

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

- Conduct Hero Pack Letter Writing Workshops (2)
- Maintain OMK Website (1)
- Mobile Technology Lab (2)
- Present Hero Packs (298)
- Present OMK informational Workshops (47)
- Yellow Ribbon Events (1)

Total Educational contacts

	Adult Contacts	Youth Contacts
In Person	920	758
Indirect Contacts (Print, Web, etc...)	1000	200

Narrative Summary and Impact

Massachusetts Operation Military Kids (OMK) supports children of military service members before, during and after deployment by building statewide networks that educate citizens on the impact of deployment on communities, families and youth, as well as providing educational, recreational and social programs for children of military families. It is a program of the Extension 4-H Youth Development Program, UMass Extension and the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment.

Through a wide variety of programs, youth learned skills in outdoor and environmental education, cooking, animal science, public presentations, geocaching and geospatial technology, computers and more. A combination of military personnel, volunteer parents, and 4-H youth professionals and trained volunteers provided the educational programming and events and provided positive adult role models for youth.

Youth participants on military bases are able to join 4-H groups, ensuring that should their family be re-located, they will be able to find another 4-H group to join. This helps youth to readjust to new environments and have a sense of belonging more quickly. They are able to continue their 4-H projects no matter where they are located in the country.

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**