

# Mahoney honored for work as Army nurse

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Medford -

There is little doubt that a lot has changed for Megan Mahoney since she was working as a waitress in 2003 and being given the Key to the City earlier this month.

A nurse with the Greater Medford Visiting Nurses Association, Mahoney recently completed a year of service with the Army in Iraq.

"I was part of the poverty draft," Mahoney joked. "I was waiting tables and couldn't afford to go to nursing school."

But nursing is what Mahoney wanted to do and the freckle-faced young woman would get what she wanted one way or another. She went through boot camp and became a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN).

In June of 2006, Mahoney mobilized with the 399th Combat Support Hospital (CSH) and headed to Mosul, Iraq after a period of additional training.

"It looked like something out of M.A.S.H.," said Mahoney. "It was one of Saddam's old bases so it was a good spot for military operations. We did take a lot of indirect fire."

Inside the reinforced hospital, Mahoney felt safe enough. Over in Mosul, mortar fire raining down over the bunkers was much like hail. When it started, a peaceful British voice would announce, "incoming," over the loudspeakers.

"We got mortared, like, all the time," Mahoney said. "I thought it was completely exciting."

When the mortar fire starts, everyone evacuates into the underground bunkers, said Mahoney, adding no one in her CSH was injured.

Most of the patients Mahoney's unit saw were Iraqis. The hospital was set up for mostly routine care, but one never knew when a sudden explosion in the area would send in a rush of blast victims.

On one such occasion, someone set off an explosion at a local marketplace and suddenly the hospital was slammed with patients.

“People are tossing bags of blood back and forth and it’s a high intensity situation. We had this little boy,” said Mahoney. “He was probably 6 years old. He was so stoic so everyone thought it would be a poor prognosis.”

When a small child doesn’t even have the energy to cry or appear upset, Mahoney said, he or she is often at death’s door. When they examined the child more closely, they found a ball bearing lodged in his foot.

Working quickly medical staff removed the debris, bandaged him up and gave him some blood.

“He starts crying and yelling at us and we started cheering,” said Mahoney.

After four busy months in Mosul, Mahoney spent eight more in Al Asad, where things were a bit quieter. She helped to build a hospital, but said she was not as excited as in Mosul.

“It was by far the greatest experience in my life,” she said.

### **Key to the City**

“Something foul is afoot,” Mahoney said, walking down the corridor in her blue scrubs, grinning.

The staff at the VNA set up some snacks and were keeping Mahoney in the office. Before long, Mayor Michael McGlynn walked through the door, plaque in-hand.

“Sometimes we take our military for granted,” said McGlynn to a surprised Mahoney. “These people get uprooted to overseas and make tremendous sacrifices.”

The good-natured yet tough-as-nails Mahoney now blushed a bit.

“As a community, we thank you for all you and your colleagues have done,” McGlynn continued. “And so I present you the Key to the City.”

“I could not be more flattered,” Mahoney said.

Mahoney has been back for about a year now and has worked for the VNA for six months. Being able to swap stories about serving the country, she feels a certain connection with some of the vets she cares for.

“I love it,” she said. “I consider nursing my livelihood.”

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