressions, and we can talk as a family,” said fifteen year-old Katie.

“And you can give people bunny ears,” added 11-year-old Steve.