The Hero Pack initiative was the first outreach effort of Operation: Military Kids (OMK). Hero Packs contain both fun and educational material for the youth and informational material for parent/guardians. The first packs were assembled at the 2004 National 4-H Conference and then distributed by the state delegations that participated in that conference. The main purpose of the pack is to say “Thank You" to military children and youth of Guard and Reserve families for the sacrifices that they make during the deployment of a loved one. The items in the packs represent all the National OMK partners and the publicity generated through the distribution of the packs raises community awareness and builds support for these geographically isolated families.

Hero Packs can be assembled by a variety of groups: 4-H Clubs, Boys and Girls Clubs, school “Home rooms,” Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, home school groups…etc. The most important piece included in each Hero Pack is a personal, hand-written note. The letter is written by youth to a military family and their soldier thanking them both for their service and sacrifices that they are making for our country. The State OMK Team works with the Guard and Reserves to find families to distribute the hero packs to.

*What can I do to help?*
- Secure items to be included in Hero Packs or donations to purchase items for the packs – see wish list
- Organize a group to help assemble Hero Packs and/or write letters to military families
- Sew backpacks or tote bags to be used as Hero Packs – a number of different patterns may be used; they should be sturdy, and designed in a neutral color.
The following items are requested by the Indiana Operation: Military Kids Team to be included in Hero Packs:

The following items are available, free of charge, by contacting the State OMK Team Leaders. Quantities are limited.
- OMK Partner Card (brief description of OMK)
- 4-H ID tag
- OMK silicon bracelet
- Military One Source Magnet
- OMK Tablets
- OMK Envelopes

You should choose to include other items in the Hero Packs as well. Here are some ideas for you. This is not an exhaustive list – be creative!
- Small photo albums
- Disposable camera
- Stationary
- Journal
- Pen and/or pencil
- Items from 4-H Sourcebook – Frisbee, bandana, stadium cup, yo-yo (Sourcebook is available from your local County Extension Office or on the Web at www.4-hmall.org)
- 4-H stuffed animals
- Hats
- T-shirts
- Phone cards
- Stamps
- Stickers
- Coloring books
- Crayons
- Certificates for restaurants
- Discount Cards
- Donated items from local businesses, service organizations, government

REMEMBER…
- Items may be purchased, donated, or handmade
- All items must be non-perishable
- Do not include cash
- Hero Packs are designed for children from pre-school to middle school age
- Items are designed to be a fun, educational pick-me-up for the child receiving the Hero Pack

Local 4-H, Extension Homemaker, Extension information – relevant to military families
- Methods to enroll in 4-H program
Opportunities available in 4-H
Methods to join Extension Homemaker Clubs
Programs offered through EH/CFS – money management, budgeting, healthy lifestyles, meal planning, etc.

Information on local services available to military families
- Tutoring for students
- Child care options
- Food bank
- Family services

Letter to youth and military family handwritten by a local youth or adult
- Thank them for the sacrifice that they, as an individual, and as a family, have made on behalf of our country and the freedom of others around the world
- Share any positive personal story you may have regarding military service of your own or of someone in your family
- Suggest they contact the local County Extension Office to utilize some of the resources that are available
- Encourage them to enjoy the contents of the Hero Pack
- Thank them for being a Hero to all of us!
- Keep the letter positive and upbeat.
- Sign your first name and the organization you represent, but do not include personal contact information

Need more information?

omk@ydae.purdue.edu
Tips for Writing a Letter to a Military Family

These tips will help you to write a letter to a Military Family. The letter will be included in the HERO PACK that you assemble.

- Keep the message in the letters positive, politically neutral.
- The message in each letter should come from “the heart” so there is no standard format (for ideas, see below).
- Include the date at the top of the letter.
- Address the letter to “Dear Family,” or “Dear Military Family”.
- Tell the family why you are writing – as a part of a community service project for your event.
- Thank the family for the contributions and sacrifices they make.
- Comment on any personal experience you have with a family who is involved with the military, or on a family member who is enlisted.
- Mention that 4-H is a great organization to become involved with to help support the family while a member is deployed.
- Express your appreciation to the family.
- Wish the family well.
- Be sincere – families will greatly appreciate your kindness for providing this HERO PACK to them.
- Close the letter appropriately: Sincerely, With Sincere Thanks, Truly Yours, Very Truly Yours, etc.
- Do not include any personal identifying information (NO phone number, email address, street address, etc).

POSSIBLE LETTER CONTENT:

Dear Military Family,

Thank you….

- Grateful
- Most appreciated
- Sacrifice, unselfish
- Service
- Patriotism
- National honor
- Pride
- Love of country
- Devotion to freedom

We would like you to receive a “Hero Pack”….

- Token of appreciation
- Small symbol of support

Sincerely,

First name, Last name (don’t use any other identifying information)