



New video conferencing center for troops, families now operational at Galva Armory

By DAVE CLARKE Of The Star Courier

GALVA -- Families of Galva National Guard members and their loved ones stationed in Iraq will now be able to see, hear and talk to each other live through a new video conferencing center that went on line Monday at the Galva Armory.

Believed to be one of the first such systems of its kind in the state, the center is the brainchild of the Galva Lions Club which raised \$2,300 in donations to buy the equipment. Lions member John Goodale came up with the idea after setting up a video link on his home computer to chat with his daughter and grandchildren who live in Texas. Galva Lions member Frank Prosser, a National Guard recruiter, and others in the service club joined in the effort. More than \$600 was donated toward the project by "Operation Carelift," a volunteer effort in Kewanee organized to send care packages to local troops in Iraq.

The system was set up by IDC Tech Center of Geneseo. Galva's cable TV provider, Mediacom, donated the high speed Internet access needed to connect Galva with Baghdad, where the Galva unit is stationed.

Final checks were made Monday by IDC manager Cheryl Carton and the stations are now operational in the armory's conference room equipped with monitors, web cams and printers.

In addition to video conferencing, families who do not have home computers can e-mail their sons, husbands or brothers, send photos and copy photos sent by the troops.

With Baghdad nine hours ahead of local time, access to the center at unusual hours was essential. It was announced Monday the center will be open 24 hours a day with the assistance of Battery F Rear Detachment Officer Staff Sgt. Martin Gibson who is stationed at the armory around the clock Monday through Friday and on regularly-scheduled drill weekends.

"The Army is really encouraging communication as a way to keep up morale," Goodale said.

Soldiers at Camp Victory North near the Baghdad Airport where the Galva unit is based have access to Internet cafes with video conferencing capabilities and are slowly getting

Internet service to their rooms. Some members of the unit also took video conferencing gear with them when they deployed.

Video sessions will have to be arranged in advance via e-mail at a time convenient to the soldier. Those on both ends of the link will be able to see and hear each other in real time.

There is no charge for using the center.

The Lions Club hopes to turn operation of the stations over to the Family Readiness Group which includes members from Galva, Kewanee and Dixon, the three Guard units that comprise Battery F.

Now that the troops in Baghdad have access to the system, any business, industry, school or individual who has video conferencing available, is encouraged to make their equipment available, especially in communities outside of Galva.

[Prison employees man picket lines](#)

KEWANEE -- Approximately 125 Kewanee prison employees held an informational picket near the front entrance of the Illinois Department of Corrections facility Monday afternoon.

[School board in line for \\$1 million grant](#)

Kewanee school officials already were expecting more than \$800,000 from the federal government for the next school year.

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[Police blotter](#)

Incidents

[Miss America talks to literacy group](#)

BETTENDORF, Iowa -- Erika Harold, Miss America 2003, was the guest speaker for Bi-State Literacy's annual awards breakfast at The Lodge in Bettendorf last Friday.

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