4-H Youth Development outreach to military kids and their families

AT A GLANCE
4-H military partnerships create opportunities and provide support to military-connected youth whether they live on or near an installation, in our communities or on overseas installations.

The Situation
4-H clubs and opportunities provide consistency in belonging and to develop life skills through a positive youth development framework. 4-H programs are built upon four essential elements ensuring that youth feel a sense of belonging in a safe environment, develop independence in both group and individual work, share with others in the community through generosity, and develop a sense of mastery that continues throughout life, practicing and sharing what they have learned. As military families move frequently and experience the difficulties surrounding deployment and reintegration, 4-H provides predictable programming and a safe and nurturing environment for military-connected youth.

In Idaho, Outreach to Military Kids (OMK), as part of University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development, provides 4-H programming and resource support to Mountain Home Air Force Base (MHAFB) and geographically-dispersed military youth and their families. OMK also strives to educate the public about the affects multiple deployments have on children.

Our Response
The OMK statewide 4-H program meets the needs of military youth through activities that provide support, express gratitude and teach important life skills that build resiliency. OMK provides resources in 4-H nationally defined mission areas to help us focus our education and training activities for over 6,200 military youth and families in Idaho to help them with the unique stresses of deployment. In partnership with the military, we provide support during “Yellow Ribbon” and Gowen Field “Family Day” events, and opportunities to participant in 4-H experiences and challenges to build strong family bonds.

OMK staff and volunteers provide and participate in professional development training through 4-H and military partnerships to develop quality youth and family programming and activities.
Program Outcomes

4-H OMK provides military-connected youth the opportunity to attain the following outcomes:

Air Force and geographically-dispersed — 4-H affords youth opportunities to engage and connect with their communities and caring adults, while developing skills in healthy living, science, citizenship and leadership.

4-H connects and supports geographically-dispersed military youth in locally-based 4-H opportunities which provide resiliency-based skills.

MHAFB youth center, UI Extension in Elmore County and 4-H personnel evaluate programming needs and direction. Coordinating efforts, staff training and regularly scheduled meetings have improved efficiency to serve youth and family needs. Military based youth are increasingly being integrated into the county 4-H club based programs. Weekly 4-H activities at the youth center provide robust, educational opportunities for youth.

Insights from OMK participants in 2018 include:

MHAFB health and fitness club — healthy living: Youth became aware of choices to reduce stress, healthy eating choices and food preparation, and developed cooperative and team skills through physical activity and games.

• Quote: “I don’t come to the youth center very often, but I try to come on Wednesday’s because it is 4-H day. I love all of the 4-H activities that we get to do.”

“Socks of Love” with MHAFB and local community — citizenship: Youth learned the importance of community partnerships, applied learned skills to identify and design solutions to a specific community need, and provided products and services to others in need.

• Quote: “I like getting to do all the 4-H activities. Each week we get to learn how to do something new. It’s the best.”

4-H National Science Day skill-a-thon at MHAFB — science: Youth developed public speaking skills, self-esteem, positive attitudes toward science and share acquired knowledge with their community in partnership with the local library.

A look at numbers — Idaho has seen a significant increase in military youth involvement in 4-H. There has been a 61 percent increase in the last five years reported as 633 geographically-dispersed and 323 MHAFB 4-H members.

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The Future

As our 4-H military-connected youth increase reveals, expanding support to geographically-dispersed youth in eastern Idaho is a priority. University of Idaho Extension 4-H Youth Development will continue to partner in providing training, resources and 4-H educational opportunities to MHAFB and geographically-dispersed military youth and families.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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