



Company provides home movies as a gift to soldiers

By K.C. Mehaffey, World staff writer

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WINTHROP — A Winthrop company that edits and preserves videos has a free gift for the members of U.S. armed forces serving in Iraq or Afghanistan: 30 minutes with their friends and families.

HomeMovie.Com has launched Operation Enduring Love to honor the dedication and sacrifice of service members and the families who support them.

Families are invited to send a 30-minute home video to the company. HomeMovie will convert it to DVD and make it available online by password to the service member, then mail back the video tape free of charge, said Kirk Esmond, communications consultant for the company.

The idea came to Michelle Larsen, wife of HomeMovie.Com's CEO, John Larsen, last month while she was moved by the news about a new parent who was serving in Iraq and missing some of the most precious moments of her young child's life.

"Her first thought was, 'There has to be something we can do to help connect families serving our country,' " John Larsen said.

Esmond said HomeMovie.Com assumes it will be flooded with 30-minute video tapes from friends and family of service members from throughout the United States. But they're ready, he said.

"We're prepared to take on a 24-hour-a-day operating schedule, and increase our employees," which now number 15, he said.

Jennifer Allen-Tate, marketing director for HomeMovie.com, said the free offer will continue throughout 2005 — partly so the company isn't immediately overwhelmed with video tapes — but also to give families plenty of time to come up with a quality home movie and record birthday parties, holidays, or even plan special events to create the video.

The company estimates that the endeavor will cost about \$250,000.

The company partnered with NoaNet, the Okanogan County PUD and CenturyTel, which will sponsor the cost of broadband fiber needed.

Chris Jenkins, a former U.S. Army Sergeant paratrooper who now works for HomeMovie.Com, said the offer is just a generous, heart-felt gift.

“Being a soldier myself, it was kind of incredible to see something like this take shape,” he said. “I still have buddies with boots in Iraq. ... This one guy I’ve known for eight years, he’s really excited about it. He missed the birth of his first son,” he said.

On the Web:

<http://www.homemovie.com/>

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