

## Family credits sunglasses for saving son's eye

*Spc. Kevin Gallo of Medford was injured Tuesday in Iraq*



November 12, 2009

By Paul Fattig

The family of a Medford soldier injured when a Humvee was struck by a truck on Tuesday in Iraq is crediting special protective sunglasses given to his local Oregon Army National Guard unit with saving his right eye.

Spc. Kevin Gallo, 27, son of Ron and Laurie Gallo of Medford, was serving as a gunner in the turret of the armored vehicle when it was struck, causing him to hit his head, his mother said.

"He broke the occipital bone behind his eye," his mother said. "His glasses broke, but I believe with all my heart that he would have lost his eye at the very least without those glasses."

She was referring to the Wiley X sunglasses given to the roughly 150 citizen-soldiers of the Guard's 1st Battalion of the 186th Infantry, headquartered in Ashland. After learning that Medford resident Debbie Hicks had raised about \$1,600 this past spring, enough to buy 68 pairs at a drastically reduced price for the soldiers from Jackson and Josephine counties, Wiley X Inc. in Livermore, Calif., donated 90 pairs free. At a retail value of \$95 each, that represented a gift of \$8,500. Hicks is an American Red Cross volunteer dedicated to helping local soldiers.

Deployed to Camp Victory near Baghdad early in the summer, the local soldiers are among more than 600 members of the 1/186th that joined the Guard's Tigard-based 41st Infantry Combat Brigade Team, which sent about 2,800 troops

from Oregon and some 650 more from other states to Iraq. They are expected to return home next spring.

According to the Guard, the collision occurred early Tuesday morning when a truck traveling with no lights hit the Humvee when the convoy had stopped. Cpl. Richard Martin of Central Point also was injured in the accident. Although information about Martin's injuries was not available at press time, the Guard reported that neither soldier was critically injured, and both were in stable condition.

Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski, a former Marine, stopped by to visit Kevin Gallo at the military hospital in Balad on Wednesday during his visit to Iraq. The specialist was expected to be flown to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany today where he would receive further treatment.

Laurie Gallo said the family had not heard from the military, but had received a call from their son who informed them of his injuries.

Kevin Gallo, a graduate of Crater High School, and his wife, Tasha, have two young children.

Reach reporter Paul Fattig at 776-4496 or e-mail him at [pfattig@mailtribune.com](mailto:pfattig@mailtribune.com).