

New Hampshire 4-H Youth Development: Operation Military Kids

“Working Together to Support Military Kids and their Families”

by: Charlotte Cross and Kathleen Jablonski

Did you know New Hampshire 4-H Youth Development has been helping to support military families for the last five years? OMK, as it’s called, does a variety of activities to support military families.

What is Operation: Military Kids (OMK)?

When National Guard, Reserve, and other military families living in civilian communities become mobilized, their children experience the stress of being a military kid. These children have unique needs for special support and services, even though they still “look the same” to their friends and community. University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development partners with all branches of the military, American Legion, Red Cross, schools, the spiritual community, YMCA, community recreation centers, Boys and Girls Clubs, PlusTime NH, and other youth and family organizations to form the outreach effort called Operation: Military Kids. This program functions in 34 states across the country, including New Hampshire.

Goals of OMK

- OMK collaborates with groups across the state to provide sustainable local support services to military youth before, during, and after their family members are deployed.
- OMK creates networks of support for the military children and connects them with other military and non-military youth through a variety of recreational, social and educational programs.
- OMK works to raise community awareness and foster understanding about the impact of the deployment cycle on the military member, family, child and larger community.
- OMK organizations act as resources for military children/families for things like summer camps, after school programs, and more.

Throughout this past summer, workshops, weekends and other educational experiences were planned and held throughout the state. This fall, there is a family camp opportunity for military families. More activities will be scheduled over the fall and winter. Military and non-military youth can participate in these activities.

Community organizations can assist the project by doing a military kid project. For more information, check out the Operation: Military Kids site at http://extension.unh.edu/4H/4H_OMK/4H_OMK.htm

In Grafton County, teens interested in becoming Operation: Military Kids Babysitters can sign up for the class planned for later this year. The course will help teens earn key life skills and gain a sense of responsibility, will increase their community involvement by assisting parents in need of trained childcare providers and will provide a common learning environment and development track for teens. Volunteer babysitters may receive community service credit through Promise Passport or at their school. Participants, upon successful completion of the seven lesson course, would sign an agreement to volunteer at least twice at a military event where parents are present in partnership with an adult volunteer or may babysit for a military family they know. The course will be taught by Kathy Jablonski, Extension Educator, and a trained adult volunteer. To express an interest in the course as a participant or a trainer or find out more about it, contact Ms. Jablonski at 787-6944 or email : Kathleen.jablonski@unh.edu

New Hampshire and Vermont National Guard Units are expecting a large deployment in the coming year. Military families will be in need of our assistance while their soldiers are away. Operation: Military Kids is one way you can help.