Operation: Military Kids

Things Military Kids want you to know...

We are proud of our parents.
We think about war and we know what it means.
We take on a lot of responsibility (but sometimes, it’s too much).
We live in the community.
We appreciate recognition of our family’s service.
We miss our parent.
In a lot of ways we’re just like the other kids.
We serve too.

In 2005 the University of Idaho Extension through 4-H youth development joined with the military and local communities to bring support to military children before, during and after deployment by forming Operation: Military Kids. Our military has changed and now nearly 70% of our active duty personnel are serving in the National Guard and Reserves. Most do not live near a military installation where they can easily access services for their families.

Today over 10,700 children in Idaho still need our help as many soldiers return. They need help accessing community and military resources to manage a very challenging time in their young lives. They need to develop important life skills to cope in their unique situation. They need time with their whole family to get to know each other again after a long separation.

You can help them by providing support for activities where military children spend time with other military children learning to express themselves, build friendships and develop self-confidence. Families need special time set aside to rebuild the necessary bonds that make a family strong. Additional support is needed for special family weekends with trained staff providing activities aimed at instilling family teamwork, listening skills, communication, and empathy for each other to build families that endure.
MISSION AND GOALS

IDAHO O:MK builds community partnerships to increase capacity for youth, families and communities to support youth of military families to:

- 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 that staff are attuned to the unique needs of military students
- Educate the public on the impact of the deployment cycle on soldiers, families, kids and the community as a whole
- Become a part of the ongoing deployment support service for children and youth where there are military families
Operation: Military Kids IDAHO 2013

2013 Program Impact:

- **Operation: Military Kids (O:MK)** has provided 87 support programs in Idaho, supporting 2,151 military children last year.
- O:MK supported five camps for over 370 children from all over the state collaborating with the Idaho National Guard and 4-H youth development.
- Provided leadership training opportunities for 11 military teens on a monthly basis
- Supported three educational events throughout the year utilizing Mobile Technology Labs (MTL) and promoting Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math skills.
- Those impacted in Idaho represented 11 different branches of military service (Army, Army Reserves, Army National Guard, Air Force, Air Force Reserves, Air National Guard, Navy, Navy Reserves, Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reserves, and Coast Guard Reserves).
- O:MK provided support for 6 Military Family days helping geographically-dispersed families to locate services in their communities (Idaho Falls, Pocatello, Twin Falls, (2) Boise, Post Falls)
- Provided two days of Yellow Ribbon support for 112 soldiers and 132 family members. A deploying Yellow Ribbon is a stressful family event preparing families for deployment that includes writing wills and planning the service member’s funeral). O:MK provided support and activities for the children to plan ways to communicate and cope with a parent being gone.
- Expanded community outreach to geographical-dispersed areas of Idaho creating greater regional networks of support in Eastern, Northern and Central Idaho by utilized 4-H programing and county agents, American Legion, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs, schools and recruiting new volunteers.

2013 Community Impact:

- Through the University of Idaho’s Operation: Military Kids (O:MK) program 263 volunteers provided 1467 hours of service to military youth representing a value of over $17,600 in donated time in Idaho.
- O:MK participated various public events providing information on avenues to build strong family bonds were attended by 3700 military family members and 8416 civilians.
- Hero Pack presentations were made in eight public schools to children in Post Falls, Cascade, and Boise providing recognitions of their service and resources for 125 military youth.
- A 30 minute radio interview reaching from Southwest Idaho to McCall to Eastern Oregon provided public information on the unique needs of today’s military youth and avenues for the public to make a contribution as a volunteer.
- Media expansion to Facebook and Twitter has added additional means of communicating the needs of Military Families to the public and increased community contacts that generated donations in cash and supplies over the last two years of $11,725.
To donate, volunteer, or for more information about *Operation: Military Kids - Idaho* contact:

**O:MK, 4-H Youth Development, University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System**

322 E Front St., Ste. 390  
Boise, ID 83702  
Phone: 208-334-2332/2328  
Fax: 208-364-4084  
Email: OMK@uidaho.edu

**Links:**  
www.operationmilitarykids.org  
http://www.uidaho.edu/extension/4h/programs/omk  
http://www.4-hmilitarypartnerships.org