



MEDIA RELEASE

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Son steps up when father deploys to Afghanistan

NASHVILLE -- Tennessee Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Leyman Joe Weaver, from Kingston Springs, Tenn., today is in the rugged terrain of Afghanistan teaching villagers basic farming techniques such as planting and harvesting wheat, planting corn in rows and using trellises to grow tomatoes and grapes.

Weaver is a member of the National Guard's 129th Army Band, but volunteered to deploy as part of an Agri-business Development Team that departed Nashville three months ago. He's a veteran of 14 years in the Tennessee Army National Guard and is a percussionist in the band.

Imagine the soldier's surprise a few weeks ago when he got a telephone call in Afghanistan from his son, Clay, who shouted, "Dad, guess what! You're not gonna' believe this! I'm playing with the Guard band!"

The youngster's mother, Cheri, explained that out of the blue, the band members extended a warm invitation for their son to perform locally with them during his dad's deployment. The 15-year-old Weaver is a freshman who plays 1st Trumpet in the award-winning "Harpeth High School Band of Blue" in Kingston Springs. Clay jumped at the chance. "It's like a big military family and they've taken him under their wing," Mrs. Weaver said.

"It's really something to play my horn with them," Weaver said. "These Guard men and women are the best of the best. Sitting in alongside them is such an incredible privilege."

Mrs. Weaver said Clay gets excited when he starts talking about the next performance with the soldier-musicians. "He truly feels honored to be sitting in," she explained, "and he's pushing himself hard to become a stronger musician." Young Weaver plans to join the Tennessee National Guard as soon as he turns 17 and - what else - audition for the band as soon as he completes Basic and Advanced training

He was overcome with emotion a few weeks ago when he received an Award of Excellence, the personalized coin given to him by Brig. Gen. Max Haston, Assistant Adjutant General of the National Guard.

Clay recalled, "I remember thinking how I wished Dad was here to see it. He would have been so proud of me."

It was a powerful experience for the young Clay Weaver.

"I was fighting back tears and couldn't speak a word. All I could do ... was hug the general."

CUTLINES:

Photo #1: Staff Sgt. Leyman Joe Weaver in Afghanistan

Photo #2: Clay Weaver sits in for a performance with the National Guard's 129th Army Band.

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