

Serving Our Soldiers

By Alex Alesso

“The local Iraqi people I met often seemed in desperate need of help, and appeared grateful for the help we were able to offer.” I quote from Captain Melissa Tschohl of the Minnesota National Guard. She served from 1995 to 2008; deployed to Iraq in 2003. While based at Camp Scania, she treated the locals’ injuries and soldiers with traumatic experiences.

My Aunt Melissa and a few medics set up a clinic outside the camp for locals who often had burns due to their heating and cooking culture. Lots of support was given from home; medicines, toys, and money. One girl had a defective heart valve, and got sent to the States for treatment, thanks to donations. Soldiers are sent to fight, but they also make meaningful connections with the locals.

As a doctor, Captain Tschohl was able to gain the trust of the soldiers on base, enabling her to help with their traumatic experiences. “The rate of divorce is sky high, as is the rate of suicide.” she informed me, “No one comes back from war the same person they were when they left.” Hearing about post-traumatic stress from someone I know made it more real.

Hearing my aunt’s experiences has motivated me to do more to support our soldiers while they’re serving and when they come home. We can provide moral support and send care packages for not only them, but also the locals they are helping.