

**OPERATION:**  
**Military**



**PACKS**



**OPERATION:**  
● **MILITARY KIDS**  
★ **HERO PACKS** ★





# Hero Packs (HP)

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# **This guide is designed to assist youth groups say “thank you” to “suddenly military” youth and Soldiers in their community.**

## **How to Use this Guide:**

This Guide contains the information you will need to implement your own Hero Packs Project:

- Section 1 provides an overview of the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project and Operation: Military Kids initiative.
- Section 2 provides the “must know” information to properly implement the Hero Packs Project in your community.
- Section 3 provides suggestions for making connections in your community to gain additional support (i.e., partner programming, funding,) for the Hero Packs Project.
- Section 4 provides suggestions for recognizing and reflecting on the experience with your young people.
- Appendix 1 provides resource information including, but not limited to Acronyms, resources/websites and reference materials.
- Appendix 2 provides logistical information on creating, personalizing, and packing the Hero Packs.
- Appendix 3 provides information for facilitating the Connection Activities.

The Hero Pack Project is a support element for the Operation: Military Kids Initiative. The material is supported by the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (YDP), a partnership of the U.S. Army Child and Youth Services and the National 4-H Headquarters, CSREES, U.S. Department of Agriculture and is funded by the YDP, Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Washington State University Special Project 2005-48606-03230.

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Dear Participant:

Thank you for participating in the Hero Packs Project, a support element for the Operation: Military Kids (OMK) initiative. This collaboration of national, state and local OMK Partners is an effort to support “suddenly military” families who have been mobilized or deployed due to the Global War on Terrorism and are living in civilian communities.

Hero Packs serve as a tangible expression of support for military families from their communities and OMK Partners. Hero Packs are backpacks filled by non-military youth with mementos and items designed to help connect kids with their deployed parent. They are a way to hand-deliver a salute to military children & youth for their strength and sacrifices while parents are deployed. A Hero Pack project involves youth groups and adults in a valuable community service effort that also builds awareness and fosters community support for geographically dispersed military families.

Thank you for your support of the Operation: Military Kids Initiative.

Sincerely,

M.-A. Lucas  
Director, U.S. Army  
Child & Youth Services

Sharon K.B. Wright  
National Program Leader  
CSREES/USDA

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Section 1:

Introduction to  
Operation: Military Kids  
(OMK)



# What is the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (YDP)?

The U.S. Army Community & Family Support Center (CFSC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) share a common mission of providing positive youth development programs to build the skills and competencies youth need to lead productive, healthy, and self-sufficient lives wherever they reside. These two federal agencies have created a partnership, the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (YDP), to accomplish their common mission and to make efficient use of public resources.

National 4-H Headquarters, at USDA/CSREES, provides leadership for 4-H Youth Development Programs in Land Grant universities and 3,150 U.S. counties as part of the Cooperative Extension System. Youth aged 5-19 participate in a wide variety of 4-H programs led by youth development professionals and volunteers across the country. The CFSC provides leadership to the Army Child & Youth Services (CYS) programs. The CYS Programs provide quality childcare and youth programs on Army installations worldwide for children and youth ages 4 weeks through 18 years.

The 4-H/Army Youth Development (YDP) partnership assists CYS programs to provide predictable, quality youth programs and introduces 4-H to military youth on installations and in communities worldwide. The YDP also makes significant contributions to:

- ◆ Mission readiness – Soldiers focus on their mission, knowing their children are in safe and supportive environments with caring adults.
- ◆ Reaching new audiences – 4-H reaches a new audience of youth not previously served.
- ◆ Wise use of public resources – Federal agencies improve programs and use tax dollars effectively.

The successful partnership is largely the result of the following accomplishments:

- ◆ The CSREES has Cooperative Agreements with five universities to implement the YDP. Through the agreements, faculty from multiple universities are contracted to administer programs, to develop educational materials, to conduct trainings, and to provide technical assistance for Army youth programs.
- ◆ The 4-H Youth Development and Technology specialists are on loan from their universities for assignments at seven Army Regional offices to work directly with regional CYS staff to assist all installations served by their region.

- ◆ Each state has identified one State 4-H Military Liaison to coordinate military support efforts in the state. Programs are increasingly integrated into the ongoing work and mission of Cooperative Extension.  
([http://www.usda-army-ydp.org/contact\\_liaisons.html](http://www.usda-army-ydp.org/contact_liaisons.html)).
- ◆ The CYS staff have positively embraced the benefits of the partnership and opened the doors for programming to be administered on installations around the world. Such support has resulted in the establishment of 450 4-H clubs at 125 installations worldwide; enrollment of almost 12,000 new 4-H members; involvement of 1,000 Army staff in implementing 4-H clubs.

Through the efforts of the YDP, Active Duty Soldiers are better prepared to focus on the mission at hand by being assured their children and families are being supported at home. At the same time, CSREES is reaching out to a whole new audience of youth and parents who had not previously been involved in 4-H.



# What is

## Operation: Military Kids (OMK)?

As the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) increases military deployments, State 4-H Military Liaisons have stepped forward and worked with CYS and National 4-H Headquarters to develop a coordinated response to the issues that may affect “suddenly military” children of National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers. The OMK initiative was created in a few months, rolled out by 4-H and Army teens at the National 4-H Conference, and celebrated at a Capitol Hill reception in April 2005. The National Guard, Army Reserve, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC), The American Legion, Schools and other community organizations joined CYS and 4-H to create a collaboration which will reach out to “suddenly military” youth...before, during and after their parents are deployed – Operation: Military Kids.

Operation: Military Kids focuses on those young people whose parents are being called in increasing numbers by the National Guard and Army Reserve for extended assignments. While these youth do not relocate, their lives are changed dramatically when a parent suddenly is mobilized or deployed and leaves the family for extended and often dangerous assignments. Families of National Guard and Army Reserve are usually not on military installations, but rather, dispersed throughout the United States in rural areas, small towns, suburbs, and cities. In addition, many of these families live 50-100 miles away from any other National Guard or Army Reserve families and from the normal military support mechanisms. They may lack connections to other military families and youth who are experiencing the deployments and separations. Until deployment, these families have been civilians and have had little or no experience dealing with the military. Clearly, they face new challenges and risks.

### Operation: Military Kids initiative:

- Create community support networks for military youth “in our own backyard” when Soldier parents are deployed.
- Deliver recreational, social and educational programs for military youth living in civilian communities.
- Support military kids coping with the stress of knowing their deployed parents may be in harm’s way.
- Collaborate with Schools to ensure staff are attuned to the unique needs of military students whose parents are deployed.
- Educate the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on Soldiers, families, kids and the community as a whole.
- Incorporate “suddenly military” families into ongoing Partner Programs offered by 4-H Clubs, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (B&GCA), The American Legion, and others, in the communities where they live.

## GOALS

The OMK initiative includes four major core support elements – Ready, Set, Go! Manual (RSG), Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK), Mobile Technology Labs (MTL), and Hero Packs Project (HP).

# GOALS

## Hero Packs Project:

- Recognize the strengths of military-connected children and youth.
- Provide a symbol of thanks to children and youth for the sacrifices they make when their parents are deployed.
- Provide the tools to help “suddenly military” children and youth stay connected with their absent parent.
- Educate the non-military community about the challenges “suddenly military” families are facing to support the GWOT.

This guide contains “how to” information for incorporating the Hero Packs Project into your Operation: Military Kids initiative.

## Connection Activities

To assist your group in understanding the importance of the OMK initiative, we recommend using the introductory activities in Appendix 3. Connection activities for the youth and adult group leader(s) help to introduce OMK and to discuss “suddenly military” families and the emotions of deployment.





# What is "Suddenly Military"?

Before September 11, 2001, the Reserves and National Guard Soldiers were viewed as "weekend" or "citizen" Soldiers. Since that day, our nation's reserve component, the Reserves and National Guard have been integrated into the ongoing peacekeeping and combat missions with the military's active component forces.

Due to the increasing numbers of National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers being called to duty for long periods of time, we can no longer classify these service members as "weekend" or "citizen" Soldiers, and likewise, their families are no longer just everyday citizens. These families are "suddenly military." "Suddenly military" families are families whose part-time service member is activated to full-time status (i.e., long-term deployment). The family is no longer a civilian family. The family is now identified as a military family, which has to face the same issues as an Active Duty family. They now give our community another reason to hang a yellow ribbon on the house or the car. Mommy is no longer just a lawyer, she is a military medic. Daddy is no longer just a school teacher, he is an infantryman.

Even though these families are eligible for Active Duty support they may be geographically dispersed and may not have access to all the resources that Active Duty families have. Financial losses can be incurred, military support systems are not easily accessible, and Schools are not prepared for the "out of norm" stressors (i.e., safety of a parent, parent unable to attend a special event). There is a lack of community awareness and support, too much war dramatization by the media, and child care is not available or does not meet the needs of the family. These "suddenly military" families, especially the children, are in need of additional support.

OMK is an initiative dedicated to supporting children of military members belonging to the National Guard and Army Reserve. These youth rarely have a direct connection to the military and are often located far away from any military installation. Very few support programs exist for these youth whose lives are turned inside out when their parents are deployed for long periods of time. OMK brings together military, 4-H, Schools, B&GCA, The American Legion, and various community organizations to help build community networks of support for these youth and families and creates a greater understanding of the challenges of "suddenly military" life throughout the communities and states.

## Connection Activities

“Suddenly military” is a difficult concept for both youth and adults to understand. Youth and adult leaders working with the youth will find connection activities listed in Appendix 3 that will assist youth groups to better understand the changes occurring in “suddenly military” families. We recommend the Connection activities 1-3.

# Participation

## in the Hero Packs Project

By participating in the Hero Packs Project support piece, youth will be engaged in character education and community service work.

Each military branch has a set of core values. While specific words vary from branch to branch, the principles are the same and serve as the foundation for the military.

### Army

- Loyalty
- Duty
- Respect
- Self-less Service
- Honor
- Integrity
- Personal Courage

### Air Force

- Integrity
- Service before Self
- Excellence

### Navy and Marines

- Honor
- Courage
- Commitment

The CHARACTER COUNTS! Six Pillars of Character connect closely with the values identified by the military.

### Six Pillars of Character

1. **TRUSTWORTHINESS** – promise-keeping, integrity, honesty, loyalty
2. **RESPECT** – courtesy, autonomy, diversity, Golden Rule
3. **RESPONSIBILITY** – duty, accountability, pursuit of excellence
4. **FAIRNESS** – openness, consistency, impartiality
5. **CARING** – kindness, compassion, empathy
6. **CITIZENSHIP** – lawfulness, common good, environment

As your groups compile and distribute Hero Packs, have participants think of the many ways this activity displays character. Here are some beginning ideas.

<b>Pillar of Character</b>	<b>Military Child (Recipient of Hero Pack)</b>	<b>Non-military child (Giver of Hero Pack)</b>
<b>TRUSTWORTHINESS</b>	Keeping their word to the family soldier; being honest and loyal to the soldier and to other family members left at home.	Showing loyalty to other young people who are having unique experiences and feelings.
<b>RESPECT</b>	Understanding what other family members are going through even if their reactions are different. Showing respect to other authority figures – teachers, etc.	Showing appreciation for military families who are separated by duty in an effort to preserve our freedoms.
<b>RESPONSIBILITY</b>	Doing what family members ask them to do. Completing chores without being asked.	Collecting extra items for the Hero Packs, arriving on time to help fill and distribute packs.
<b>FAIRNESS</b>	Understanding that all family members are experiencing the separation differently, yet treating everyone fairly in family decisions and chores.	Equitably providing items for the Hero Packs so every military child will receive something to show your appreciation. Understanding that even though the items in the Hero Packs are really wonderful, they are to be given to military children and not kept for themselves.
<b>CARING</b>	Appreciating what others do for the military families, including those who are distributing Hero Packs.	Writing letters expressing gratitude for the military families' sacrifice and knowing it is a situation one cannot really understand without experiencing the separation firsthand.
<b>CITIZENSHIP</b>	Knowing citizenship is a responsibility of every citizen regardless of age. Showing pride in what their family Soldier is doing to defend and protect us all.	Knowing citizenship is a responsibility of every citizen regardless of age. Showing pride and respect in what Soldiers are doing to defend and protect us all.

Community service work allows young people to make a contribution or change within their community. It is an opportunity for youth to understand the community in which they live and the impact it has on their lives. While an individual may be learning when participating in community service, the main focus is on the service work that assists young people in better understanding the sense of duty a service member has when he or she is carrying out a mission. Hero Packs will also help youth develop and carry out a service program to improve the quality of their environment by:

- ◆ Recognizing the strengths of military-connected children and youth
- ◆ Providing a symbol of thanks to children and youth for the sacrifices they make when their parents are deployed
- ◆ Providing the tools to help “suddenly military” children and youth stay connected with their absent parent.
- ◆ Educating the non-military community about the challenges “suddenly military” families are facing to support the GWOT.

Youth of all ages are capable of performing community service work; however, take care to match the difficulty of the project with the developmental stage of the child. While great difficulty and frustration may provide excellent learning experiences for the older teen, they may simply mean bad memories for the young child. Adapt the activities listed in this guide according to your knowledge of the child or youth participating.

All of us perform better when we choose what we want to work on. Children are no different. It is useful to brainstorm ideas with children, asking them how they would like to help, or what they would like to see happen in their neighborhood or community to support “suddenly military” families. Use suggestions provided in these pages, to prompt ideas, but let the youth participating in the activity choose what they want to do.

*Information adapted from, Compiled Herbert J. Engman, Senior Extension Associate, Department of Human Development and Family Studies. College of Human Ecology, Cornell University.*





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Section 2:

Hero Packs  
Project Implementation



# Background and Information

## What are Hero Packs?

Hero Packs are a hands-on way for youth to hand deliver a salute to military children and youth for their strength and sacrifice while parents are deployed. Hero Packs serve as an expression of support for military families from their communities and OMK Partners. The Hero Packs Project is community service work that builds awareness and fosters community support for geographically dispersed military families.

Hero Packs consist of three elements: an appreciation element, a content element, and a support element.

### The appreciation element:

The Hero Pack as a whole serves as a salute and a token of thanks to the “suddenly military” family. Hero Packs are backpacks that include a collection of family support materials, communication tools, and fun items military children can enjoy with their siblings, non-military parent, or friends.

### The content element:

Youth will “pack” into the backpack a variety of family support materials, communications tools, and fun items. Communication tools are meant to help encourage a connection between the deployed parent and their child. For instance, the camera can be used to capture memories the child may wish to share with their parent either by mailing the pictures immediately or saving them in the photo album/scrapbook or picture frame until reunion. Fun items, such as a stuffed animal or Frisbee, are there simply to bring joy to the affected youth.

### The support element:

In each backpack, youth will be provided with OMK Partner information and family support materials. The OMK program has partners on the national, state, and local level. (Please refer to Section 3 for more Partner Program information) OMK Partners are working together to create networks in communities across America to support these geographically dispersed military families.

## Connection Activities

“Deployment” is a difficult concept for both youth and adults to understand if one has never experienced it. We recommend you make use of Connection activities 4-5 in Appendix 3.

## Who can build Hero Packs?

Any group of youth that wants to get involved – Boys & Girls Club members, The American Legion, local baseball team, 4-H members, chess club from School, church youth group, etc.

## Where do you start?

First and foremost, the Hero Packs Project is a youth-led and adult supported project. Youth and adult leaders who want to participate in the Hero Packs Project must contact the State 4-H Military Liaison (<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>). The State 4-H Military Liaison along with the National Guard Youth Program Coordinator, the Army Reserve Region Child and Youth Services Coordinator and/or the Family Readiness Group leader(s) associated with those units can assist your youth group in identifying what units are currently deployed in your area.

Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) are the primary way of communicating information to a Soldier’s family. The FRG Leader(s) will assist your group in identifying the number of youth affected by the deployment and how best to access the families. As this process takes place, please understand there is a great degree of confidentiality in working with the families. We do not want to promote that a family has a loved one gone and set them up for any risks. (Please refer to the timeline in Appendix 1).

# Contents

## Core contents of Hero Packs

Backpack - Backpacks can be bought or made. (Please refer to Appendix 2 for directions to sew an inexpensive backpack.)

Partner information for Parents – Recipients’ families need support information available from the many partners (national, state, and local) to assist them during this stressful deployment time. A sample list of national partner information follows but is not limited to:

- OMK Information card
- OMK information and resources specific to the state and/or community
- Up-to-date 4-H club program information
- Up-to-date Boys & Girls Clubs of America program information
- Up-to-date program information for The American Legion
- Military Child Education Coalition (MCEC) “staying involved in your child’s education during deployment” booklet
- Operation: Military Child Care Blue Card (OMCC)
- MilitaryOneSource Information (<http://www.militaryonesource.com>)
- Operation: Child Care Rest & Recreation (R&R) card (OCC)
- Local Partner information

Handwritten appreciation letters – These letters should be written to the child and to their deployed family member thanking them for their service and sacrifices to our country. You may also consider collecting letters of encouragement from local partners or businesses that have donated items for the Hero Packs. (Please refer to Appendix 2 for letter guidelines).

Fun items – Good examples of fun items may be stickers, a stuffed animal or Frisbee. These non-breakable items are there simply to bring joy to the youth.

Connection/communication tools – Although the items listed above can communicate to the recipient the community’s appreciation and support it does not assist the youth in staying connected to the deployed family member. Hero Packs must include 3 acceptable connection tools to complete the core contents.

## What type of items are acceptable as connection tools?

Disposable camera – If a parent is deployed for long periods of time, we want the recipients to have an opportunity to take pictures of family and friends and have people take pictures of the recipient to send to the deployed parent or to post in a photo album/scrapbook.

Photo album/scrapbook – Military children will want to take lots of pictures to show their parent. Photo albums/scrapbooks will help the child organize the pictures by chronological order, by events, or by favorite pictures. (Please refer to Appendix 2: Resources for directions to create two different types of inexpensive photo albums/scrapbooks).

Journal/pen – Recipients will use the journal to write down their thoughts and daily events. This can be shared with the deployed parent upon homecoming.

Stationery – Military youth will want to send their parent lots of mail, especially handwritten letters. Soldiers really enjoy getting mail. Providing the child with paper will motivate him or her to write more to the parent.

Other items that the recipient could send to the soldier:

- Video diaries created with the MTL
- Worry dolls (Directions found in Appendix 2)
- Postage stamps
- Pens
- Gift card to the Post Exchange (PX)
- Prepaid phone calling card (Operation: Uplink)
- Locally donated items

\* Please note OMK State teams will need to decide if they want to have the same three connection/communication tools in each backpack distributed or to give youth groups an acceptable list and let them choose their three tools.



As discussed above, these elements are considered the core contents for Hero Packs because they are important in helping the youth stay connected to the deployed parent and assist the youth and their family in becoming more aware of the local support available to them. Hero Packs are not limited to the items listed above. Youth may include additional items as long as they fall into one of the following categories - family support materials, communication/connection tools, and fun items. Example items may be: OMK lanyards or hard candy.

## How to obtain locally donated items?

Locally donated items will assist the OMK initiative in building community awareness and the local support network. In addition, it will give the “suddenly military” families a little touch of home. When working within your community and asking for donations, please keep in mind the donations need to be a family support item, a communication tool, or a fun item to support the goal of the Hero Packs Initiative.



Figure 1

A good example of a locally donated item is from a company in New York State, which is located just outside of Ft. Drum. The company, famous for their “Little-Tree” hanging air fresheners, expressed an interest in donating a product (specifically their patriotic trees). These items can either be a connection tool or a family support item. The trees can be easily mailed to the deployed Soldier (i.e., assist with connecting to the Soldier) or displayed by the family of the deployed Soldier (i.e., community awareness and support). As a result of the desire to become involved, the company becomes a local support partner through its donation.

## Last piece

It is helpful for the OMK program to receive feedback from the recipient family. Below is an example of a possible letter to include in the Hero Packs. Be sure to include a stamp and the return address for your State 4-H Military Liaison.



## Operation: Military Kids – Hero Packs

Are you?:    Boy                      Girl                      What's your Age? \_\_\_\_\_

Is Your Mom or Dad a Soldier? \_\_\_\_\_

Please check the Branch of Service?

- ☐ Army
- ☐ Navy
- ☐ Air Force
- ☐ Marines

How did you receive your Hero Pack?

- ☐ Individually
- ☐ At an Event
- ☐ FRG Meeting
- ☐ Camp
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Did you use all the items? Yes    No                      Was it helpful to you? Yes    No

What did you like? \_\_\_\_\_

What didn't you like? \_\_\_\_\_

What would you change? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you contacted OMK Partners as a result of the Hero Pack? Yes    No

Which Partners? \_\_\_\_\_



# Assembly and Distribution of Hero Packs



## How to get packs assembled?

In a place visible to all “packers,” have a backpack set out with the contents around it. Once you’re ready to begin, use of assembly lines is an efficient way to assemble backpacks. There are two assembly line options:

- Have each youth fill the entire backpack by carrying it along the line.
- Pass backpacks down the line, having each youth in charge of a particular item.

It is important that each backpack includes youth written letters to the military child and the service member. There may be youth in your group who would prefer to write letters while others may have no interest in the letter writing aspect. It is up to you, as the leader(s), to decide how to accomplish the letterwriting task.



## What kinds of events lend themselves to include Hero Packs?

Small groups – Torch club meeting, 4-H club meeting, Keystone club meeting, church youth group meeting, etc.

Mass events – Regional/National Boys & Girls Club conferences, County or State fairs, Teen Leadership events, 4-H Congress, School Government Day, community get together at The American Legion, etc. Try to combine with community events or take advantage of National events or highly publicized programs such as:

- Nickelodeon Big Help Day
- National Kids Day
- National 4-H Week
- Catch The Sprit – Prudential
- Colgate – Youth For America
- National Service Day
- National Guard and Army Reserve events
- Launching OMK in a state or community

## How to distribute to groups or individually

Youth and adult leaders participating in the Hero Packs Project must continue to communicate with the State 4-H Military Liaison. The State 4-H Military Liaison needs to be told of your plans for your Hero Packs Project as they must continue to play a role in communicating with the National Guard Youth Program Coordinator and the Army Reserve Family Program Coordinator, as well as the FRG leader of the identified unit(s). It is the intent of the Hero Packs Project for youth to hand deliver the backpacks to the recipients. Deliveries could be made at an FRG meeting or perhaps a community event. Find a common date and time that your youth group and volunteers can meet with the FRG representative to create an action plan for youth to hand deliver these packs.

The FRG representative will be the link for your group to personally deliver Hero Packs to families. Preferably, the FRG Leader(s) will visit the same day the packs are assembled. This is significant in that the youth who worked so hard can see their efforts are going to support actual people, and not just sitting in a closet. Please stress with the group that if a face-to-face opportunity does not occur it is only because of confidentiality in working with the “suddenly military” families. We do not want to advertise that the family has a loved one gone and set them up for any risks.





On the day of distribution it would be helpful to the receiving families to have current partner information in the backpacks. Invite these “suddenly military” families to participate in 4-H programs and local Boys & Girls Club programs as well as other national, state, and local partner programs within their area. Give to the recipients a list of upcoming open events (shows, fair, etc.) and local contact information. They may decide they would like to become involved in partner programs. Once the packs are distributed, please alert partners (state and local) that they may be receiving phone calls of interest.

## How to Prepare a News release Pre-event/Post-event

Begin your news release with the most noteworthy and newsworthy fact to capture the editor’s attention. Put in all the information readers will want to know in a style familiar to editors: who, what, where, when, why and how. Tips to remember:

- Don’t disclose any personal information regarding the deployed unit families.
- Always include the 5Ws and H (who, what, where, when, why and how)
- Begin with the most noteworthy information and continue in descending order of importance.
- Use complete names, addresses, and telephone numbers for contact information, check again for accuracy.
- Sample available in Appendix 2.

# Reporting Requirements

## Documentation of the Hero Packs Projects

Thank you for your dedication and support of the Hero Packs Project! Please provide a short narrative and pictures of your event and be sure to complete the Hero Packs report form (Appendix 2). Once you have submitted a report form to the State 4-H Military Liaison, they will forward a certificate to your group. This is our token of thanks for participating in this program support piece for OMK.



**OPERATION:**

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**PACKS**

Section 3:

Hero Packs  
Project Support



# Funding

While these packs are intended to provide military youth with the most “bang” for the buck, if you are creating more than four or five packs, it can get costly. As clubs and organizations get excited, the number of packs they hope to give will rise. This can be very expensive. Because we do not want you to be deterred from participating in this outstanding program, we would like to offer some funding possibilities:

## How do we pay for these packs?

There are many options for finding the funds necessary to create Hero Packs. Perhaps you do not want to purchase pre-made items at all. In Appendix 2 you will find patterns and information to make homemade Hero Packs.

For example: Sewing simple pull-string bags is an easy, affordable, and fun way to create bags necessary for the packs. This activity not only will be a sewing project, but also will be part of the larger community service program. Some clubs have used fancy pillowcases as bags, providing the pack recipients with markers to decorate the bags before sending them overseas to their deployed parent.

**Fundraisers** – Most youth groups already raise funds to help pay for trips, special activities, t-shirts and other items. You may choose to plan and advertise a fundraiser specifically to pay for Hero Packs materials.

**Forming a Partnership** – Many community organizations are already trying to support military families. Consider asking the local B&GC, 4-H program, The American Legion, VFW, scouts, School, church, store, library, or another club if they might be interested in teaming with your group to create Hero Packs for military children in your community. Consider asking your local Chamber of Commerce for a list of businesses and organizations in your community.

**Grants** – There are funds available for non-profit groups interested in providing community service. Below is a list of websites that may assist you in your search for grants to support community service and other such projects:

- [www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org)
- [www.youthventure.org](http://www.youthventure.org)
- [www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org)
- [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org)
- Check the internet on a regular basis for other grant or mini-grant opportunities.

# Partner Information



Who are OMK Partners? (<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>)

Operation: Military Kids is a successful initiative because of its collaborative effort on national, state, and local levels. The national or core partners for OMK are CYS, National Guard, Army Reserve, The American Legion, USDA/CSREES – National 4-H Headquarters, B&GCA and the MCEC. A Core partner is an organization that has made a commitment at the national level to participate in and support the OMK initiative.

Connecting the national partners to the states are the State 4-H Military Liaisons (<http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>). The State 4-H Military Liaison serves as OMK Project Director and assembles a state OMK team, whose mission is to create long-term state and community support networks to educate citizens on the impact of the war and deployments on military children and families, And to develop and deliver educational programs for youth and families of deployed Soldiers. In addition to national partners, the OMK Team also must include a representative from the State Department of Education. The State OMK Team members make the final local connection to involve businesses, scouts, faith-based organizations, VFWs, etc.

Why do the OMK Partners participate?

The partner organizations have created a support network for the geographically dispersed “suddenly military”. These partner organizations are local and can be accessed easily. This partnership is successful due to the organizations building on their strengths and addressing their weaknesses for the good of the “suddenly military” families.

How can “suddenly military” families get involved in the partner programs?

“Suddenly military” families will find in each Hero Pack brochures and pamphlets to give them additional information on how to access partners in their state and local communities. Hero Packs assemblers must make sure such family support materials are available. The State 4-H Military Liaison and the Family Program Coordinators can direct groups in locating this information.

How can participating partners be contacted?

Many of the partners’ websites are in Appendix 1, on the OMK website, or available by contacting your State’s 4-H Military Liaison.





**OPERATION:**

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Section 4:

Recognition and  
Reflection



# Recognition and Reflection

## Recognition

Find some way to recognize and thank the youth who have participated. Try to provide a snack or even a light lunch. Depending on the number of supplies you have and how you received them, you may consider allowing each participating youth to take home a small toy or stuffed animal.

Please complete the report form found in Appendix 2 so your group may be recognized with a certificate from the OMK Project.

Submit a post-event news release.

## Reflection

After you have completed the process of putting together and handing out the Hero Packs, take a few minutes to talk to your group about the importance of supporting military children and their families. This is not meant to be a political discussion, instead, remind the youth of the sacrifice military families make, and that the kids in this family will not be able to see their father or mother for a very long time as they serve the country overseas and in war.

Some questions to ask your group are:

- What did you hope to learn and achieve?
- Did you accomplish your goals?
- How did you feel about your experience?
- What are the most important things you learned and how will they help you in the future?

## Connection Activities

Have your group participate in Connection Activity 6 (Appendix 3)

# Next Steps

Congratulations you have successfully completed Operation: BugOut. Below are some ways you can continue to support our “suddenly military” families as well as the humanitarian efforts of our Soldiers that are deployed:

## **OMK supported opportunities:**

- Ready, Set, Go! (RSG) - The Operation: Military Kids (OMK)—Ready, Set, Go! (RSG!) Training Manual was developed for distribution to state, regional, and local teams as well as key military, school, and community stakeholders. Coordinated regional and local training efforts are needed to increase understanding of the unique issues facing military youth who are dealing with the deployment or reintegration of a parent or loved one. These workshops offer an insight into military culture and the deployment cycle; and suggest ways to best provide for, understand the needs of, and support military kids and their families through community
- Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK) - SOMK is a youth –led, adult supported project that generates community awareness of issues faced by youth of military families. Through simulations, interviews, and research, participants find out first hand what military families go through during deployment. and then form speakers bureaus. Participants in the speakers bureau develop presentations, public service announcements, videos, and other materials and actively seek to share their experiences with others in the community (e.g. school assemblies, Rotary clubs, city council, teacher in-service).
- Mobile Tech Lab Events (MTL) - The MTL is designed to facilitate the connection between deployed soldiers and the children & youth left behind utilizing mobile technology. Available for use are 15 laptop computers, a digital camera, a video recorder, a printer, a scanner and the necessary software and materials for children and youth to send a personal message to their deployed loved one.
- Hero Packs Project (HP) - Hero Packs are a hands-on way for youth to hand-deliver a salute to military children & youth for their strength and sacrifice while parents are deployed. Hero Packs serve as an expression of support for military families from their communities and OMK Partners. The Hero Pack project is community service work that builds awareness and fosters community support for geographically dispersed military families.

## **Army supported opportunities:**

- Adopt-A-Platoon Program / Adopt-a-Soldier Program
- Adopt-A-Family Program
- Pen Pal Program
- Operation: Up Link
- Operation: HomeFront

For more ideas to support our troops visit [www.army.mil](http://www.army.mil) and check out the Support Troops page.



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Appendix 1:

Resources



# Key Acronyms

B&GCA	Boys & Girls Clubs of America / Boys & Girls Clubs
CCEJC	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Jefferson County
CFSC	U.S. Army Community & Family Support Center
CSREES	Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service
CYS	U.S. Army Child & Youth Services
FRG	Family Readiness Group
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
HP	Hero Packs
MCEC	Military Child Education Coalition
MTL	Mobile Technology Labs
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
OCC	Operation: Child Care for R&R childcare
OMCC	Operation: Military Child Care for day-to-day childcare
OMK	Operation: Military Kids
OPP	Operation: Proud Partners
POC	Point of Contact
PX	Post Exchange
R&R	Rest & Recreation
RSG	Ready, Set, Go! Manual & Training
SOMK	Speak Out for Military Kids
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
YDP	4-H/Army Youth Development Project

# Timelines/ Agenda

## Step 1:

### Youth Group Meeting #1

#### Goals to Accomplish

- Introduce the concept of OMK and Hero Packs
- Introductory Activities #1-3 (Appendix 3)
- Group consensus to participate in the Hero Packs Project

#### Sample Agenda

- Group arrives/introductions/refreshments
- Ice breaker
- Why are we here today information – What is OMK?
- Facilitation of:
  - Introductory activity #1
  - Introductory activity #2
  - Introductory activity #3
- Group discussion on participating in the Hero Packs project
- Next steps discussion

## Step 2:

The Group's Youth and Adult Leader(s) contact the State 4-H Military Liaison at <http://www.operationmilitaryKids.org>

## Step 3:

The State 4-H Military Liaison contacts the National Guard Youth Program Coordinator and the Army Reserve Family Program Coordinator to identify what units are deployed and the FRG Leader(s) contact information

## Step 4:

The FRG Leader(s) identified for currently deployed units are contacted by the appropriate Family/Youth Program Coordinator





## Step 5:

The Group's Youth and Adult Leader(s) meet with the FRG Leader(s) to discuss the number of units deployed and the number of children and youth affected

## Step 6:

### **Youth Group Meeting #2**

#### Goals to Accomplish

- Connection Activities #1-3 (Appendix 3)
- Discuss:
  - How many units or children the group wants to reach
  - Funding
  - Supplies
  - Local donations and partners
- Plan Packing Day
- Plan Delivery Day

#### Sample Agenda

- Group arrive/introductions/refreshments
- Ice breaker
- Why are we here – HP planning
- Facilitation of:
  - Connection activity #1
  - Connection activity #2
  - Connection activity #3
- Meet the FRG leader(s)
- Group discussion on Hero Packs Project goals: How many units/children wanting to reach, funding, supplies, donations, partners, etc.
- Assign tasks and roles for participants
- Group discussion on the packing day – date, time, etc

## Step 7:

The Group's Youth and Adult Leader(s) communicate to the State 4-H Military Liaison and the FRG the packing day date

## Step 8:

The youth group will need to complete the following before the packing day event:

- Gather supplies
- Distribute news release
- Contact and gather local partner information

## Step 9:

### **Packing Day**

Goals to Accomplish

- Connection Activities # 4-5 (Appendix 3)
- FRG Leader(s) attend the event
- Create Hero Packs

Sample Agenda

- Group arrives/introductions/refreshments
- Ice breaker
- Why are we here – HP packing
- Facilitation of:
  - Watch Lauren’s speech
  - Connection activity #4
  - Connection activity #5
- Encouragement from the FRG leader(s)
- Pack – set-up packing stations
- Assign tasks and roles for participants
- Packing of HP’s
- Letter writing
- Pack Complete HP’s for delivery day
- Next steps discussion

## Step 10:

To plan Youth Group Meeting #3, with the FRG Leader(s), the hand delivery day of the Hero Packs



## Step 11: **Delivery Day**

### Goals to Accomplish

- Connection with FRG Leader(s)
- Backpacks to be transported
- Identify roles: presenter, photographer, activity coordinator, etc.
- Next steps

### Sample Agenda

- Group arrive/introductions/refreshments
- Ice breaker
- Why are we here – HP delivery
- Review members' role
- Encouragement from the FRG leader(s)
- Delivery of HP's – may be to a home, may be at a National Guard or Reserve function, may be at an FRG meeting
- Next steps discussion

## Step 12: **Youth Group Meeting #4 – Follow-up**

### Goals to Accomplish

- Connection Activity #6 (Appendix 3)
- Post event news release
- Report Form
- Next steps

### Sample Agenda

- Group arrive/introductions/refreshments
- Ice breaker
- Why are we here – next steps
- Facilitation of:
  - Connection Activity #6 (Appendix 3)
- Next steps discussion

# Resources

- ♦ Operation: Military Kids Website - <http://www.operationmilitarykids.org>
- ♦ Military One Source - <http://www.militaryonesource.com>
- ♦ National 4-H Headquarters (USDA) - <http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov>
- ♦ CYFERnet-Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network - <http://www.cyfernet.mes.umn.edu>
- ♦ National 4-H Council - <http://www.fourhcouncil.edu>
- ♦ National 4-H Youth Directions Council - <http://www.n4-hydc.org/who>
- ♦ Army and Air National Guard Family Programs - <http://www.guardfamily.org> and <http://www.guardfamilyyouth.org>
- ♦ Army Reserve Family Programs - <http://www.ARFP.org>
- ♦ Department of Defense Educational Opportunities - <http://www.militarystudent.org>
- ♦ Army Community Service-Operation READY – <http://www.armycommunityservice.org>
- ♦ Department of Defense Military Family Resource Center - <http://www.mfrc-dodqkol.org>
- ♦ Department of Defense Deployment LINK (Deployment Health Support) - <http://www.deploymentlink.osd.mil>
- ♦ Department of Defense - <http://www.defenselink.mil>
- ♦ Hooah4Health - <http://hooah4health.com>
- ♦ Military Child Education Coalition - <http://www.militarychild.org>
- ♦ U.S. Army MWR (Morale, Welfare and Recreation) - <http://www.armymwr.com>
- ♦ Boys & Girls Clubs of America- <http://www.bgca.org>
- ♦ Army Community Service/Operation READY Training Modules - <http://www.armycommunityservice.org/home.asp>
- ♦ Academy for Educational Development, Center for Youth Development and Policy Research - <http://www.aed.org>
- ♦ Community Youth Mapping - <http://www.communityyouthmapping.org>
- ♦ National After School Organization - <http://www.naaweb.org>
- ♦ Air Force site - <http://www.afcrossroads.com>
- ♦ MTOM - Military Teens on the Move - <http://www.defenselink.mil/mtom>
- ♦ Marine Corps site - <http://www.usmc-mccs.org>
- ♦ Real Teens Connected - <http://www.us.army.mil>
- ♦ National Association of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies - <http://www.naccrra.org>

*Adapted from OMK Ready, Set, Go! Training Manual 2nd Edition Chapter 12, pages 11-13*







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Appendix 2:

Backpack Items





# Vendor Supply List



The following is a list of the vendors and partners previously used for Hero Packs material. OMK does not endorse one vendor over another. We suggest that you work with other states when ordering supplies as you may be able to receive a discounted price if ordering bulk items.

ITEM	VENDOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation: Military Kids *Hero* Sling Bag</li> <li>• Operation: Military Kids HERO Pin</li> <li>• Raccoon Hand Puppet</li> <li>• 4-H Liberty Bear</li> </ul>	<b>Glory Be Collectibles</b> Steve Bolt (760) 723-5222 2169 Green Canyon Road Fallbrook, CA 92028 <a href="mailto:sales@glorybe.com">sales@glorybe.com</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation: Military Kids Stationary</li> <li>• Operation: Military Kids Tablets and Envelopes</li> <li>• OMK Info Cards</li> <li>• Ink Well Journal</li> <li>• Hero Packs Parent Cards</li> </ul>	<b>HBP Charter Printing</b> Mike Smith (703) 370-1010 Charter Printing 4202 Wheeler Avenue Alexandria, VA 22304-6433 703-370-1010 <a href="mailto:msmith@charterprint.com">msmith@charterprint.com</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operation: Military Kids Ruler</li> <li>• Ink Well Pen</li> <li>• Parent Pouches for OMK Partner Info Cards</li> </ul>	<b>Concept Prints Inc.</b> Tom Campbell (800) 969-1954 6707 Guion Rd Indianapolis, IN 46268 317-290-1222 <a href="mailto:tc@conceptprints.com">tc@conceptprints.com</a>

## Vendor Supply List (cont.)

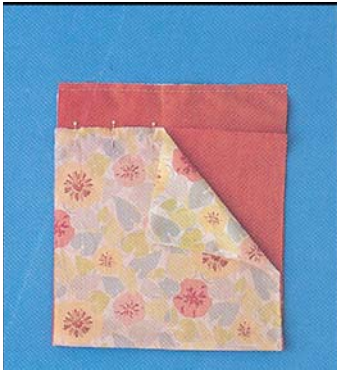
ITEM	VENDOR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Military Child Education Coalition Bracelet</li> <li>• Military Child Education Coalition Magnet</li> <li>• Military Child Education Coalition Frisbee</li> </ul>	<b>Military Child Education Coalition</b> Linda Neault (254) 953-1923 108 East FM 2140, Suite D Harker Height, TX 76548 254-953-1923 <a href="http://www.militarychild.org">http://www.militarychild.org</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4-H Power of Youth Hat</li> <li>• 4-H Bandana</li> </ul>	<b>National 4-H Council/Supply Service</b> Ed Gershon (301) 961-2800 6931 Arlington Road, Suite T400 Bethesda, MD 20814 <a href="mailto:4hsupply@fourhcouncil.edu">4hsupply@fourhcouncil.edu</a>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patriotic Disposable Camera</li> </ul>	<b>E Camera and Films</b> Sunny (866) 656-1600 <a href="http://www.ecamerafilms.com">http://www.ecamerafilms.com</a>

# Handmade Hero Packs

## "Materials and Items"

### Materials Needed

- 2 - 14" x 32 " Nylon rectangles
- 2 - 14" x 32 " Cotton - preshrunk rectangles (approximately 3 packs to a yard)
- Straight pins
- 2 – 4" pieces of cording
- 2 – 50" pieces of cording
- Sewing machine or one can hand sew



#### Step 1:

Stack the nylon rectangles with their corresponding cotton (right sides facing) rectangles sides together and pin.

#### Step 2:

Sew shorter ends together using a 3/8" seam allowance. Turn inside out to hide seams.

#### Step 3:

Stitch across the ends again, using a 3/4" seam allowance to create a channel.

#### Step 4:

Fold end to end (nylon side out) and pin sides.

#### Step 5:

To create bottom loops, fold 4" cords in half, place inside the bottom corners, ends aligned with fabric edges.

#### Step 6:

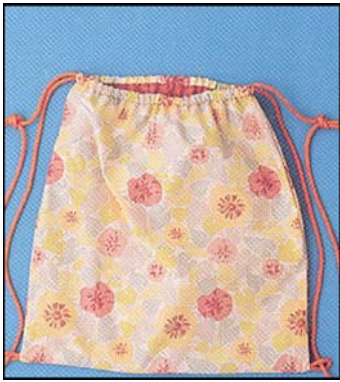
Stitch sides, catching end of loops. Do not sew channels closed.

## "Homemade Hero Pack" (cont.)



### Step 7:

Starting on one side, thread each end of a 50" cord through each channel. Repeat from the other side.



### Step 8:

Turn bag right side out. For straps, thread an end of each drawstring through the loop below it and tie ends.

# "Scrap Book - expandable book"

## Materials Needed

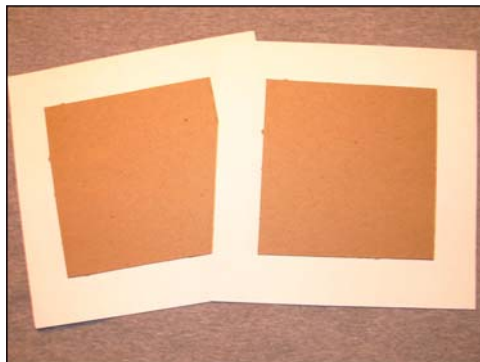
- 12"x12" Cutting tool
- Scissors
- Straight edge (ruler)
- Pencil
- Double-sided tape
- 2 – 6" x 6" mat boards
- 2 – 12"x12" sheets of printed paper
- 6 sheets of cardstock paper
- Ribbon
- Scrapbooking pen
- Optional: stickers/decorations



**Figure A**

## Step 1:

Take one of the 12" x 12" printed paper sheets (printed side out) and trim to an 8" x 8" square. Repeat the process for the second sheet.

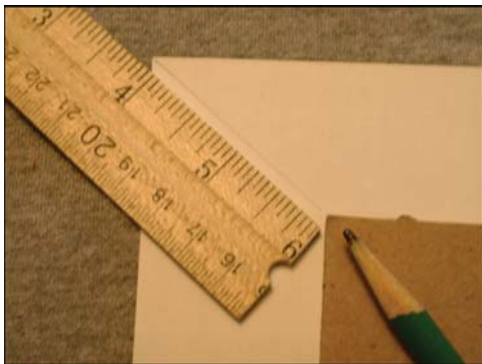


**Figure B**

## Step 2:

Place the 6" x 6" mat board in the center of the 8" x 8" square with double-sided tape. Repeat the process for the second 6" x 6" mat (Figures A and B)

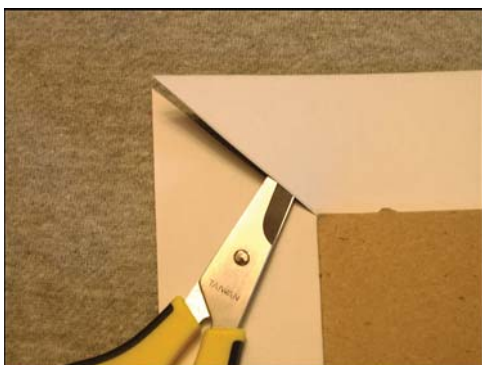
## "Scrap Book - expandable book" (cont.)



**Figure C**

### Step 3:

Using a straight edge, draw a diagonal line on the excess printed paper, starting from the corner of the mat square to the same corner of the printed paper. Cut the diagonal line. Do this for all corners of each 6" x 6" covered mat (Figure C).



**Figure D**

### Step 4:

Cut the diagonal lines for each 6" x 6" covered mat board (Figure D).



**Figure E**

### Step 5:

Cut the triangles off of each corner for each 6" x 6" covered mat board (Figures E and F).



**Figure F**





## "Scrap Book - expandable book" (cont.)



**Figure G**

### Step 6:

Fold the printed paper over the 6" x 6" covered mat board and secure using double-sided tape. Repeat the process for the second 6" x 6" covered mat board (Figures G and H).



**Figure H**

### Step 7:

Take approximately one yard of ribbon and attach it to one of the 6" X 6" covered mat boards with double-sided tape (Figure I).



**Figure I**

## "Scrap Book - expandable book" (cont.)

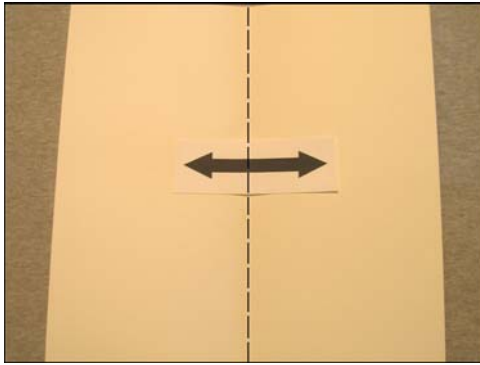


Figure J

### Step 8:

Take a 12" x 12" sheet of your card stock. Fold in half lengthwise and crease (Figure J).

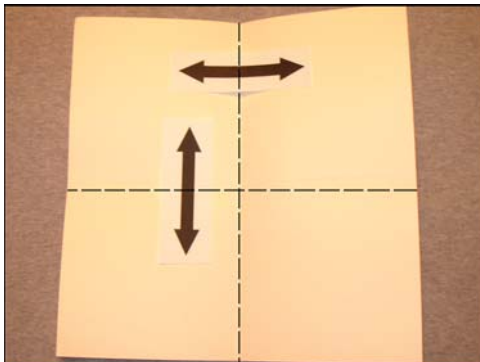


Figure K

### Step 9:

Take the folded 12" x 12" cardstock and open it up. Now fold the cardstock in half crosswise and crease (Figure K).

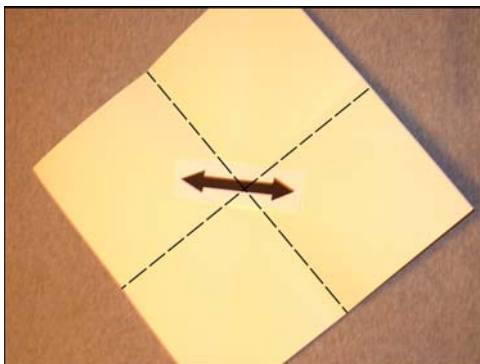


Figure L

### Step 10:

Take the folded cardstock and open it up. Now fold the cardstock corner to corner and crease. Please do this fold only once (Figures L and M).

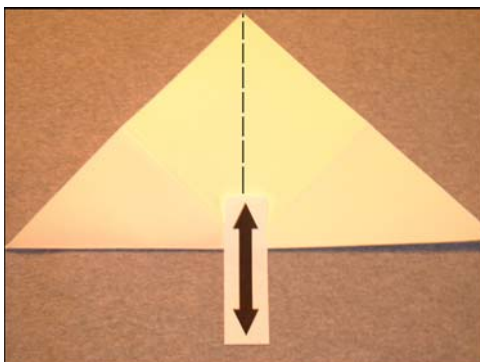
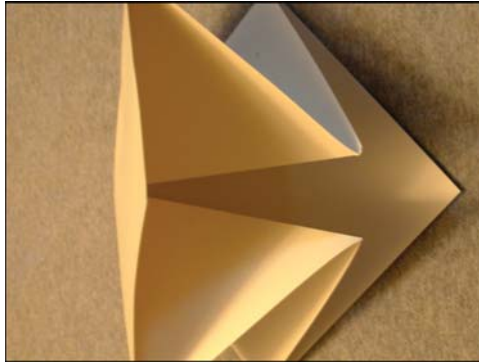


Figure M





## "Scrap Book - expandable book" (cont.)



**Figure N**

### Step 11:

The creased 12" x 12" cardstock will fold down to a square (Figure N).

### Step 12:

Repeat steps 8-11 for each of the remaining 12" x 12" cardstock papers.



**Figure O**

### Step 13:

Locate the folded corner of one square. Locate the open corner of the remaining square. Using double-sided tape, tape the folded corner to the open corner (Figure O).

### Step 14:

Continue step 13 until all 6 sheets are attached to each other. Fold the entire group together into a 6' x 6" square.

## "Scrap Book - expandable book" (cont.)



Figure P

### Step 15:

Secure the 6"x6" stacked cardstock to the inside of the front cover mat board. Secure the open corner in the upper left hand corner and the folded corner to the bottom right hand corner (Figures P and Q).

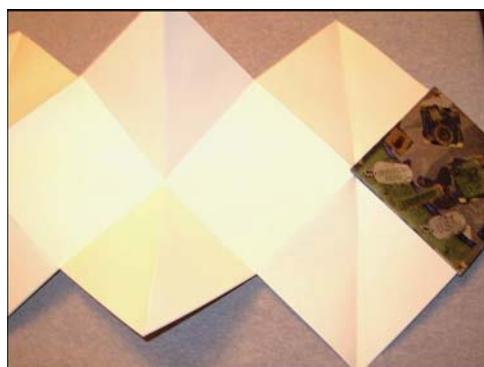


Figure Q

### Step 16:

Flip the front cover 6" x 6" mat board down with the attached 6"x 6" cardstock stacked. Secure the open corner of the attached stacked cardstock in the upper left hand corner and the folded corner should be secured to the bottom right hand corner on the back 6" x 6" mat board (Figure R).

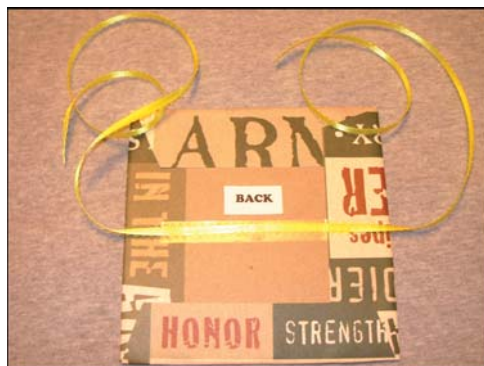


Figure R

### Step 17:

Your book is finished. Now is the time to decorate the album with stickers and give a personal sign to the youth you're giving it to (Figure S).



Figure S

# "Scrap Book - lunch bag"

## Materials Needed

- Scissors
- 6-8 Lunch bags
- Hole punch
- 2 clothespins
- Straight edge (ruler)
- Ribbon, yarn, brads, or binder rings
- Optional: stickers/decorations



**Figure A**

## Step 1:

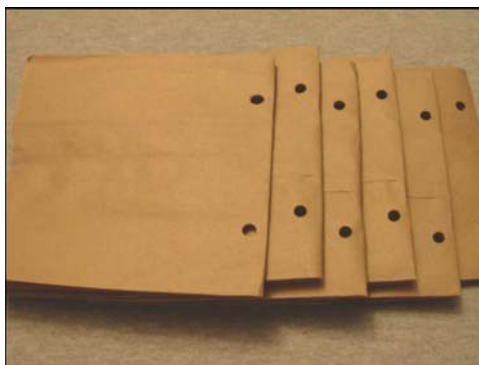
Collect 6-8 paper lunch bags. Lay the paper bags together, alternating the open and closed ends of bags. Make sure the flapped sides are down.

## Step 2:

Fold the bags in half to create a "spine" (Figure A). Use the ruler to crease the lunch bag.



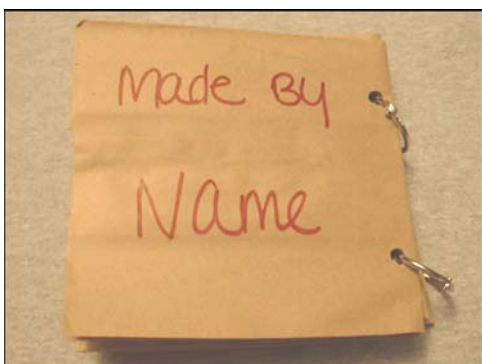
**Figure B**



**Figure C**

## Step 3:

Punch two holes along the creased spine for each bag (Figure B and C).



**Figure D**

## Step 4:

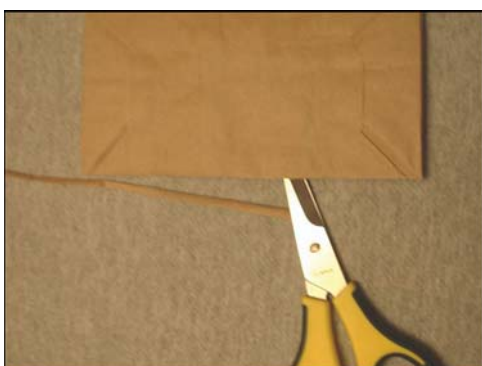
Thread the book together with ribbons, pipe cleaners, yarn, metal fasteners, binder rings, etc. (Figure D). Make sure you sign the back of the scrapbook.



**Figure E**

## Step 5:

Cut the closed ends off the bags to create more storage space (Figures E and F).



**Figure F**

## Step 6:

Decorate the paper bag album (Figure G).

## Step 7:

Complete albums (Figure H).



**Figure F**



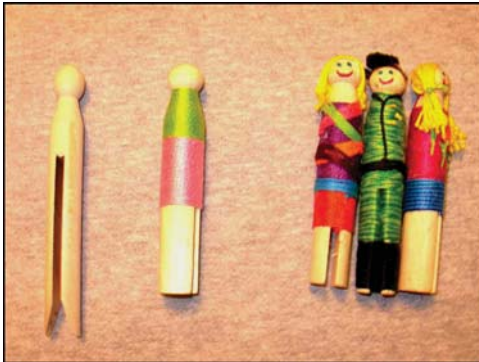
**Figure H**



# "Worry Dolls"

## Materials Needed

- Tacky Glue
- Straight clothespins
- Yarn/Embroidery Floss
- Markers



In Guatemala, kids tell their troubles to worry dolls. These are tiny figures that they tuck under their pillows at night. Take this tradition worldwide with a multicultural collection of clothespin dolls.

## Step 1 - Create hair for your worry doll.

- Have the youth select a color floss strand for the doll's hair.
- Have the youth decide on the hair type (i.e., short or long).
- Glue hair on.

## Step 2 - Design a shirt for your worry doll.

- Have the youth select a color floss strand for the doll's shirt.
- Rub a small amount of glue in the "shirt" area of the clothespin.
- Wrap the floss tightly around the sticky area.

## Step 3 - Design bottoms for your worry doll.

- Have the youth select a color floss strand for the doll's bottoms.
- Have the youth decide the type of bottoms (i.e., skirt, shorts, pants).
- Rub a small amount of glue on the "bottoms" area of the clothespin.
- Wrap the floss tightly around the sticky area to fashion the bottoms.

## Step 4 - Final touches

For jewelry, coil bracelets and necklaces out of craft wire or metallic pipe cleaners, or additional floss strands. Finally, draw facial features with colored markers on these tiny confidants -- the cheerier the better for easing fretful minds.

# Handwritten Letters

## Guidelines and Samples



The handwritten notes of encouragement and thanks are for the receiving youth and their deployed parent. The letters will be provided by your 4-H members, Torch or Keystone club members, community members, teens, families and whomever else participates in the Hero Packs Project.

The goal is to have one letter for each recipient and their parent

in each Hero Pack. Please encourage the writers to keep the message in the letters positive, politically neutral, and do not include personal identifying information (phone number, email address, street address, etc). Sample letters are included below. Remember the most important thing is to write from your heart. Think about what a civilian youth may say to a military youth if they were to talk in person. Share some of your favorite experiences and pastimes. Encourage military youth and their families to join partner programming in their area.

It also might be nice to have letters of encouragement from local partners or businesses that have donated items for the Hero Packs.

Please remember the following when writing letters:

- Keep it positive
- Have fun and thank our everyday heroes
- Good words to use: grateful, most appreciated, sacrifice, unselfish, service, patriotism, national honor, pride, love of country, devotion to freedom, token of appreciation, small symbol of support
- Thank the youth for the sacrifices they are making - Remind the military youth that they are heroes, too
- Do not tell the military youth how bad you think their situation is or how sorry you may feel for them
- Keep it politically neutral
- No personal information (last name, phone #, email, etc.)



Please refer to the sample letters below.

*Sample letters to a military child/family*

*Dear Child,*

Thank you for supporting our country. I really appreciate all of the services and sacrifices that you are making while your parent is gone. I made this Hero Pack for you because you are one of my Heroes. Yes, you and your parents are heroes for making such a big contribution to our country. I hope you can use some of the items in this care package to keep in contact with your parent while he or she is gone.

My 4-H club made this Hero Pack for you. As a member of 4-H, which is a youth organization open to everyone ages 5 to 19 years, I take part in lots of fun activities. My favorite part of 4-H is 4-H camp. Each summer I get to go to 4-H camp for five days with my friends. We spend time dancing, swimming, doing a high ropes course and making things to take home. One year I got to make a lamp out of wood and marbles to take home and give to my parents. My favorite part of 4-H Camp is my counselors. The 4-H camp counselors are high school kids who are lots of fun. 4-H is in every county in Ohio. I encourage you to join 4-H in your county. It is a youth organization from The Ohio State University and I hope you will join in the fun.

Thanks for being a hero!

*Your First Name / Your State*

*Dear Family,*

I am currently at the 2005 National 4-H Conference in Chevy Chase, MD. Although the Conference has just started, it has been a blast so far and we still have so much to do! We are working on our community service program to recognize families like you who make many sacrifices for our great country. We realize that with the War on Terrorism increasing, families of National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers are being affected more often than they are used to be.

Whether or not you have a deployed Soldier from your household, the strains on the rest of your family are tough. They may not be as visible to the public as they are to you, and being far away from other military families is not easy when you might be going through these hardships. I'm sure it takes a lot of strength to pick up the extra load of work and responsibilities that are left behind when your Soldier is gone, plus to have nobody around who understands what you are going through.

Once again, I would like to commend you on your will to continue the proud tradition of service and leadership that America has always shown. Not only are you helping somebody serve our country with honor but also you are really keeping our freedom for generations to come. Congratulations for serving the United States of America with such talent, skill, and determination. It's people like you who are able to make the U.S. proud of everything it has done. Thanks again for being great role models for the whole country.

Sincerely,

*Your First Name / Your State*

*Sample letter to a service member*

Sample Letter

Dear Soldier,

Hello from the 2005 National 4-H Conference! I am writing to thank and commend you on serving our country. As part of a nationwide effort at conference this year, we are writing to Soldiers in the Army Reserve and National Guard who are becoming more and more active as the Global War on Terrorism increases. It takes a lot of skill, devotion, and drive to do what you are doing. Whether you are overseas or in your own hometown, you are definitely helping to keep us free.

There is a lot to be said about a person who is willing to risk his or her own life for the good of a nation. Many wouldn't even consider it. I feel privileged to be able to write to somebody with such bravery and dedication. I want you to know that I fully believe in everything the United States stands for, which is exactly the same as what you are fighting for. It is truly people like you who help us keep what many take for granted. They fail to realize the sacrifices, both personal and emotional, that Soldiers like you make to keep our nation free from terror.

Although you will probably never hear it enough for what you deserve, I want to thank you once more for your active roll in the United States Military. I hope that you never forget the men, women, and children whom you are fighting for, and especially never forget the family who is there to support you the whole way. For anything major to be accomplished, it takes a team effort, and everyone is behind you 100%!

Sincerely,

Your First Name / Your State





# News Release

## Press Release

*For Immediate Release*

Contact:      Name, Title  
                    Phone/email

Date:

Hero Packs for Military Kids at the State Fair

As part of a nationwide effort to support children of deployed National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve service members, Operation: Military Kids-state will be packing and distributing Hero Packs from 10:00 am until 7:00 pm on August 27-28 and September 3-5 in the State Fairgrounds 4-H Youth Building. Hero Packs, book bags filled with goodies, will also be distributed to families of deployed National Guard and U.S. Army Reserve service members. All children and youth must have their military ID or be accompanied by another military ID card-carrying family member. For statistical purposes, please be prepared to identify the sponsor's unit. Operation: Military Kids is a partnership of Army Child and Youth Services, USDA National 4-H Headquarters, and the Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development. For more information or to become involved with Operation: Military Kids, please contact name, title, at phone # or email.

\* \* \* \*

# Photo Release

## 4-H / Army Youth Development Project Photo Release

I give to the 4H/Army Youth Development Project's Operation: Military Kids Initiative and its partners (Army CYS, CSREES/4-H, Boys & Girls Club of America, Military Child Education Coalition and The American Legion), its nominees, agents, and assigns, unlimited permissions to copyright and use, publish, and republish for purposes of advertising, public relations, trade, or any other lawful use, information about me and/or my child(ren) and reproductions of my/our likeness (photographic or otherwise) and my/our voice, whether or not related to any affiliation with 4-H, with or without my/our name. I hereby waive any right that I (and Minor) may have to inspect or approve the copy and/or finished product or products that may be used in connection therewith or the use to which it may be applied.

Participant Status: ☐ Youth ☐ Adult

Participant Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent of parent or legal guardian if above individual is a minor.**

I consent and agree, individually and, as parent or legal guardian of the minor named above, to the foregoing terms and provisions. I hereby warrant that I am of full age and have every right to contract for the minor in the above regard. I state further that I have read the above information release and that I am fully familiar with the contents.

Name of child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Project Report

## 4-H / Army Youth Development Project Operation: Military Kids Hero Packs Project Report

Lead Volunteer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/email: \_\_\_\_\_

State 4-H Military Liaison: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide a short narrative on the Hero Packs Project and the distribution of the Hero Packs in your state. Be sure to include:

- How did you hear about the Hero Packs Project?
- How many Hero Packs were assembled and distributed?
- Where, when, and how were the Hero Packs assembled?
- How many youth were involved in the Hero Packs Project?
- Who were the Hero Packs presented to in your community? (National Guard/ Army Reserve families)
- Number of: Boys \_\_\_\_\_ Girls \_\_\_\_\_
- Ages: School Age (K-5) \_\_\_\_\_ Middle School & Teen (6-12) \_\_\_\_\_
- How were the Hero Packs distributed in your community?
- Provide any testimonials from families receiving Hero Packs.
- Provide any pictures (if possible) of the Hero Packs Project (assembly, distribution, etc). See photo release.
- Provide any news articles or press releases that provided publicity for the Hero Packs Project.
- Would you do the Hero Packs Project again and recommend to other states? Why or why not?

Thank you for your continued support of OMK and our Military families. Please return the Hero Packs report to [ementzer@CSREES.USDA.GOV](mailto:ementzer@CSREES.USDA.GOV) and your State 4-H Military Liaison two weeks after distributing the Hero Packs.





**OPERATION:**

**Military**



**PACKS**

Appendix 3:

Introductory and  
Connnection Activities



# Activities

## Introductory Activities

Connection Activities are provided for the youth and adult group leader(s) to introduce OMK and to discuss “suddenly military” families and the emotions of deployment.

### Introductory Activity 1

- Who has had an immediate family member deployed?
- Who had had an extended family member deployed?
- Who has had a friend or neighbor deployed?

### Introductory Activity 2

- “Until Then” slideshow presentation (available online through state’s OMK POCs) \*

### Introductory Activity 3 - *Walk this Way* \*\*

Objectives:

- Youth will be able to reflect on what it may be like to be a military kid.
- Youth will be able to understand the challenges military youth face.

Supplies:

- Pens
- Bingo sheets
- Bingo prize

Instructions:

- Have you ever heard of the expression, “Walk a mile in my shoes”?
- Pass out the bingo square sheet.
- Have youth read the bingo squares to themselves.
- Mingle and find someone who has experienced these situations.
- Get their signature on the line.
- Youth mingle and gather signatures until the first person gets a “bingo” and earns a prize!

Debrief/Reflection:

- What happened when you completed the “Walk this Way” activity?
- Were you surprised at how many participants did/didn’t have similar experiences on the activity?
- How can you use this information to help “suddenly military” families who are affected by the deployment of a parent or loved one?
- How can you use this information to make your Hero Packs Project successful?

\* *Until Then* (slide show) - Activity 2 - Courtesy of Elaine Clegg of GCS Distributing

\*\* *Walk This Way* - Activity 3 - Adapted from OMK Ready, Set, Go! Training Manual 2nd Edition Chapter 1, page 11

## Introductory Activity 3 - *Walk this Way*

Have you ever heard of the expression, “Walk a mile in my shoes”? This activity will help you understand the challenges that military youth face.

**Instructions:** Find someone who has personally experienced these situations. Get their signature on the line. The first person to get a “bingo” gets a prize!

...ever had to move because of a parent or guardian's job _____	...ever had a sudden major reversal of family income _____	...ever known the joys of a flexible schedule because you have to live life “spur of the moment” _____	...felt upset or angry because you do not get enough time spent with your parents or guardians _____	...communicates frequently with friends by either letters or emails _____
...had the fear of a sibling or parent or guardian getting a serious disease or illness _____	...experienced stress or anxiety over the last year _____	...ever had to quit a sports team or a club because you had to move away _____	...born outside of the state you are currently living in _____	...ever felt like your parent or guardian has missed a major milestone in your life _____
...had a Pen Pal outside of the United States of America _____	...ever enjoyed spending time with others who share similar experiences _____	FREE SPACE!  OMK Makes a Difference!  FREE SPACE! _____	...had to stay with family members or friends while a parent or guardian went away for an extended time period _____	...not had communication with a parent or guardian for over two weeks when they were away from home _____
...ever been confused as to where “Home” really is _____	...attended more than two different schools _____	...gotten a letter or email from a parent or guardian while they were away from home _____	...had to complete the housework by yourself _____	...has a parent or guardian who is currently enrolled in the military _____
...has traveled internationally _____	...listened to taped stories from parents or guardians because they were away from home _____	...dreaded listening to the news or reading the newspaper for fear of bad news _____	...had to celebrate the holidays or birthdays without parents or guardians _____	...ever lived outside of the state that you are currently living in _____





# Activities

## Connection Activities

### What is it like to be “Suddenly Military?”

#### Connection Activity 1 - *If the Shoe Fits*

##### Objective:

- Youth will be able demonstrate to one another that it is much harder than what they think to “walk in someone else’s shoes.”

##### Supplies:

- Shoes
- Markers
- Easel pad paper

##### Instructions:

- Have youth sit in a circle.
- Have each youth to take off both of their shoes and put them in the middle of the circle.
- Have each youth find two shoes that are not their own and put them on.
- Have each youth stand up and have them try to walk around the room.

##### Debrief/Reflection:

- What was it like to wear someone else’s shoes? What was easy about it? What was hard?
- What would have made it easier?
- How can we be supportive of “suddenly military” youth?

*Adapted from the Lesson plan created by Dona Leonhard, Janel Dingy, and Jessica Rice, Ohio State University, Course AGR EDUC 643.*

## Connection Activities (cont.)

### Connection Activity 2 – “Who Am I”?

#### Objective:

- Youth will be able to experience what it is like to become a “suddenly military” family.

#### Supplies:

- Civilian/MOS cards
- Repositionable sticky tape/glue
- Easel pad paper
- Markers
- Whistle

#### Instructions:

- Have youth sit in a circle.
- Have youth select a civilian/MOS card (e.g., mayor, doctor, School teacher, house dad).
- Have youth share who they are/write down their role in the community on the easel pad.
- Blow a whistle – have youth break up into groups.
- Have youth open up their bio-card and share what is now their military role.

#### Debrief /Reflection:

- What was your non-military role vs. your military role?
- Were the roles similar? Were the roles different?
- What changes do you think will happen in your home if your non-military role changes?
- What can we do as a community to support these “suddenly military” families with these changes?

Your Civilan Role is:

**Town Mayor**



Your MOS is:

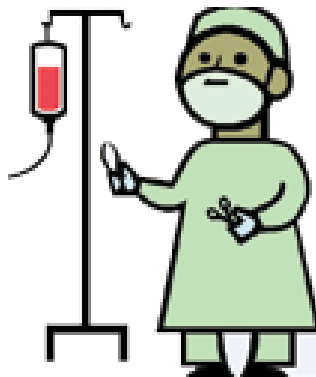


**Platoon Leader**

You are ultimately responsible for the safety, well being and discipline of the men and women in your platoon

Your Civilan Role is:

**Doctor**



Your MOS is:



**Mechanic**

You are responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of various types of machinery. This may include vehicles, generators, tanks or helicopters.

Your Civilan Role is:

**School Teacher**



Your MOS is:



**Medic**

You provide both basic and advanced on the spot medical assistance to members of your platoon as well as civilians and enemy combatants.

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for duplication purposes

Your Civilan Role is:

## Soccer Coach



Your MOS is:

## Infantry

As a front line combatant, you will spend a great deal of time studying weapons and tactics.



Your Civilan Role is:

## Librarian



Your MOS is:

## Fire Person

You provide fire, rescue and medical support both on and off installation.



Your Civilan Role is:

## Bowling Alley Owner



Your MOS is:

## Chaplain

You will be providing spiritual guidance to both military and family members. Quite often you will act as a counselor and work directly with leadership.



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Your Civilan Role is:

## Lawyer



Your MOS is:

## Cook

You will be responsible for preparing up to 600 meals 3 to 4 times per day. To prevent illness, exceptional sanitary conditions must be maintained for the dining hall.



Your Civilan Role is:

## Stay at Home Dad



Your MOS is:

## Supply Technician

It is your responsibility to account for every item in the Army's inventory. This means keeping track of every vehicle, every piece of uniform, and every bolt.



Your Civilan Role is:

## Boys & Girls Club Director



Your MOS is:

## Veterinarian

You will be responsible for the health and safety of military working dogs as well as ensuring that all food and living areas are sanitary.



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Your Civilan Role is:

## Artist



Your MOS is:



## Helicopter Pilot

You will fly either combat or support aircraft.  
You may be responsible for transporting troops and equipment in adverse conditions.

Your Civilan Role is:

## Accountant



Your MOS is:



## UAV Pilot

You are responsible for operating an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. You may accomplish this from thousands of miles away.

Your Civilan Role is:

## Hotel Concierge



Your MOS is:



## Linguist

You will be responsible for translating information for use by colleagues and superiors. This will entail both written and verbal translation.

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Your Civilan Role is:

**Policeman**



Your MOS is:



**Engineer**

You will be in charge of building facilities for use by other military members. A combat engineer works with explosives to destroy buildings, mountains and bridges.

## Connection Activity 3 -

### *Activity A: Military Alphabet Soup*

#### Objective:

- Youth will be introduced to the “new” language that “suddenly military” families must navigate.

#### Supplies:

- Marker
- Beach ball
- Acronym list
- Small candy bites for correct answers

#### Instructions:

- With a marker place the acronyms (see attached list) on the beach ball.
- Have youth stand in a circle.
- Toss the ball around the circle – when one catches the ball he or she must guess the meaning of the acronym (reward if guessed correctly).



#### Debrief/Reflection:

- Does anyone have a family member who speaks two languages or know a family that does?
- How do you communicate with the family if you do not speak the language?
- How would you feel if that was the language you needed to talk in now?
- How could you help the “suddenly military” family cope with the new language they have to know?

## Connection Activity 3 (cont.)

### *Activity B: RSG! Letter Activity*

Dear Family,

Greetings from Iraq! This morning I got up at 0500 and reveille was an hour later. The  said we would start this morning with some PT.  said that TAG was coming tomorrow to talk about RR and ACU's.

It was a good day today... we didn't have KP because we had MRE's. Life in the ARNG is good! After lunch at 1300 I went to AAFES to my APO and received your letter.

Mom said that there was a meeting at the FAC, with the RDC, where all of the FRG's got to meet the SYC and talk about OMK. It sounds like a great program!

Well, it is about time for retreat, and lights out at 2200. Have a great week, and remember I miss you, and I love you!

Love, Dad

## Connection Activity 3 (cont.)

### Activity B: RSG! Letter Activity

Dear Family,

Greetings from Iraq! This morning I got up at 0500 (5:00 a.m.) and reveille (bugle call in the morning) was an hour later. The 🌟 (Major) said we would start this morning with some PT (Physical Training). The 🪖 (Sergeant) said that TAG (The Adjutant General) was coming tomorrow to talk about R&R (Rest and Recreation) and ACU's (Army Combat Uniform).

It was a good day today... we didn't have KP (Kitchen Patrol) because we had MRE's (Meals Ready to Eat). Life in the ARNG (Army National Guard) is good! After lunch, at 1300(1:00 p.m.) I went to AAFES (Army and Air Force Exchange Service) to my APO (Army Post Office) and received your letter.

Mom said that there was a meeting at the FAC (Family Assistance Center), with the RDC (Rear Detachment Commander), where all of the FRG's (Family Readiness Groups) got to meet the SYC (State Youth Coordinator) and talk about OMK (Operation Military Kids). It sounds like a great program!

Well, it is about time for retreat (bugle call in the evening), and lights out at 2200 (10:00 p.m.). Have a great week and remember I miss you, and I love you!

Love, Dad

## Connection Activity 3 - *Military Alphabet Soup* (cont.)

Suggested acronyms:

AAFES	Army/Air Force Exchange Service
ACS	Army Community Service
AFTB	Army Family Team Building
AER	Army Emergency Relief
ANG	Air National Guard
APO	Army Post Office
AOR	Area of Operational Responsibility
AUSA	Association of the United States Army
BAH	Basic Allowance for Housing
BDU	Battle Dress Uniform
CDR	Commander
CONUS	Continental US
CYS	Child & Youth Services
DCU	Desert Camouflage Uniform
DOD	Department of Defense
ETS	Estimated Time of Separation
FORSCOM	Forces Command
FRG	Family Readiness Group
HQ	Headquarters
LES	Leave and Earnings Statement
MEDDAC	Medical Department Activity
MIA	Missing in Action
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MRE	Meals Ready to Eat
MWR	Morale Welfare Recreation
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
OCONUS	Outside Continental US
PAC	Personnel Administration Center
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
POA	Power of Attorney
POC	Point of Contact
PT	Physical Training
PX	Post Exchange
QTRS	Quarters (housing)
R&R	Rest and Recreation
RNLTD	Return No Later Than Date
SAS	School Age Services
SD	Staff Duty
SDNCO	Staff Duty Non Commissioned Officer
SDO	Staff Duty Officer
SGLI	Servicemen's Group Life Insurance
SSN	Social Security Number
TDY	Temporary Duty
USAR	United State Army Reserve
VA	Veterans Affairs (Department of)
XO	Executive Officer

*Adapted from OMK Ready, Set, Go! Training Manual 2nd Edition Chapter 4, pages 24-28*



## Understanding the Emotions of Deployment

### Connection Activity 4 - *Thinking Like a Military Family*

#### Objectives:

- Youth will gain an understanding of what members of a military family are thinking and feeling.
- Youth will gain an understanding of the challenges that exist within a “suddenly military” family during each stage of the deployment cycle.

#### Supplies:

- Pens
- Bubble cloud handout
- Sticky wall
- Family member signs

#### Instructions:

- Divide into three groups.
- Each group will have the role of a member of a “suddenly military” family (deployed parent, spouse of the deployed parent, and child of the deployed parent).
- Each group should brainstorm what they believe their family member is thinking/feeling.
- Write the thoughts in the thought bubbles. (See thought bubble template)
- Post the thought bubbles on the sticky wall.
- Ask each group to share their thought bubbles.
- Repeat the steps by adding more members of a military family such as grandparents, close friends, or neighbors to modify this activity.

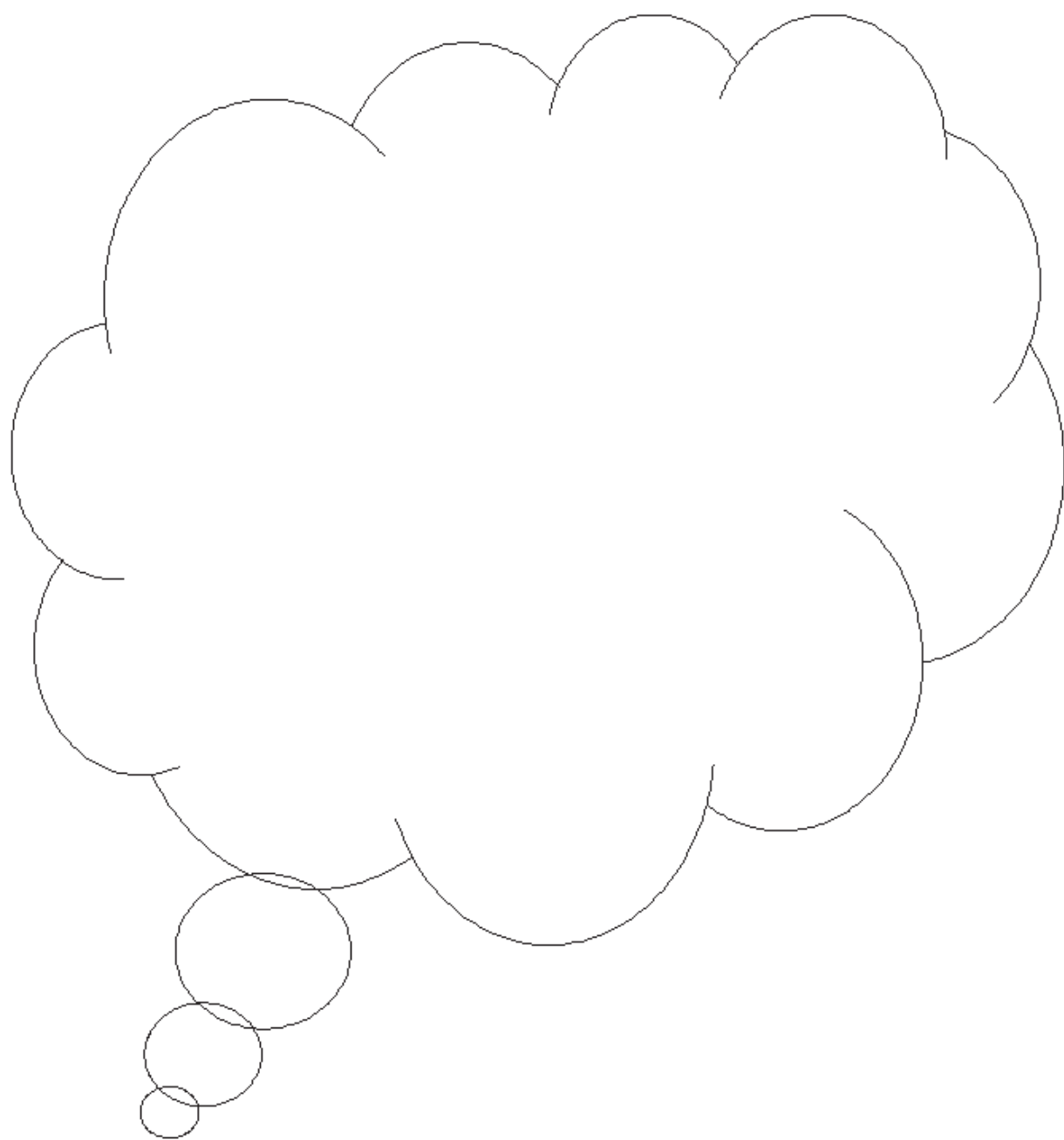
#### Debrief/Reflection:

- What are some other challenges of a military family that we have not talked about?
- What would change in your house if your parent were deployed?
- How can your youth group help “suddenly military” children feel supported while their parent is deployed and after they return?

*Adapted from the Lesson plan created by Dona Leonhard, Janel Dingy, and Jessica Rice, Ohio State University, Course AGR EDUC 643.*



## Bubble Cloud Handout



## Connection Activity 5 - *Milestones*

### Objective:

- Youth will become familiar with events that “suddenly military” parents may miss as a result of their deployment.

### Supplies:

- Pens
- 3x5 cards
- Box to put cards in
- Sticky wall
- Months of the year signs

### Instructions:

- Have youth write down on a 3x5 card their age, and an important event that will happen within the next 6-8 months: at School, in sports, after School activities, church, etc.
- Have the youth drop their cards into a box and mix their responses up.
- Have the youth choose a card and share with the group the event on the card.
- Have the youth place this card in the appropriate month on the sticky wall.

### Debrief/Reflection:

- What are some milestones that a parent would miss if they were deployed? (Think about birthdays, first day of School, holidays, and anniversaries).
- How would you feel if your parent missed such events?
- How can HP’s help “suddenly military” children capture these special moments to share with their parent when they are gone or after they have returned?

## Connection Activity 6 - A Blanket Community

### Objectives:

- Youth will recognize the strengths of all community members.
- Youth will recognize how we need to support the youth and families from our military units.

### Supplies:

- Blanket/tarp/tablecloth
- Several small objects to represent various aspects of the community - balls, bean bags, empty plastic water bottles, other lightweight objects with different shapes, textures
- Civilian/MOS cards from Connection Activity #2

### Instructions:

- Give each youth a civilian/MOS card.
- Have each youth place the civilian/MOS card on the floor at their feet.
- Place the blanket or tarp on the floor.
- Have the youth line-up on the edges of the blanket.
- Each person picks up an edge of the blanket and holds the blanket tightly.
- Add objects to the center of the blanket.
- As the objects are added, the group leader will talk about how several community members have been called to serve in their National Guard or Army Reserve unit.
- The group leader will randomly call out their civilian role.
- When the young person with this civilian role is called, they move away from the blanket.
- The remaining youth/community members must try to keep all the objects on the blanket.

### Debrief/Reflection:

- Who or what did the objects represent? (The military children)
- What happened as people started leaving their spots on the blanket?
- How did you feel in trying to keep all the objects on the blanket?
- How did your role/responsibility change as others left the blanket?
- How can we help the “suddenly military” youth and families in our community?

*A blanket community - Adapted from OMK Ready, Set, Go Training Manual 2nd Edition Chapter 5, page 28*



The Hero Pack Project is a support element for the Operation: Military Kids Initiative. The material is supported by the 4-H/Army Youth Development Project (YDP), a partnership of the U.S. Army Child and Youth Services and the National 4-H Headquarters, CSREES, U.S. Department of Agriculture and is funded by the YDP, Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and Washington State University Special Project 2005-48606-03230.

