

# Postcards from Iraq

## Chance of a lifetime

By Carolyn Wardell  
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My children will tell you it's in my nature to try something different. Earlier this year I was reading about the work going on in Iraq and it intrigued me. It was the kind of challenge I wanted to take on, to see if I could cut the mustard, work in this kind of environment.

So when I told my son and daughter I had decided to volunteer and sign up for a job in Iraq it didn't surprise them. And now that I've been in Baghdad a month, I can truly say it was the right decision. This is a tremendous opportunity professionally and personally.

I'm currently working 12-hour days as a contract specialist in Baghdad. We're helping Iraqis improve their roads, renovate schools, upgrade their sewer and water networks, and upgrade their electric distribution systems. Occasionally one of our Iraqi contractors will stop by. They have a tough job in a challenging environment. It's very satisfying to know we're putting people to work as they help improve basic services in their neighborhoods.

This job is more than meeting my expectations. One of the pleasant surprises was to see that our living conditions weren't as "rustic" as I'd imagined. The food is great and we each have our own room, TV, and refrigerator. It's a very comfy place to go home at night, especially with some personal touches like a rug on the floor and my own microwave.

Bottom line – this assignment has more than met my expectations. I encourage you to consider signing up...it's been a chance of a lifetime.

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**Carolyn Wardell and her son Sgt. 1st Class John E. Crawford are both serving one-year tours in Iraq. Carolyn is a Contract Specialist with U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Gulf Region Division Central District in Baghdad. Crawford is the Force Modernization NCOIC and CBRN NCOIC for HHC Special Troops Battalion 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) from Ft. Hood TX, assigned to Camp Anaconda in Balad. He's been in the Army 16 years and this is his 4th tour to Iraq.**