

Even in Iraq, Marine wouldn't miss wife's ceremony

By JANETTE RODRIGUES

© May 11, 2007



Debra Tate was surprised to see her husband, Maj. Andy Tate is a Marine serving in Iraq, appear by video at her graduation. BILL TIERNAN/THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

NORFOLK - Tidewater Community College student Debra Tate thought she had missed something during the nursing program pinning ceremony Thursday when one of her professors called her to the lectern.

Her confused look was replaced by wonder and then teary-eyed happiness when her the visage of her husband, Marine Maj. Andy Tate, filled the huge video screen on stage behind her fellow nursing students.

Thanks to a charity called Freedom Calls Foundation and TCC's information technology staff, the marine watched his wife of nearly a year receive her nursing pin from thousands of miles away in Camp Fallujah, Iraq, via video-conferencing.

"This is the best thing I could have asked for - to have my husband here," Debra Tate, a 40-year-old Virginia Beach resident, said after the ceremony. "I love him."

Andy Tate, 37, was just happy to "attend" the ceremony, in which students are pinned with a symbol that is a reminder of the work and sacrifices they make to become nurses.

"It was important to me because it is important to her," he said, looking a little bleary-eyed.

It was close to 2 a.m. in Iraq.

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