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# WAR ON TERROR TAKES TOLL ON THOSE AT HOME



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LINDSAY SEMPLE/LSEMPLE@THESTATE.COM

Eight days after surgery, Katherine Griffith, who has cerebral palsy, is back to her happy self. Her older brother, Timothy, not in picture, makes his sister laugh during a pillow fight as their mother, Kim Griffith, watches.

## Father deployed just when family needs him most

By NOELLE PHILLIPS  
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**POMARIA** — The days pass at the Griffith family home with 10-year-old Katherine sitting in a wheelchair with her legs in hot pink and purple casts.

She wears her father's oversized Hawaiian print shirts like nightgowns. They are easier than pulling shorts or jeans over the casts that cover both legs.

With those big, soft shirts draped over her body, Katherine feels just a little bit closer to her father, Sgt. 1st Class Todd Griffith, who is in Afghanistan with the S.C. National Guard.

In June, Katherine underwent surgery at the Shriners Hospital for Children in Greenville, where doctors built arches into her feet. The 10-year-old has cerebral palsy.

It was not an ideal time to have major surgery while Todd Griffith was on the other side of the world.

But Kim Griffith told her husband it would be best to go ahead.

"I said, 'You're doing what you need to do, and we'll do what we need to do.' It's best for

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In May, Kim Griffith takes her family to O'Charley's in the Harbison area, soon after her husband begins his yearlong deployment to Afghanistan.



### ABOUT THIS SERIES

The State newspaper is following the Griffith family of Pomaria throughout the S.C. National Guard's deployment to Afghanistan. For past stories and pictures of the Griffiths, visit [thestate.com](http://thestate.com).

### ABOUT THE GRIFFITHS

Sgt. 1st Class Todd Griffith, 43, is in Afghanistan with the 218th Combat Brigade Team. He left his home in Pomaria in February to train at Camp Shelby, Miss., and was deployed to Afghanistan in early May for a one-year tour. Griffith works in maintenance at Louis Rich in Newberry and serves as a volunteer firefighter. He is married to Kim Griffith. They have two children, Timothy, 15, and Katherine, 10.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY LINDSAY SEMPLE/LSEMPLE@THESTATE.COM

**Nancy Griffith and her granddaughter Katherine have a makeup party in honor of her 10th birthday at their home in Pomaria. Nancy Griffith is staying with the family while her daughter works and Katherine recovers from surgery.**

## GRIFFITHS

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the family to get it over with," Kim Griffith said.

Todd Griffith is supposed to come home from Afghanistan in the summer of 2008. Kim wants the family to be able to play and travel together rather than sit around the house while Katherine heals.

Putting the surgery off yet another summer — until 2009 — is out of the question for a little girl who can't walk through the mall without getting tired.

"She's like an old woman," Kim Griffith said. "She wants to go sit down."

Katherine wanted to get it over with, too.

"I don't want every summer to be like this," she said.

It hasn't been easy, but the Griffiths are getting by.

Katherine's 15-year-old brother, Timothy, entertains her in the living room. They play video games, watch movies and practice directing a marching band, something he wants to do while in high school.

Timothy, too, has raided his father's closet and wears a gray T-shirt with "Army" printed across the front.

The children's grandmother, Nancy Griffith, is there. Nancy

Griffith is spending the summer with her grandchildren while their mother works full time.

She and Katherine paint each other's faces in CoverGirl blush and eye shadow after matching wits in the board game Trouble.

They all miss Todd Griffith, especially now when his strength is needed. It's not just his strong arms that are needed to help lift Katherine in and out of her wheelchair.

They feel secure when he is at home.

On a recent morning, Katherine noticed a stranger in the front yard. She rolled off the couch and pulled her body across the living room floor to hide.

It was a man hired to repair a shed, but Katherine was scared because she didn't recognize him.

"I wish Daddy was home to do that stuff," she said.

Todd Griffith has been in Afghanistan for two months of a 12-month tour. Already, he has missed milestones in his family's life.

In May, Kim Griffith had a breast removed as a preventative measure against breast cancer. The disease already took one breast. But she and Todd decided to have the other removed rather than worry about cancer returning.

He's missed two birthdays —

Timothy turned 15 on April 24, and Katherine turned 10 on June 28.

Todd and Kim Griffith's wedding anniversary is today, and his birthday is Tuesday.

At home in Pomaria, Nancy Griffith, whom the children call Nana, moved into the family's farmhouse to help care for Katherine. Kim Griffith works as a recycling coordinator for the Newberry County Public Works Department.

Because Nancy Griffith has a bad back, Timothy lifts his sister in and out of her wheelchair. He thought about getting a summer job, but his family needed him at home.

"I appreciate him," Nancy Griffith said. "He's a good boy. He helps us out."

Last week, the Griffiths returned to Shriners Hospital for a follow-up. Katherine's feet are healing well, and she gets her casts off July 23.

"Then, she'll get to come home and go swimming," Kim Griffith said. "She can spend the rest of the summer in the pool."

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