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1073rd to correspond with families via Web

By S. Michael Manley - Daily News staff writer

GREENVILLE -- After Spc. Frederick Frye of the Greenville-based Michigan National Guard 1073rd Maintenance Company leaves for Fort McCoy, Wis., on Sunday night, he will rely on the power of the Internet to stay in touch with his family.

Frye said the World Wide Web will give the 212-member unit an extra boost to keep their morale up, thanks to Stanton-based Casair Inc., which is arranging free Internet connections for all the troops and their families.

"I think it's a positive thing," he said.

The 1073rd is scheduled to leave at 11 p.m. Sunday for four to six weeks of training at Fort McCoy before heading to Fallujah, Iraq, for 18 to 24 months.

Casair President Jerry Weissberg said he has set up 241 free Internet connections in the homes of family members.

"Once they got the orders to move out, I had contacted (1073rd) Capt. (Jim) Jennette about providing the service for them," Weissberg said. "It took us about a week to set everything up for them. Our hope's that other people could help out the families for whatever they needed and this was our way of helping out."

Frye said he will keep in touch with his two young daughters, Kali, 8, and Krysta, 6. He said he is going to e-mail them through their school account.

"Overall, it's probably the best and easiest way to keep in contact with family and close friends," Frye said. "And if the computers have a Web camera, you can see them, so you don't have to rely on sending pictures to them."

Weissberg said it normally would cost \$200 to set up a single family for Casair's Internet service.

"This is a means of providing communications, helping to ease financial burdens on the families," he said.

Weissberg said since there are no computer lines in Iraq, a satellite will have to be used for the Internet signals.

Frye said he is going to utilize the service as often as he can.

"I don't know what the work schedule (in Iraq) will be like yet," he said. "It's also going to make it convenient in my military career because I'll be able to do correspondence courses over the line."

Frye said the Internet is better than writing letters.

"It makes communication with the family a lot easier and quicker," he said.

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