



GEORGIA OPERATION:

MILITARY **Kids**

OPERATION:

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MILITARY KIDS

**MILITARY FAMILIES
IN OUR OWN
BACKYARD.**

GEORGIA OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS

DEVELOPMENT OF GEORGIA OMK

- Operation: Military Kids (OMK) represents a unique collaboration between the U.S. Army and local communities through UGA Cooperative Extension.
- An official, nationwide program launch occurred on April 6, 2005, led by Iowa Senator Chuck Grassley. Currently, 42 states actively participate in Operation: Military Kids.
- The program positively affects youth from families of all branches of the military.
- Operation: Military Kids provides support to military kids and their families before, during and after the deployment of a loved one. It recognizes that these youth have significantly different needs than those of active duty military families, as they are members of civilian communities through Georgia.



The State OMK Team includes representatives from Georgia 4-H, UGA Cooperative Extension, Georgia National Guard, Army Reserves, Georgia Department of Education and Boys & Girls Clubs of Georgia.

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2008 GOALS:

- Maintain Operation: Military Kids state team's points of contact.
- Form county OMK teams in 100 of Georgia's 159 counties.
- Support educational efforts for military youth designed and implemented by each Georgia partner.
- Educate youth professionals working with military youth and families.
- Educate interested individuals and organizations statewide in the issues facing Georgia's military families.
- Train youth-adult partners to become SOMK Ambassadors.
- Recognize the efforts of the SOMK Ambassadors and capture their impact.
- Capture and clearly articulate impact through oral and written communications with all stakeholders, the public and project funders.



GEORGIA OMK IMPACT

Counties Trained in RSGI:	157
Military Youth Attending OMK Camping Experiences:	103
Hero Packs Assembled:	1,200
Hero Packs Distributed:	1,150
Mobile Tech Lab Participants:	1,440
SOMK Ambassadors:	17
SOMK Presentations:	82
SOMK Face-to-Face Contacts:	6,247
SOMK Indirect Contacts	934,709
TOTAL IMPACT:	945,105



MISSION:

Georgia Operation: Military Kids builds partnerships to increase capacity for youth, families and communities to support youth of military families.

GEORGIA OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

READY, SET, GO! (RSG!) TRAINING

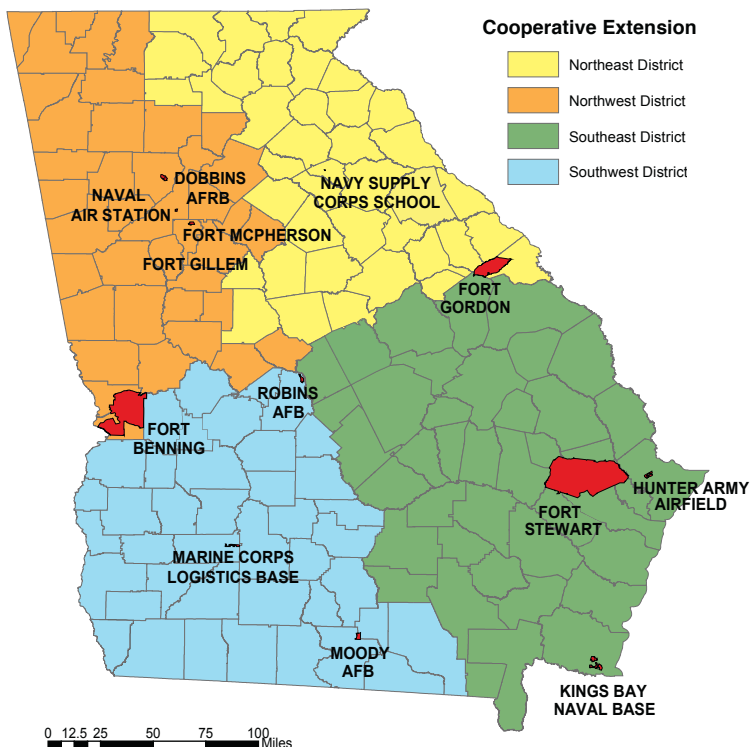
Georgia tailors this multi-faceted interactive training for youth development professionals and other interested community members based on the audience and time restraints. Providing hands-on, practical information to assist families builds local capacity in issues such as military culture, deployment cycle and understanding the influence of media. Facilitators deliver the material through requests and professional conferences.



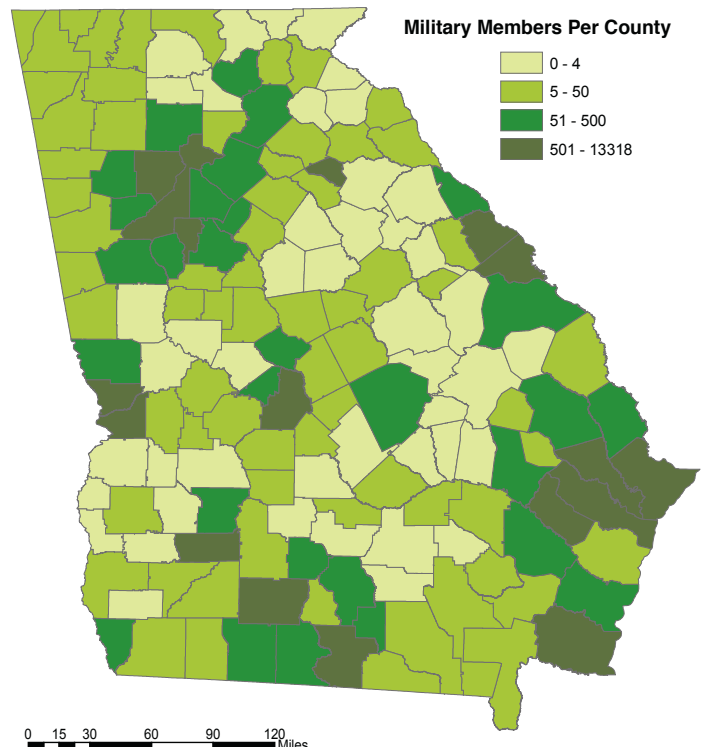
SPEAK OUT FOR MILITARY KIDS (SOMK)

SOMK Ambassadors permeate Georgia, raising awareness for military families among their peers, schools and communities. A youth-adult partnership involving military and non-military youth, SOMK Ambassador Training includes youth-led simulations, interviews and individual research. After training, Ambassadors lead activities for other youth and solicit community support for military families.

GEORGIA MILITARY INSTALLATIONS



GEORGIA MILITARY POPULATION BY COUNTY



GEORGIA OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS

HERO PACKS

A tangible way to hand deliver a salute to military youth for their strengths and sacrifices during deployment, Georgia OMK prepared and delivered over 1,500 Hero Packs to schools, communities and individuals. While a 'pack' may include a variety of items, each one contains a handwritten letter to the young person. In 2007 Dawn Brunson, Army Reserve child & youth coordinator, built a partnership with Children's Healthcare of Atlanta to deliver Hero Packs to youth in its system that experience deployment.



MOBILE TECHNOLOGY LAB (MTL)

Fifteen computers, printers, digital cameras and video cameras allow military families to communicate with their deployed soldiers. Others can use the lab to learn about military families. Thousands attended the Georgia National Fair in 2007 and tested their knowledge online about the military in Georgia using the Mobile Tech Lab.



OPERATION: YELLOW RIBBON

When the 48th Brigade came home to south Georgia, yellow ribbons dotted the interstates, highways and downtown areas. Sponsored by various communities and spearheaded by county Extension offices and SOMK Ambassadors, Operation: Yellow Ribbon helped raise money for other campaigns like Operation: Boiled Peanuts. It also showed the impact of the 48th Brigade. SOMK Ambassadors taught 4-H'ers how to make the yellow ribbons and tied them throughout the area.

OPERATION: BOILED PEANUTS

In 2006, Georgia 4-H'ers mobilized to raise money for a statewide project to package and send boiled peanuts to the 4,300 soldiers of the Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade in Iraq. The seed of Operation: Boiled Peanuts was planted when specialist Clark Rountree called his mother asking for a few bags. Rex Bulloch, a Wilcox County peanut farmer, upped that number when he decided to get enough for the entire brigade. With the Georgia 4-H Foundation fronting \$6,000, they sent about 4,800 bags. Currently, 4-H clubs are planning their second boiled peanut operation in 2008-2009 as the 48th Brigade heads off to Afghanistan.



CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY, STATE 4-H COUNCIL 2007



When Lt. Gen. David Poythress landed his Blackhawk helicopter on Cloverleaf Circle, he was adding meaning to the 2007 State 4-H Council theme of Epic 4-H: Be the Hero. He was there to assist in presenting U.S. flags and 4-H flags flown over the Capitol and national 4-H headquarters to our military installation partners.

At the State 4-H Council, Poythress and his wife Elizabeth taught the 760 youth about the Georgia National Guard and Reserves as well as issues facing military families across our state. The 4-H'ers also learned to better speak out about issues they believe in and how to be a hero within their own communities.

On Sunday, the Poythresses led the annual Citizenship Ceremony. This is a time when 4-H'ers who will become eligible to vote in the next year take a citizenship oath.

SOMK AMBASSADOR SEES MILITARY LIFE FIRSTHAND

At first glance, Heather Williams comes across as a typical University of Georgia freshman, bubbling about her future opportunities. But there's a flicker in her eyes that reveals this political science major has worried about more than clothes and relationships.

She's had to watch her dad deploy. He's currently in Iraq for the second time. He's been to both Afghanistan and Bosnia. And with 14 years in, some of which don't count because he switched from the Navy to the Marines to the Army, he'll probably hear Heather and her four siblings say goodbye a few more times.

"There's a lot of waiting," Heather said, "for bad news and good news. If you know your dad is gone on a mission and you know somebody died, you don't know if your dad matches the person who died. There's a lot of anxiety."

Heather has trouble naming a hometown. She was born in Virginia, moved to North Carolina when she was eight, moved to Hawaii and, finally, in the 10th grade, settled in Georgia. It was in Georgia that she discovered 4-H, its ambassador program and Operation: Military Kids.

Operation: Military Kids is a national initiative involving 42 states with high levels of National Guard and Reserve deployment. Programs are being designed for these youth to help them find positive ways to cope with the stress of their parents' deployment.

And while Heather doesn't fit the Reserve youth category – she's been an active duty military kid most of her life – the OMK program "helped me learn how to cope with things better," she said. "And it helped me help my mom... prepare my mom, especially now that I'm not there."

The program, she said, helped her discover resources available to military families. And it allowed her to see



a military world in Georgia that stretches well beyond Ft. Stewart in Hinesville.

After graduation, Heather plans to join Teach For America, work as a high school government teacher, spend some time in the Peace Corps, get advanced degrees in education and then head off to politics.

Her ultimate goal is to be national school superintendent. After repeating classes because they didn't transfer between states, she wants a national curriculum.

Right now, though, she's serving as a voice for Georgia's military families. At a national conference this spring, she plans to speak on what deployment has meant for her family, and how it has deeply affected her siblings' lives. "I think there needs to be a lot more awareness of military families, a lot more legislative help." And when it comes to local involvement, Heather said there needs to be more concern, "more help for families, physical help that goes beyond money, food and a phone tree."



“Thank you for giving me the opportunity to help not only military families but also to make an impact on other people so they can act.”

— Austin Overbey, Long County SOMK Ambassador

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