



NEBRASKA: OPERATION MILITARY KIDS

APRIL, 2008

We are on the web! See us at: [State-www.nebraskaomk.org](http://www.nebraskaomk.org); [National-www.operationmilitarykids.org](http://www.operationmilitarykids.org)



Pictured above OMK at 2008 Nebraska State Fair - Cyber Fair

OMK AGAIN AT 2008

NEBRASKA STATE FAIR-CYBER FAIR

The countdown to the 2008 Cyber Fair at the Nebraska State Fair begins. One of the featured events for this year again is Operation Military Kids (OMK). The Mobile Tech Lab (MTL) will again be there. The MTL consists of laptops, cameras, printers, laminators, a wireless router, and video cameras. The MTL helps facilitate connections between deployed soldiers and their kids. The MTL contains software and programs for children and youth to send personal messages and pictures to their deployed family members. With that being said, this year's theme will be "Messages from Home." At the Cyber Fair family members will be able to make videos to send to their loved deployed military member overseas.

In addition to the MTL, we will be having a HERO Pack Drive at the Nebraska State Fair Cyber Fair. The HERO Pack is an outreach effort for Operation Military Kids. HERO Packs are backpacks filled with mementos and items designed to help connect kids with their deployed family member. Presenting HERO Packs to kids is a way to show appreciation and hand-deliver a salute to military youth for their strength and sacrifices while their parents are deployed. This pack contains fun and educational items such as: a disposable camera, a small photo album, a journal, books, small stuffed animal, Frisbee, stationary, pens/pencils, stamps and a hand written letter of thanks. The key component to the HERO Pack is the hand written letter. The letter thanks the child for their contribution to our country. We have the backpacks, but are in need of contents to fill these bags. For more information on Operation Military Kids or the HERO Pack, you may go online to the Operation Military Kids website at www.nebraskaomk.org.

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Please get the word out to military families, 4-H families, Extension personnel, or anyone who would like to participate in this meaningful event. How can you participate? There are several ways:

- By donating items listed for the HERO Packs at Cyber Fair, at the Nebraska State Fair.
- By volunteering to help with the HERO Pack Drive at the Nebraska State Fair Cyber Fair. Sign up online at 4h.unl.edu/cyberfair.
- By volunteering to help with the HERO Pack Drive at the Nebraska State Fair Cyber Fair. Contact Michele Myer at (402) 444-7804 for more details.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- WHAT:** VA Welcome Home
WHEN: April 5, 2008
WHERE: CoCo Key Water Resort, 72nd & Grover, Omaha, NE
CONTACT: Beth Kaiser, (402) 440-9580, bkaiser2@unl.edu
- WHAT:** SOMK Retreat @ Iowa 4-H Youth Conference
WHEN: June 22-26, 2008
WHERE: Iowa State University
CONTACT: Mark Simmons, (402) 444-7804, msimmons2@unl.edu

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A name with a face, Mark Simmons, "The Salute of the Quarter."

SALUTE TO MARK SIMMONS

Mark Simmons is the Nebraska State 4-H Military Liaison. Mark has worked for the UNL Extension in Douglas/Sarpy Counties since 1996. He works with the Urban Programs. He has headed up the Nebraska OMK State Team since its inception three years ago. The OMK program is a grassroots organization that Mark has moved from communities knowing nothing about it to what it is today.

Mark received his BS and MS from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln. Mark is married to Nicki and they have three children--Anthony, Erick, and Sydney. Mark is the 4-H leader of the "Krazy Kidz" from Gretna. Besides being busy with his family, and 4-H, Mark belongs to the Sons of the American Legion, active with his church, and coaches youth sports. He is an avid sports enthusiast.

OMK AT COCO KEYS

Operation: Military Kids was asked by the Veteran's Administration to provide children's activities during their "Welcome Home" event. This event is being held at the Holiday Inn-CoCo Key Water Resort on April 5th from 9AM - 4PM. Since the participants partaking are from Nebraska & Iowa the Iowa Operation: Military Kids will also be joining us to provide activities for the children. OMK is planning on having tables set up where children can color, watch movies, make a card, make a craft, play board games or play a Xavix game. If you were invited we will see you there!

OMK SPONSOR: 4-H

The mission of the National 4-H Headquarters is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being and communities by creating opportunities for youth. 4-H promotes positive youth development, facilitate learning, and engage youth in the work of the Land Grant Universities and USDA to enhance their quality of life.

4-H provides information to connect military to 4-H programs in their hometowns.

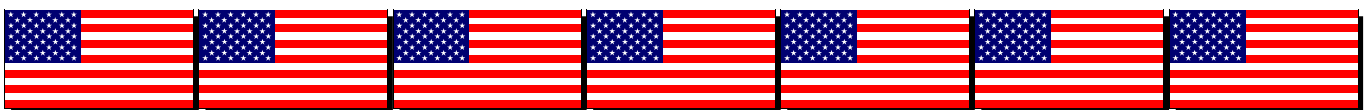
The components of 4-H is:

1. Who is 4-H...4-H is the youth development component of Cooperative Extension. This is done with the Land Grant Universities in each state, and the Cooperative Extension System.
2. What we offer...4-H is youth development. Through this they develop belonging (heart), independence (head), mastery (health), and generosity (hands).
3. How do OMK teams connect with 4-H... Each state has an identified State 4-H Military Liaison who links county 4-H educators to military staff and coordinates all 4-H military efforts across the state. They work directly with the National 4-H Headquarters to develop 4-H strategies for responding to needs of military youth.
4. How does 4-H connect with OMK...? 4-H staff, youth, and adult volunteers can link with OMK through the State 4-H Military Liaison who coordinates the State OMK team.

RSG TRAINING AT SREC CURRICULUM MEETING

Beth Kaiser presented at the SREC Curriculum meeting held in Seward on March 6th. It was attended by 35 Extension personnel. She handed out the OMK informational flier along with other handouts informing them about the RSG training, the MTL and the Hero Packs. She took a Hero Pack along to better demonstrate what goes into one and how each county could take donations for them at their fairs. She also strongly encourages each county to hold RSG training along with having a youth on our SOMK team.

If you are interested in having an OMK representative speak at your next meeting or want any additional information mentioned above please contact us at www.nebraskaomk.org.



KRAZY KIDS WORK WITH 530TH

The Gretna Krazy Kidz 4-H Club, like most 4-H clubs, begins every meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance and the 4-H Pledge. This group of kids is completing traditional projects including horticulture, foods, safety and livestock. They are also living up to the vow to serve their club, their community, their Country and their world.

The Families of the 530th MP Unit of the Army Reserves are serving their Nation while their Soldier is deployed. The unit's Family Readiness Group (FRG) meets monthly to learn about their loved ones abroad and to provide comfort and support to one another.

Nebraska Operation: Military Kids has helped create a partnership between the 4-H Club and the FRG. The members and parents of the 4-H club attend the monthly meetings, providing activities for the children of these deployed Soldiers while their parent attends the meeting.

Sherie Peterson, FRG Leader for the 530th MP BN best sums up the partnership. "The assistance (from 4-H) with children's activities has directly impacted our mission in a very positive stance. Because of their assistance, the children have a positive impression of the Family Readiness Group meetings."

Peterson continues, "The children can actually play and develop friendships... more than "just another meeting" I have to go to while our Soldier is gone. The parents are able to have an hour or two 'downtime' with other adults, knowing that their children are in a safe and controlled atmosphere, within easy access."

For more information on how your group or organization can support an FRG Group in your area, please contact Mark Simmons at msimmons2@unl.edu

HERO PACKING BY YOUNG WOMEN GROUP & RELIEF SOCIETY OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LDS

On March 1st Beth Kaiser met with 24 lovely women and young ladies to do a Hero Packing. They were with the "Young Women Group" & "Relief Society" of The Church of Jesus Christ of LDS. They decided to do this "Hero Packing" as one of their Enrichment Activities. They took the list of suggested items to go into a Hero Pack off of the *Operation: Military Kids* web site www.nebraskaomk.org and collected all of the items to fill 10 backpacks. During the packing Beth shared with the group *Operation: Military Kids* core components and how deployment affects more than just the person being deployed. The 10 Hero Packs were given to Sara Cease the Nebraska National Guard State Youth Coordinator. She will then see that they are given to children whose parents were recently deployed.

Beth along with the whole Operation: Military Kids organization thanks the Young Women Group & the Relief Society for doing this Hero Packing.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR SUMMER CAMP

OMK is proud to announce that we are sending 30 Day Campers (ages 5-8), 30 Explorer Campers (ages 8-11), and 10 Discovery Campers (ages 11-14) to 4-H camps across Nebraska.

If your child is registered to go, please keep in mind the following from *Preparing Children for the Summer Camp Experience*

(www.campparents.org/expert/campexperience.php).

Consider camp a learning experience

- This is an opportunity for your child to explore a world bigger than his/her neighborhood and a chance for you and your child to practice "letting go." Letting go allows children to develop autonomy and a stronger sense of self, make new friends, develop new social skills, learn about teamwork, be creative, and more. This time also allows parents an opportunity to take care of themselves so that they will feel refreshed when their child returns home.

Prepare for camp together

- Decisions about camp -like where to go and what to pack - should be a joint venture, keep in mind your child's maturity. If your child feels a part of the decision making process, his/her chance of having a positive experience will improve.

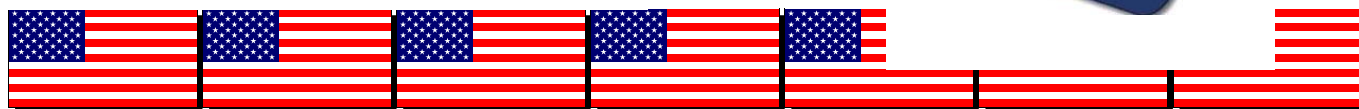
Talk about Concerns

- As the first day of camp nears, some children experience uneasiness about going away. Encourage your child to talk about these feelings rather than acting on what you think his/her feelings may be. Communicate confidence in your child's ability to handle being away from home.

Have realistic expectations

- Camp, like the rest of life, has high and low points. Not every moment will be filled with wonder and excitement. Encourage your child to have a reasonable and realistic view of camp. Discuss both the ups and downs your child may experience. Your child should not feel pressured to succeed at camp either.

The main purposes of camp are to relax and have fun. We encourage you to visit the American Camp Association (ACA) Web site <http://www.acacamps.org> for more resources related to camp preparation. Also, feel free to contact the Nebraska 4-H Camps and Centers with questions. Have a fantastic spring and we can't wait to see you this summer!



THIRD ANNUAL OPERATION: HIDDEN EGG

On March 15th, the race was on to find the hidden eggs. This Operation was hosted by the Nebraska National Guard Family Program Office and co-sponsored by the Elks Lodge 80 at the Lincoln Air Base. About 200 people attended the event. Eggs, candy, and prizes were found by all who attended. Thank you to the Nebraska National Guard Family Program Office and the Elks Lodge 80 as fun was had by all!



***If you should have story ideas, for the OMK newsletter, please contact Michele Myer at mmyer2@unl.edu.*



Above a soldier and child looking for Easter Eggs.



Pictured above is a little tyke finding goodies.

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