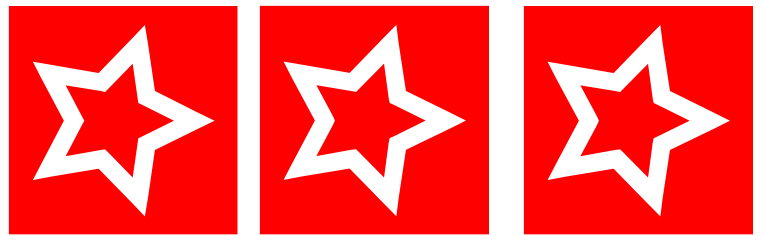


Massachusetts Operation: Military Kids 2008 Annual Report



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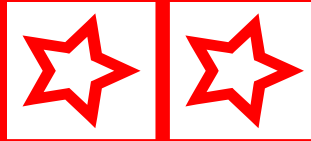


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Operation: Military Kids is a partnership of Army Child and Youth Services, National 4-H Headquarters/USDA, and University of Massachusetts Amherst 4-H Youth Development. Operation: Military Kids. Massachusetts is supported by the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project under Kansas State University special project number 2007-48661-03868.



Massachusetts Operation: Military Kids



Mission and Goals

The University of Massachusetts Extension Outreach 4-H Program coordinates the statewide Operation: Military Kids (OMK) effort. As part of the national Army Child and Youth Services OMK initiative, MA OMK's mission is to support military children and youth. Our statewide team does this by organizing regional teams, by educating communities on the effects of the deployment cycle on military youth and by offering educational, recreational and social activities for those military youth. Specific goals include the packing and delivery of Hero Packs to military children experiencing deployment of a loved one, conducting Ready, Set, Go! workshops on the effects of deployment on children for community members, staffing OMK information tables at events, supporting military youth events, and providing the Mobile Technology Lab (a set of laptop computers, cameras and

printers) at military family events when possible. State team members are from the MA National Guard Family Program, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Westover Air Reserve Base, the Army Reserve Child and Youth Services, Greater Westfield and Cape Cod Boys and Girls Clubs, The American Legion, MA 4-H, Cape Cod Extension, 4-H Camp Marshall and University of Massachusetts Amherst. In addition to the state team, MA OMK has 4 regional teams. The 4 regional teams operate from western MA, central MA, northeastern MA and Cape Cod. They all work together to get the word out about OMK and supporting military children. The State Team coordinator is Gretchen May at 101 University Dr, Amherst, MA 01002,

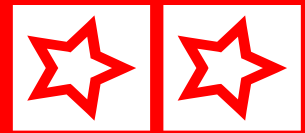
gmay@umext.umass.edu,
413-577-0332.

OMK website:

www.operationmilitarykids.org/MA

"She is very happy and that makes me happy!" (a mother)

"My daughter uses hers (Hero Pack) to bring to summer camp every day. Thank you for all your help!"



One youth wrote:

"I loved scrapbooking because I made something for my dad."





MA OMK Educates Over 3000 Commonwealth Residents!

During 2008, MA OMK delivered 7 Ready, Set, Go! workshops reaching 110 participants. Boys & Girls Club staff, child care providers, conflict mediators and military family members learned about the deployment cycle and the effects of deployment on children. State and regional team members staffed an additional 21 informational sessions around the Commonwealth reaching over 2900 people with the OMK message of supporting military children. Audiences included the MA Association of School Committees, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, MA Early Childhood Educators, Montessori staff, MA Association of Student Councils, VFW's, ELKs, United Way members, among others.

OMK team members trained 9 teens (military and civilian) during 2 "Speak Out For Military Kids" workshops on communication skills in an effort to help them learn how to relay the OMK message. The teens succeeded in producing an OMK public service announcement which can be found at Worcester Community Cable Access www.wccatv.com. The station which has a viewing audience of 57,000 also hosted and archived a Ready, Set, Go! workshop on its website.

MA OMK Delivers Over 500 Hero Packs to Military Children!

During 2008, MA OMK distributed 595 Hero Packs to military children at deployment briefings, Family Readiness Groups, schools, and homes, wherever the child or family member thought it best to be done. Hero Packs contain a thank-you letter written by a non-military youth, a variety of items such as cameras and stationery to be used by the children to stay in touch with their loved ones and items for themselves such as toys and stuffed animals. Teens were given a choice of a Hero Pack or a Hero Package which contained some of the regular items in addition to a gift card. Children too young for Hero Packs were given Hero Totes and infants were given Hero Blankets made from fleece or handmade quilts tied with a ribbon and soft toy.

Raytheon took on Hero Packs as its community service for the fall resulting in a donation of over \$1200. The MA 4-H Foundation donated \$2200. The American Legion Posts donated \$625. Operation Homefront donated hundreds of toys. Two quilters' guilds donated handmade quilts and 2 church groups made fleece blankets for a total of 88 items. 4-H Clubs, Boys & Girls Clubs and a synagogue youth group made Hero Pack thank you cards, raised donations and packed hundreds of Hero Packs. In addition, a variety of community groups, individuals and organizations made contributions to the Hero Pack initiative.



MA OMK
received over
\$8000 worth of
donations for
the Hero Pack
initiative in
2008!



MA OMK Touches Over 1300 Military Youth!

MA OMK supported a myriad of youth events during the 2008 project year. From Cape Cod to Westfield to Littleton over 1300 youth from military families participated in activities such as museum trips, mock deployments, swimming lessons, and leadership trainings. In addition to the 595 youth who received Hero Packs, another 641 attended at least one OMK sponsored event. There were series such as "What's in Our Backyard", "Crafts from the Heart", and "Adventure Club". There were one-day events such as "Talk like a Pirate", "Military Kids Day", "Veterans' Day Flag Session", teen leadership trainings, science day, and holiday events. MA OMK also supported youth activities at Guard and Reserve events.

Of special note was a 6-part yoga and stress management series at which 13 youth were able to discuss their particular stressors and learn techniques for dealing with them. It was so successful, parents asked to attend and a second session was offered in the summer. The instructor donated 10 yoga mats at the end of the session so youth who attended that afterschool program could continue to practice yoga. Also of special note was a day-long series of workshops for military youth organized by a teen 4-H and Girl Scout member. She coordinated 30 volunteers for the event which reached 20 youth and 20 adults. An evaluation was completed by all: 75% stated they learned a specific skill such as making a pillow or scrapbooking and 25 % stated they learned they could make anything they wanted with the right amount of effort.

MA was fortunate to offer 2 weeks of Operation Purple Camp at 4-H Camp Marshall in Spencer meeting its maximum enrollment of 75 military youth each session. The Army Reserves integrated 36 of its youth into a week-long camp at YMCA Camp Lyndon on Cape Cod and MA OMK provided specific activities for those military youth each evening.

MA OMK received its Mobile Technology Lab (MTL) from national OMK this spring. The MTL consists of 10 laptops, 2 printers, cameras, cables, etc. We trained 26 people in its use and brought it to 9 events over the summer. By using the MTL, 150 military youth were able to make cards or pictures to send to their deployed family members