

Marine speaks with wife, sees daughter for first time

By Kirby Haskins Advocate staff writer

Despite that fact he has been stationed in Iraq since late last year, a United States Marine saw his newborn daughter for the first time ever at Mary Chiles Hospital this week.

Cpl. Derek Emanuel of Carlisle was able to see his firstborn daughter, Aiden Elizabeth, and his wife, Jennifer, via live video teleconference at the hospital Monday afternoon. The video conference was made possible thanks to the cooperation of Mary Chiles Hospital and The Freedom Call Foundation, a charitable organization that provides communication services to military families and their loved ones on the front lines, free of charge.



Jennifer Emanuel shows off Aiden Elizabeth to her dad in Iraq

With Jennifer sitting in the boardroom of Mary Chiles Hospital, and Derek at a base in Iraq, the two conferenced for about an hour and a half through laptop computers equipped with Web cams and broadband Internet connections and the Freedom Calls satellite network.

“It was really nice that we got to do something like that” Jennifer said.

“We just talked about who we thought (Aiden Elizabeth) looked like and his family got to come in and talk to him, too. And we were just trying to catch up” she added.

Jennifer says her husband, who is stationed in Trebil near the Iraq and Jordan border, calls home as often as he can but the “Freedom Call” was the first time she had been face to face with her husband since his deployment.

“It was just unreal; I couldn’t believe I was sitting there looking at him,” she said.

Derek, she says, was amazed at the sight of his new daughter, who was born at 4:22 a.m. Saturday, March 10, weighing 8 pounds and 3 ounces.

“He kept saying he couldn't believe that was really our daughter (he was looking at)” Jennifer said. “He really just sat there quiet the whole time just looking at her”.

Jennifer NeSmith, vice president for Physician Services and Marketing at Mary Chiles Hospital, says Mary Chiles was happy to take part in helping the new parents and their baby conference face to face. “We appreciate how uniquely special and significant the birth of a baby is in the lives of parents and so we were delighted to make these arrangements” NeSmith said. “We believe health is broadly defined to include the mind body and spirit. Mary Chiles hospital hopes this videoconference will help provide Jennifer with an additional boost of emotional and mental support”

Derek is expected to return to the United States in April, his wife said.