

[Fallen soldier's family treated to trip](#)

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Jordan Salas and her little brother Ricky, children of Army Pvt. 1st Class Ricky Salas Jr. who died serving in Iraq in 2006, pose with the American Eagle mascot prior to their departure to Dallas Thursday with their mother for a fun-filled weekend courtesy of The Snowball Express. (Mark Wilson Photo)

Roswell's airport terminal was crowded with city officials and well-wishers Thursday, as a local family took to the skies for an all expense paid trip to Dallas as part of the Snowball Express program. The American Airlines charity organizes events for surviving children and spouses of soldiers who have died while on active duty since Sept. 11, 2001.

"Our soldiers give us our freedom," said state Senate President Pro Tem Tim Jennings, who was among the officials present to send off April Baca- Salas and her two children. "We are freer than any other nation in the world and we wouldn't have that without your sacrifices," he said. Ricky Salas Jr. was killed in Iraq by an IED explosion in March 2006.

His former wife and their two kids, Ricky, 5, and Jordan, 7, have been taking part in the annual trip for years. "It just means a lot to know that we are able to communicate and the kids are able to know there's other kids that have gone through what they've gone through," said April Baca Salas.

The family will be treated to various activities, including a “Nutcracker Ballet” performance, which Jordan said she’s looking forward to the most. “I think I’ll like it,” she said. American Airlines says the company is flying 1,300 children and spouses of soldiers to Dallas. Families will be traveling from 48 cities across the country. “It’s very exciting,” said Brett Hooyerink, regional manager for American Eagle.

“We’re very proud to be a part of it.” Mayor Del Journey read a proclamation to the family declaring Dec. 9, 2010, Snowball Express Day.

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