

## **Project: 4-H Military Project**

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### **Project Overview**

The 4-H Military Partnership program creates opportunities and provides support to military connected youth whether they live on or near an installation, in our communities, or on overseas installations. 4-H clubs and opportunities provide consistency in belonging and an opportunity to develop life skills through a positive youth development framework. The 4-H Program is built upon four Essential Elements ensuring that youth feel a sense of belonging in a safe environment, develop independence in both group and individual work, share with others in the community through generosity, and develop a sense of mastery that continues throughout life as they practice and share what they have learned with others. As military families move frequently and experience the difficulties surrounding deployment and reintegration, 4-H provides predictable programming and a safe and nurturing environment for military connected children and youth. (from <http://4-hmilitarypartnerships.org/>)

In Massachusetts, many military personnel are connected to reserve units; it is rare to live on a base. Because of this, military families live within communities across the state and do not have access to the same support and resources that are often associated with being in a concentrated military community.

The 4-H Military Partnership 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. Providing these programs helps youth to understand their relationship to military parents, realize they are not alone in their feelings, and become resilient.

### **Activity Summary 2016**

- Maintain military youth outreach component on Massachusetts 4-H Website
- Work directly with military youth located at Hanscom Air Force Base and at Joint Base Cape Cod
- Provide 4-H Science Kits to elementary youth at the Hanscom AFB Elementary School and assist with Science Share Day
- Hold two one-week camps for military teens to teach life skills, resilience skills, and form bonds with other military connected youth
- Provide support and trainings for teachers and youth/child program coordinators on bases, through reserve activities, and at National Guard events

### ***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 provides a common base for youth whose parents are active or reserve military. In Massachusetts the focus is concentrated on National Guard youth and children of military personnel at the Hanscom AFB. Additional activities, 4-H Clubs, and educational programs are also held for military youth at Joint Base Cape Cod, 4-H Fairs, and through partner organizations such as the Greater Westfield Boys and Girls Club.

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 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. Approximately 80 adults served as mentors to 124 youth who conducted several different science experiments. The science kits were provided by Massachusetts 4-H and were compiled from National 4-H Youth Science Day experiments. The participants created presentations and spoke about their experiments, hypotheses and results gained.

On Cape Cod, 28 youth ages 8-16 attended a specialized 4-H Air force 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 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 and Westover Air Force Bases**
- **Massachusetts 4-H Foundation**
- **Massachusetts National Guard and Army Reserve - Family and Youth Programs**

