

VFW Helps to Connect Father and Daughter Thousands of Miles Apart

Oct 15, 2009

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — This past July, as Staff Sgt. Brett M. Bennethum lined up in formation at deployment, his 4-year-old daughter, Paige Bennethum, just “didn’t want to let go.” The picture of Paige holding her father’s hand as he prepared to deploy immediately touched hearts around the world, especially those at the VFW National Headquarters, an organizations with a long standing history of supporting military families. Berks County’s Reading Eagle newspaper runs a column titled “Kelly’s Korner,” where on the 5th of October, the now famous photo of Paige refusing to let go of her father’s hand appeared alongside mother, Abby Bennethum’s, statement explaining that the their current computer did not have webcam capabilities for videoconference sessions with her deployed husband.

When VFW National Headquarters heard of this poignant story, it immediately responded. It contacted the VFW Department of Pennsylvania to inform the Commander, Frank Mills, that the family’s computer would not allow for much communication between Paige and her dad, and that a new laptop, with a built-in webcam, would be a great donation in order to make the deployment a little easier on everyone, especially Paige.

VFW’s Military Assistance Program (MAP), agreed to provide the VFW Department of Pa. with a grant in order to purchase the laptop for the Bennethums. State Commander, Mills, District Commander, Jim Lindsey and Department Director of Communications, David Sandman arrived at the Bennethum’s home yesterday bearing the gift of communication!

“We will really enjoy being able to stay in closer contact with him as the birth of our third child draws near,” said Abby.

Abby also mentioned to the VFW members that as a child, she remembers her grandfather being very active in the VFW. She went on to explain that her husband Brett had expressed interest in joining too. Again, VFW wanted to help.

In Sinking Springs, Pa., VFW Post 6150 Commander, Barry Weitzel, is offering Sgt. Bennethum one year free membership. Paige’s aunt and uncle are new members to Post 6150 so he will already have familiar company. The Post is about 6 miles away from the family’s home in Laureldale, Pa. and has been in contact with Bennethum’s 733rd

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Transportation Company since it deployed, expressing interest in adopting the unit through VFW's Adopt-A-Unit program. They have been accepting donations for the family and will continue to help keep little Paige's mind busy through the program with care-packaging events and other activities that go along with adopting a unit.

"I can't tell you how grateful Paige and I are for all the help and support people have given us," concluded Abby.