

OPERATION:
Military

Kids

2006

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MILITARY KIDS

**MILITARY FAMILIES
IN OUR OWN
BACKYARD.**

Operation: Military Kids Building Circles of Support!

2006 was an amazing year of accomplishments by our 34 Operation: Military Kids State Teams! Support networks were created for geographically-dispersed military children and youth across the country, backed by the strong partnership of the U.S. Army Family and Morale, Welfare & Recreation Command, National 4-H Headquarters, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, The American Legion, the Military Child Education Coalition, and the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

Using the *Ready, Set, Go!* Manual, OMK State Teams trained thousands of community members about the impact of deployment on families and helped implement support strategies in local settings. This allowed resources to be effectively leveraged for quick response to the changing needs of families in a dynamic military environment. Civic groups and school organizations volunteered time and resources to sponsor events for families and distribute Hero Packs. Clubs and facilities of OMK partner organizations welcomed military youth into their programs and activities.

Events such as *Speak Out for Military Kids* helped geographically-dispersed children and youth cope with deployment of loved ones. Mobile Tech Labs were set up at Armories, state fairs, and community events so youth could learn technology skills and communicate with deployed parents. OMK Teams supported summer camps, allowing kids to get away and have fun with peers who were also separated from family members.

We at Headquarters Army and 4-H are committed to expanding support for our strong OMK Teams, especially in states most affected by the extension of troop assignments and by continuing deployments. In 2007, four new states will initiate OMK Programs; successful OMK initiatives will be replicated and information shared across the country; and Installation Child and Youth Programs will become active members of OMK State Teams.

Together, we will continue to demonstrate to our stakeholders that partnership initiatives such as OMK help reduce stress in the lives of children whose parents are making such a significant commitment to their country. We must never forget that these children are "every day" heroes.

M. A. Lucas
Director, Child and Youth Services
HQ Department of Army

Sharon K.B. Wright
National Program Leader,
National 4-H Headquarters
U.S. Department of Agriculture

"When I started speaking and giving support for Operation Military Kids, I realized how much help it would have been to have somebody like me who could relate to my problems."

*Logan (age 16)
Military Youth*



Operation: Military Kids Expands to 34 States.....

500 representatives of 4-H, Army, National Guard, Reserve, Boys & Girls Club, American Legion and schools were engaged on State OMK Teams in an array of programs supporting military youth.

2005 State Teams

Alabama
Arkansas
California
Florida
Georgia
Hawaii
Iowa
Idaho
Indiana
Maryland
Missouri
New Hampshire
New York
North Carolina
Ohio
South Carolina
Tennessee
Texas
Virginia
Washington

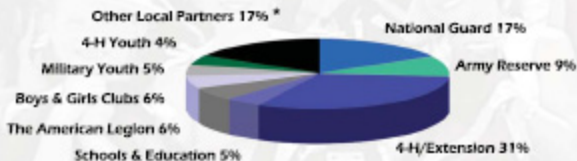
2006 New State Teams

Arizona
Illinois
Kansas
Kentucky
Louisiana
Maine
Massachusetts
Mississippi
Minnesota
Michigan
Nebraska
Nevada
New Jersey
South Dakota



29,000 Youth **in** **34** States participated in OMK

OMK Partners actively participating on 2006 State Teams



* Note: Local OMK partners include The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Americorps, The American Red Cross, Chambers of Commerce, Civic Organizations and many others.

Veterans of Foreign Wars donated 36,422 stuffed animals and 1,200 skype internet calling cards for military youth.

Military Child Education Coalition trained 228 community members during 5 OMK hosted Supporting the Children and Families of Guard and Reserve Institutes©

For more information visit: www.operationmilitarykids.org

State Highlights

- ★ Military 4-H youth received awards during 4-H presentation days in **California** and audiences in the hundreds heard Speak Out for Military Kids speeches about being a military child, having military friends, and how to help other military children in the community.
- ★ **Florida** OMK 4-H Clubs adopted military families, providing them child care, lawn maintenance, meal assistance, and other services. One of these connections was the result of direct contact from a deployed Soldier in Iraq who expressed concern about his wife and children.
- ★ In **Georgia**, Speak Out for Military Kids Ambassadors and 4-H played a key role in the "Operation: Boiled Peanut" project, which raised thousands of dollars to ship Hardy Farms Boiled Peanut treats to soldiers deployed in Iraq.
- ★ OMK state corporate reports in **Hawaii, Minnesota, and Missouri** were used to brief governors, members of congress, and other decision-makers on the impact and accomplishments of OMK programs.
- ★ Interactive Ready, Set, Go! training programs were recorded on streaming video and posted on the **Indiana** 4-H website so that county OMK teams could view the material when it was most convenient.
- ★ The American Legion of **Iowa** Foundation joined OMK to fund 400 mobilization packets for military kids. Teams of military youth selected items for the packets, and wrote peer-to-peer letters that provided tips for kids and their friends, as well as parents and teachers.
- ★ "Suddenly Military" preschool children in **Massachusetts** received OMK "Hero Bags" to complement Hero Packs. The small tote bags contain items such as stickers, stuffed animals, crayons, the Sesame Street "Talk, Listen, Connect" DVD, and American flags.
- ★ To help build statewide support for a sustainable OMK program, the **Michigan** 4-H Foundation set up and publicized a system for direct donations from organizations, businesses, and the general public.
- ★ **Mississippi** OMK, in partnership with Freedom Call Foundation, used state university extension videoconference facilities for one-hour interactive reunions, bringing together local families with Soldiers deployed in Iraq.
- ★ OMK teens planned and produced Young Heroes, a short DVD with discussion guide for teaching **New Jersey** communities about the military deployment cycle and its effect on children and youth.
- ★ A special OMK badge may be earned by **Ohio** Girl Scouts who actively participate in planning and implementing an OMK activity and complete a participation form.

"Since I have learned how to make movies at Operation Military Kids I have taught a lot of people how to make movies too . . . Thank you for helping me learn such a great skill."

*Joshua (age 10)
MTL Participant*

"I learned a lot about what it's like to be a military kid and what I can do at my school to support them."

*Haley (age 14)
RSGF Training Participant*

"I have been to my first SOMK training. I had never done a power point before that weekend, and now I have. I learned a lot about public speaking and what a difference I could make for all military kids"

*Kathrine (age 11)
SOMK Participant*

"SOMK gave my kids some practical tips to help others in their position. I am very grateful for the program and its positive effects on my children."

*Debbie (parent)
SOMK Participant*

Published curriculum materials, information about core program elements, OMK state team summaries, current events and contact information are available on the OMK website at <http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>

Tools for Success



Ready, Set, Go! (RSGI) training, manual and resource CD-ROM: This comprehensive training tool is designed to educate youth workers, educators, counselors and other community service agencies on military culture, the deployment cycle, fostering resilience in kids, influence of the media, and building community capacity. The intent of RSGI training is to increase ordinary citizen's understanding of the unique issues facing military youth and assist them in creating state and local community teams to establish DMK support networks.



Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK) is a youth – led, adult – supported project that generates community awareness of issues and concerns faced by “suddenly military” children and youth. SOMK initiatives include Local Youth Speakers’ Bureau, public service announcements developed by SOMK participants, video productions of “suddenly military” youth telling their stories, and interactive theater productions.



Hero Packs are a tangible expression of support for military families from their communities – especially young people & DMK Partners. Hero Packs are ding bags filled with items designed to keep youth “connected to deployed parents” such as stationary, envelopes, pens or pencils, disposable cameras and journals. Each Hero Pack contains a handwritten letter to the military youth recipient from the non-military youth and parent information an encloses available to their child in local communities.



Mobile Technology Labs (MTL) include laptop computers configured for the internet, digital video cameras, scanners, laminators and software packages, e.g. video/photo editing & webpage design. Mobile Tech Labs allow military kids to communicate with deployed parents by sending special info (e.g. report cards, sports photos, birthday celebrations) by email and design keepsakes (emojis such as scrapbooks). The Mobile Technology Lab also allows the military parents to communicate with children by taping stories and messages to leave behind while they are absent.

Outcomes

- ★ 19 Mobile Technology Labs that helped children and youth connect with their deployed parents. Youth learned how to use video cameras, how to create podcasts and video editing software.
- ★ 2,278 citizens were educated using the **Ready, Set, Go!** training and resource materials. These trainings increased community member awareness of deployment issues facing military kids and families and enabled them to provide support throughout the deployment cycle.
- ★ 9,409 community members attended **Speak Out for Military Kids** presentations generating community awareness of issues and fostering community activism in supporting military families.
- ★ 16,000 **Hero Packs** were distributed to military children and youth in 30 states as a thank you for the sacrifices made during the deployment of a military parent. Hero Packs contain hands on tools to help youth connect with deployed parents and information on local support programs.

"I attended my first SOMK training with my daughter... My daughter enjoyed the activities and meeting other youth like herself. I also saw that she has improved her public speaking skills. I am looking forward to the future in this program."

**Metta
Military Parent**

Operation: Military Kids reflects the best of America...Youth, adults, schools, civic, military, and private organizations coming together to form national, state, and local community support networks for Military Kids...Everyday Heros...Right in our own backyards.



National 4-H
www.national4h.org/partners.gov



U.S. Army Child & Youth Services
www.army.gov/cys



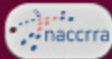
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
www.bgcja.org



The American Legion
www.legion.org



Military Child Education Coalition
www.militarychild.org



National Association of
Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies
www.naccrra.org

**For more information about
Operation: Military Kids, contact:**

e-mail: omkadmin@operationmilitarykids.org
www.operationmilitarykids.org



Operation: Military Kids
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44(Army Youth Development Project,
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