

Project: 4-H Military Project

Project Leader: Linda Horn

Project Overview

One of the frequently overlooked consequences of American military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq is that many thousands of children of National Guard and Reserve households are experiencing the deployment and reintegration of a family member. Those children can experience problems coping with new family circumstances, new responsibilities and new stresses that are now part of their daily lives. A specific, critical need for Massachusetts is that many of our Reserve and National Guard personnel do not live on or near military bases. Instead, thousands of military families are scattered throughout communities across the state and do not have access to the same support and resources that are often associated with living in a more concentrated military community. Research has shown that the most stressful time for reintegrating military families is 9 to 16 months back.

The 4-H Military Project connects children ages 5-18 with educational, recreational and social activities before, during and after the deployment of a parent. The project provides direct assistance to military children and families and educates the broader community on the effects of deployment on children to ensure that all Massachusetts military youth are safe, healthy, and supported.

Activity Summary 2016

- Conduct Hero Pack Letter Writing Workshops (3)
- Maintain OMK Website (2)
- OMK informational sessions (10)
- Science Share Presentation Day (1)

Total Educational contacts

	Youth Contacts	Adult Contacts
In Person	857	980
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	200	27581

Narrative Summary and Impact

The 4-H Military Partnership grant provides a common base for youth whose parents are active or reserve military. In Massachusetts the focus is concentrated on National Guard youth and Hanscom AFB; however, we reach youth who do not live on military bases through programs on Cape Cod, at 4-H Fairs, through partners such as the Greater Westfield Boys and Girls Club, and more.

Nationally, the 4-H program strives to have at least one 4-H club present at all military bases. When youth are re-located, along with their parents, to a new state and environment, they will have a 4-H club presence at that new location. This allows for young people to have a sense of belonging right away; they can continue with familiar projects and a structure they have come to know.

Some highlights of the program this year are as follows. The Hanscom AFB Primary School held an annual science share program for grades kindergarten through 5. Over 100 youth worked in groups to conduct one of several National 4-H Youth Science Day experiments and create a presentation showing their results. The youth worked with over 200 teachers and adult volunteers to conduct the experiments and create results. Oral presentations occurred at an Open House event.

On Cape Cod, 28 youth ages 8-16 attended a specialized 4-H Airforce partnership camp funded by a grant. Youth learned resiliency, emotional management, teamwork, making positive choices, and effective communication skills. Participants included both 4-H and non-4-H members; all had parents who are involved in some aspect of the military.

Youth of military reservists in the Western Massachusetts area are invited to meet monthly at the Greater Westfield Boys and Girls club during drill weekends. The partnership between 4-H and this program allows for youth to meet other reservist families, create understanding of emotions related to parent's involvement or deployment, and choose from STEM and other activities. During the past year over 400 youth participated.

Collaborating Organizations

- **(4-H) Boys & Girls Clubs**
- **Hanscom Air Force Base**
- **Massachusetts 4-H Foundation**
- **Massachusetts National Guard and Army Reserve - Family and Youth Programs**
- **Westover AFB**

