



2007 ANNUAL REPORT

INDIANA OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS

Through a network of community partnerships, Indiana Operation: Military Kids (OMK) supports military kids through participation in OMK County-Sponsored events, Speak Out for Military Kids, Hero Packs, and a Mobile Technology Lab. Through these activities OMK helps kids representing all military branches to feel connected, active, and supported.

OMK Information Meetings/Briefings

In 2007 Indiana OMK Team members presented information to **20 state and national audiences, reaching 3,182 people**. In addition to family and state conferences, OMK briefings have been presented at numerous Family Readiness Group (FRG) meetings for the Guard and Reserve units in Indiana. The FRG Liaison from an Army Reserve unit had this to say:



"I'd like to take this time to express my thanks for your presentations given at our first annual family day. Your topics were right on and useful and our Family Readiness Group is making plans to take or make use of the services available from the Purdue University and the 4-H clubs of Indianapolis."

An Indiana Operation: Military Kids DVD was produced to share the message of the OMK initiative with partners and communities throughout Indiana and across the country.

As a partial requirement for his Ph.D., OMK Graduate Assistant James Edwin completed his dissertation entitled, **"An Evaluation of a Military Family Support Program: The Case of Operation: Military Kids in Indiana."** The results of his study verified the importance of community-based programming such as OMK in support of military children and their families.

Indiana's Lieutenant Governor, Becky Skillman, initiated a **"Hoosier Cheer for our Heroes"** campaign to ask Indiana residents to write holiday cards to be sent to Indiana service members. OMK, County Extension staff, and volunteers responded with over 2,300 letters written and sent to the Lt. Governor's office.

"Activities to Assist" kits and lesson plans were developed and distributed by Stephanie DeCamp, 4-H Extension Educator and OMK Team member. These resources are ready-to-use activities for children that OMK Team Members throughout the state can use at deployment briefings, FRG meetings, and other community programs designed to support military children.



Youth-Focused Programs were held at the request of military units and FRG leaders. OMK volunteers led these programs for military youth while their parents were receiving information relevant to their deployments. These included Seamless Transitions, the National Guard Youth Symposium, FRG Christmas Parties and Family Days, and Indiana National Guard Youth Deployment Briefings.

Speak Out for Military Kids (SOMK) was highlighted when an OMK youth representative made a presentation to 769 High School Juniors at the Hoosier Girls State Conference. The delegates gave her a standing ovation!! Her mother said, *"the delegates that came up and talked to her after her presentation were just awesome and so supportive. Several were also interested in the OMK Hero Pack project!!"* New marketing strategies will be employed in 2008 to encourage more youth to participate in SOMK training and community events.

By the fall of 2007, nearly 1,200 **Hero Packs** had been assembled and distributed to military youth with plans underway for more distribution in various parts of the state. Hero Pack projects have been enthusiastically supported by 4-H Clubs, Indiana Extension Homemaker Association Clubs, Scouts, 4-H campers, Collegiate 4-H members, and others. Responses from the recipients of these packs have been very positive. This was reinforced by Major General Martin Umbarger when he said:

"Hero Packs remind our Guard children that they are not forgotten, and recognizes their sacrifice to their country, as well as that of their parent or sibling serving overseas. I cannot begin to say how much the Indiana National Guard values the partnership of the 4-H and Operation: Military Kids. Thank you again for all you do and God Bless!"



"Thank you SO much! Again, I want to thank you for the hero pack. Brooke loved it! She was so excited to get "Peeesents"! She said the bear was a "Dadda bear" (because of the American Flag on it). It was really cute and made our hearts swell to see her smile. Thank you for that!"
- Brooke's Mother

The Mobile Technology Lab (MTL), includes two units, each consisting of 5 laptop computers, a digital camera, a video camcorder, and a Hallmark Card Studio® 2007 program. The MTL was used at 10 events reaching 850 youth and adults. The lab was utilized at FRG meetings, Pre-deployment Family Briefings and Family Parties, at 4-H Fairs, at Camp Atterbury, and at Indiana Pacer basketball games. An FRG leader wrote:

"I know everyone loved having the Lab there and were very excited to be sending cards, etc. Personally my son carried the one for his dad around all day telling everyone that he was sending this card to his daddy in Iraq. Thank you. What a wonderful tool of communication."



"I think that the Operation: Military Kids Hero Packs initiative is a very worthwhile Community service. I always wanted to help my country, but never had a way to do that. OMK gave me a way to help my country by helping the military families in my community and state. This also allowed me to include my 4-H club to thank these military families." - 4-H Member

Another FRG leader commented:
"We can't thank you enough for the use of the laptops and printers. What a blessing it was for the soldiers and kids to make cards to send to the family members and friends overseas. We appreciate all that you do in honoring the soldiers the way you do. We are fortunate to have resources like this available to us and we are excited to continue this relationship. The FRG thanks you from the bottom of our hearts!"



County-Sponsored Events

Indiana OMK provides funds to assist local OMK teams in their support of children from military families. Local teams are able to use OMK funds to leverage their local resources and to offer events such as:

- ✓ Pre-Deployment Family Briefings and Send Off Celebration/Family Day
- ✓ Family Party – Farewell to the Troops
- ✓ Family Christmas Celebration for military families
- ✓ Several projects to create Hero Packs for distribution to children of military families



"The FRG received many thank you's and compliments at the end of the day...the families had a good time and enjoyed themselves." -FRG Leader

Other Events

- Indiana OMK sponsored a Military Child Education Coalition **"Strengthening Children of National Guard and Reserve Institute"** in Indianapolis for school personnel, Extension staff, and military representatives. Participants received information regarding how to more effectively work with students who are experiencing issues related to their parent's deployment. A similar version of this program will be offered to county teams in the spring of 2008.

- Brown County 4-H Junior Leaders wrote letters to 10 military soldiers. Each soldier received letters from two different Junior Leaders. The club also prepared care kits for 6 new military families. Other military families with a loved one serving active duty (that already received a care kit) were sent a Thanksgiving card from the Junior Leader Club.



- Quilts for fallen soldiers' children were created by a group in Scottsburg, IN, who lost a hero in May 2007 in Iraq, leaving behind 3 small children and a wife. The Extension staff purchased fabric and prepared the quilt blocks to be stitched together at the Indiana State Fair. Once the quilts were finished, they were presented to the children of the fallen soldier.



OMK Recognition and Awards:

- Indiana OMK was recognized at the 2007 National Association of Extension 4-H Agents Conference in Atlanta with the **Regional Communicator Award for the Educational Piece—Team Category for the OMK PowerPoint** that is used to share information about OMK with partners and community members.

Indiana OMK was also recognized at the 2007 Purdue Extension Professional Development Conference for two awards:

2007 Ann Hancock Educator/Specialist Cooperation Award for outstanding service to families through Indiana OMK,



presented by Purdue University Cooperative Extension Specialists Association (PUCESA), Indiana Extension Educators Association, and Epsilon Sigma Phi; and

2007 PUCESA Team Award, Indiana Operation: Military Kids, for excellence in Extension leadership, program development and Military Kids, public education outreach.

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Indiana OMK Team members, including representatives from the organizations below, have planned and implemented a wide variety of programs and activities to help military kids feel connected, active, and supported in their local communities. Together, Indiana OMK has made a difference, and with our combined resources, ideas, and commitment, we plan to continue to do so in 2008.

	<p>Indiana 4-H Youth Development Program www.four-h.purdue.edu</p>		<p>Indiana National Guard Family Programs www.inarng.org</p>	
<p>Purdue Extension Knowledge to Go 1-888-EXT-INFO</p>	<p>Purdue Extension www.ces.purdue.edu</p>	<p>U.S. Army Reserve www.armyreserve.army.mil</p>		
	<p>Indiana Extension Homemakers Association www.ieha-families.org</p>	<p>U.S. Army Child and Youth Services www.armycysconnections.com</p>		
	<p>Indiana Pacers Sports & Entertainment www.pacers.com</p>	<p>Military Child Education Coalition www.militarychild.org</p>		
	<p>Indiana Department of Education www.doe.state.in.us</p>		<p>The American Legion www.indlegion.org</p>	
	<p>Boys & Girls Clubs www.boysandgirls.org</p>	<p>American Legion Auxiliary www.legion-aux.org</p>		
	<p>National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies www.naccra.net</p>			

Operation: Military Kids is a partnership of Army Child and Youth Services, National 4-H Headquarters/USDA, and Purdue University – Youth Development and Agricultural Education Department.

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