

Democrat Herald Friday, November 27, 2009

## Albany soldier spends Thanksgiving with family

By Alex Paul, Albany Democrat-Herald | Posted: Friday, November 27, 2009 1:35 pm



Maj. Chris Reese and his son Zachary, 7, keep pace during Thursday morning's road race. (Mark Ylen/Democrat-Herald)

Zachary Reese speaks quietly when he talks about his dad, Army Maj. Chris Reese, being home from Iraq to celebrate Thanksgiving with his family.

But Zachary really doesn't need to say anything at all. The giant smile on the 7-year-old's face makes his feelings perfectly clear.

And they aren't going to sit around and watch TV all day during their two weeks together. Even though it was a 44-hour journey from Iraq, father and son got up early Thanksgiving morning and put sneakers to wet pavement to compete in the second annual Oregon Mid-Valley Road Race.

"I can outrun him," Zachary boasted, looking up at his dad and laughing.

Despite heavy rain, Zachary improved his race time by two minutes per mile over last year's outing, clocking a 34:59, or 9:27 per mile.

"He's a little sore today," his dad said this morning. "It was a tough race. It was so wonderful to be home. I smiled the whole time, seeing the effort he put into it. I told him several times how blessed I felt to be running with him."

The elder Reese, 37, arrived in Albany Tuesday night on mid-tour leave from his assignment as a public affairs specialist at Camp Tallil in southern Iraq. A helicopter pilot by training, he previously served in Afghanistan and has been in 19 countries during his 14-year military career.

“When I drove into Albany, tears came to my eyes,” Reese said. “I noticed little changes and the weather was perfect. I love this community. It’s awesome.”

Reese serves with the 41st Infantry Brigade, composed of National Guard units from Oregon, New Mexico, South Carolina, Nebraska and Delaware.

The 1991 Hermiston High School graduate — who earned varsity letters in football, basketball and baseball — left Oregon last April for more training and arrived in Iraq in July.

“August was miserably hot,” Reese said. “It got up to 143 degrees. Right now, the weather is nice, from 70 to 90 degrees during the day and 50 or so at night.”

Reese played football for the Wolves at Western Oregon University before starting his military career.

Zachary is following in his dad’s footsteps. He plays football, basketball, baseball and soccer and has a purple belt in tae kwon do. He also enjoys swimming.

Zachary has already completed four mini-triathlons, swimming 50 meters, bicycling for 1 mile and running a half-mile. His dad is a triathlete and among his accomplishments is the half-ironman race last June in Bend.

Reese and his wife, Lori, also have another son, Noah, 4.

During his two weeks in the mid-valley, Reese plans to spend time with Zach’s

second-grade class at Albany Christian School, visit family in Hermiston and start looking for a second home in Bend. Reese is up for promotion to lieutenant colonel in June and when that comes through, he will take command of the 1-82 Cavalry Squadron National Guard unit there.

“We won’t move from Albany, I’ll go back and forth for a few years,” Reese said. “I can’t wait to come home and get back involved with the Boys & Girls Club sports programs.”