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Daddy's home from Afghanistan

Dallas Marine meets his daughter for just the second time since she was born.

By SARAH HITE
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Mia Ellis met her father for the first time in August when she was just 5 months old. Now, she can't stop saying "da da."

This week, the toddler got a chance to see her "da da" in person for just the second time since she was born. Dennis Ellis, a corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps, flew home late Wednesday after a yearlong deployment in Afghanistan.

"She has yet to say 'mama,'" said Mary Ann Ellis, Mia's mother, of Dallas.

Four generations of the Ellis family, as well as close friends, were at the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport Wednesday night to welcome their favorite military man home.

Sharon Ellis, Dennis' mother, said her son enlisted when he was 25, shortly after graduating from Wilkes University. She said he always wanted to be a Marine.

"We told him not to do it at first because it wasn't the best time, with everything that's going on right now," she said. "But now we couldn't be more

proud of him." Corporal Ellis' father is Dr. Jack Ellis.

Mary Ann Ellis said she and Dennis, now 27, began dating shortly after he enlisted in the military, but didn't expect the relationship to get as serious as it did.

The pair has been married for more than a year, and Mia Ellis was born just two months after Ellis was deployed overseas. Father and daughter met for the first time when Corporal Ellis was home on leave in August. Mary Ann Ellis has two other daughters, 12-year-old Morgan Jenkins and 5-year-old Adriana Pitts.

"Skype is a blessing," Mary Ann Ellis said. "We were able to

talk pretty much every day because he was able to have his laptop."

Dennis' grandmother, Louise Castellani of Exeter, walked around the airport terminal Wednesday night carrying a brown paper bag containing a salami sandwich "loaded with mustard."

"My grandson loves these sandwiches," she said.

Frank Oatridge III, Ellis' best friend since second grade, got special permission to be at the airport while on duty as an Exeter Borough police officer.

Oatridge, who served in Iraq as a Marine a few years ago, is



CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Marine Corporal Dennis Ellis, of Dallas, returned home from a tour of active duty in Afghanistan as a truck mechanic. Welcoming him his wife Mary Ann and 10-month-old daughter, Mia.

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CHARLOTTE BARTIZEK PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Dustin Shaver plays Uncle Sam and leads his classmates in a patriotic song during a Presidents' Day program at Wycallis Elementary School.



First-graders at Wycallis Elementary School sing patriotic songs and show appreciation for their country.



Cody Konnick portrays George Washington.

U.S. proud

There were lots of flags and plenty of red, white and blue at Wycallis Elementary School on Thursday morning as third-grade students presented their annual Presidents' Day program for family and friends.

Giving back to those who helped

By SARAH HITE
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Beth Carey, of Dallas, has been cancer-free for more than five years, but she continues to give back to those who supported her during treatment and beyond.

Twenty-two-year-old Carey will participate in the Penn State THON for the seventh time this weekend.

THON is a dance marathon that raises money for the pediatric cancer support organization, the Four Diamonds Fund, associated with the Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital.

Carey is going to dance with Women's Club Basketball this year - the same organization that danced in her honor when she was a 15-year-old battling non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a type of cancer that affects the lymph glands and bone marrow.

The Four Diamonds Fund has a program called Adopt-a-Family, which pairs families dealing with pediatric cancer with organizations participating in THON.

Organization members meet with the family throughout the year, scheduling fun events and providing emotional support.

A former Lake-Lehman basketball player, Carey was paired with Penn State Women's Club Basketball when she was under-

"It's something I always think about, that my battle is mostly over, but there are still kids who are diagnosed every day and families still have to hear that their child has cancer at the Hershey Medical Center and throughout the world."

Beth Carey
THON participant

going treatments.

Her family was "adopted" by the organization for three years, until she became a student at Penn State University.

"It was a really, really neat thing to have a special bond with them," said Carey. "They really did become part of our family and supported me after my treatment. Two summers ago I attended the wedding of one of the girls so it just shows you how close we actually were."

This year, Carey is dancing for the Trimble family, which the basketball club adopted two years ago. Ella Trimble finished her last round of chemotherapy

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Beth Carey poses with Ella and Jacob Trimble, of Lancaster, at the THON Family Carnival at Penn State University Main Campus in November.

Fund will honor memory of Tom Lynch

Thomas E. Lynch, 18, of Harveys Lake, a senior at Dallas High School, died Monday, Feb. 13, shortly after arrival at the Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center Emergency Room,

Plains Township, due to injuries received in a motor vehicle accident in Dallas Township.

Lynch was a member of the Boy Scouts Two Mountain District Council of Northeastern Pennsylvania and earned his Eagle Badge on his birthday last December 21. His Eagle Scout project was building an information center for the Back Mountain Trail on Harris Hill Road. He also traveled to Philmont, N.M., on a high-adventure trip. Lynch had enlisted in the U.S.

Army and was scheduled to report to Fort Benning, Ga., on August 8, with ambition to be a Cavalry Scout.

To honor the memory of Lynch, the Thomas Lynch Scout Scholarship Fund has been set up to provide financial assistance to current and future Boy Scouts.

Memorial contributions be made to Boy Scout Troop 281 Endowment Fund, c/o Ronald Santora, Scout Master, 25 Parsonage St., Dallas, PA 18612.



THOMAS LYNCH



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