



# NEBRASKA: OPERATION MILITARY KIDS

*JULY, 2008*

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

## OMK AT NEBRASKA STATE FAIR-CYBER FAIR "MESSAGES FROM HOME"

Operation Military Kids will again be one of the featured events this year at the Nebraska State Fair Cyber Fair. This year OMK's theme will be "Messages from Home." This will be accomplished in two ways. First, deployed military family members will be able to check out a DVD camcorder from OMK to make a video of their State Fair experience. They will then be able to send this video their deployed family member. Secondly, OMK will have an area set up inside the Cyber Fair building for the general public to record messages that will then be sent to a deployed soldier. OMK will also have a few for our MTL lap tops set up to create thank you cards for military members.

If you have a loved one deployed and would like an opportunity to make a DVD please check our web site ([www.nebraskaomk.org](http://www.nebraskaomk.org)). We will soon be posting information concerning dates and times that will be available.

Volunteers are needed to help with the OMK booth. The Cyber Fair is located in the air conditioned Farmland Building. To sign up to volunteer please visit <http://4h.unl.edu/forms/cyberfair.htm>. You may also email Michele Myer at [mmyer2@unl.edu](mailto:mmyer2@unl.edu) or phone (402)444-4638.



Youth having fun in the OMK activities room at the VA Event.

## OMK YOUTH EVENT

Nebraska and Iowa's Operation: Military Kids were asked by the Veteran's Administration to provide children's activities during their "Welcome Home" event. This event was held at the Holiday Inn CoCo Key Water Resort on April 5<sup>th</sup>. OMK had several tables set up in the activities room where children could color pictures, make crafts, play board games, watch movies and make a card using the MTL or play one of the Xaxix games. OMK saw over 300 youth partake in these events. It was a fun day had by all!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**WHAT:** Babysitting Course for youth ages 11-18 to be capable, caring, trustworthy and responsible babysitters.

**WHEN & WHERE:**

- July 18, 2008, Gretna Public Library, Gretna, NE
- July 19, 2008, Gere Library, Lincoln, NE
- July 21, 2008, Eiseley Library, Lincoln, NE
- July 25, 2008, Anderson Library, Lincoln, NE
- July 26, 2008, Bellevue Public Library, Bellevue, NE
- July 28, 2008, Walt Public Library, Lincoln, NE
- August 2, 2008, Downtown Lincoln Library, Lincoln, NE
- August 23, 2008, Baright Public Library, Ralston, NE

**TIME:** 10:00-2:00

**BRING:** Cold sack lunch

**CONTACT:** Michele Myer, (402)444-4638, [mmyer2@unl.edu](mailto:mmyer2@unl.edu)

**WHAT:** Nebraska State Fair Cyber Fair--  
This year the theme will be "Messages from Home." Loved ones of deployed members will be able to make DVDs to send overseas.

**WHEN:** August 22-September 1, 2008

**WHERE:** Farmland Building, Nebraska State Fairgrounds, Lincoln, NE

**CONTACT:** Beth Kaiser, (402)440-9580, [bkaiser2@unl.edu](mailto:bkaiser2@unl.edu)

**WHAT:** Volunteers needed for OMK State Fair-Cyber Fair booth

**WHEN:** August 22- September1, 2008

**WHERE:** Farmland Building, Nebraska State Fairgrounds, Lincoln

**CONTACT:** Michele Myer, (402)444-4638, [mmyer2@unl.edu](mailto:mmyer2@unl.edu)

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## OPERATION PURPLE SUMMER CAMP

The National Military Family Association (NMFA) announced that Easter Seals Nebraska (ESN) was chosen to host a popular *Operation Purple* Summer Camp in 2008. NMFA developed this free summer camp program in response to the need for increased support for military children, especially those whose parents are or will be deployed. The National Military Family Association (NMFA) announced that Easter Seals Nebraska (ESN) was chosen to host a popular *Operation Purple* Summer Camp in 2008. NMFA developed this free summer camp program in response to the need for increased support for military children, especially those whose parents are or will be deployed.

"Operation Purple Camps provide a much needed respite from the worries of war that many of our Nation's children face each day their mom or dad is deployed. NMFA is excited to work with Easter Seals Nebraska on this very worthwhile program," said Nancy Asheimer, NMFA Chairman of the Board. "Together we can make a difference in the lives of military children."

The ESN partners with the Boy Scouts of America-Mid America Council and enjoys access to their location at *Camp Eagle*, near Fremont, NE. It sits high on the southern bluffs overlooking the Missouri River on over 800 acres of wooded, rolling hills and campers have access to lakes with fishing and canoeing, swimming pools, horses and trail rides, a nature center, hiking trails, and rock climbing walls. The Camp is also partnering with Offutt Air Force Base and military liaison, Master Sergeant Scott Crossman.

Camps are free to all eligible children thanks to a partnership with the Sierra Club Foundation and support from the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. The Nebraska Camp is scheduled for July 13-18, 2008.

### About ESN

Easter Seals Nebraska's Mission is to create solutions that change the lives of children and adults with disabilities or other special needs, and their families. Each person touched by Easter Seals Nebraska--whether a client, family member, volunteer, employee, donor or other supporter--becomes a force of change to ensure all people enjoy independence and has equal opportunities to live, learn, work and play in their communities. For more information, visit [www.ne.easterseals.org](http://www.ne.easterseals.org).

### About NMFA

The National Military Family Association, the only nonprofit organization that represents families of all ranks and services, prepares spouses, children, and parents to better deal with the unique challenges of military life. The Association protects benefits vital to all families, including those of the deployed, wounded, and fallen. For nearly 40 years, its staff and volunteers, comprised mostly of military family members, have built a reputation as the leading experts on military family issues. For more information, visit [www.nmfa.org](http://www.nmfa.org)

## OMK SPONSOR: U.S. ARMY CHILD & YOUTH SERVICES (CYS)

The Army Child and Youth Services (CYS) recognize the challenges of our Soldiers and their Families by offering quality programs for children and youth. CYS supports the Army Family Covenant by reducing the conflict between mission readiness and parental responsibility. The Army Family Covenants are as follows:

- Recognize the commitment and increasing sacrifices that our Families are making every day.
- Recognize the strength of our Soldiers comes from the strength of their Families.
- Committed to providing Soldiers and Families a Quality of Life that is commensurate with their service.
- Committed to providing our Families a strong, supportive environment where they can thrive.
- Committed to building a partnership with Army Families that enhances their strength and resilience.

CYS is committed to improving Family readiness by:

- Standardizing and funding existing Family programs and services.
- Increasing accessibility and quality of healthcare.
- Improving Soldier and Family housing.
- Ensuring excellence in schools, youth services and child care.

--Expanding education and employment opportunities for Family members.

CYS's Mission is Caring-Army Child and Youth Services programs exist to support military readiness by reducing the conflict between a Soldier's mission requirements and his or her parental responsibilities.

--Child and Youth Services is an integral part of the Army mission. CYS programs support the Soldier which in turn enhances Army readiness. In other words, a Soldier can concentrate on his/her mission knowing that their children and youth are safe and supervised by trained and professional staff while participating in quality developmental programs.

-- The Army Soldier's workday differs slightly due to irregular or extended duty hours, deployments and temporary duty assignments. The challenges for care continue to grow as mission requirements demand more of the modern day Soldier. One significant difference is the Soldier may not have a choice when called for duty.

--Army Child and Youth Services programs and services are a direct mission-related necessity to an Army that is 53% married; with an additional 7.5% who are single parents. Commanders, as well as their Soldiers and Families, consider Army child care and youth programs to be an important quality of life and well-being issue.

## FALLEN SOLDIER TRIBUTE



Johnny is placing a Fallen Soldier Flag



Panoramic view of all 4100 Fallen Soldier Flags.

In late April Mr. Soto contacted Mark Simmons and Beth Kaiser concerning making a donation to Operation: Military Kids. Beth was so moved by how this donation was coming about that she made a flier up to distribute to others.

The following is what the flier said:

"Have you ever wondered how you could honor the almost 4100 US Military Members that have lost their lives in the Iraq war? Do something special to remember and honor their service and sacrifice but not make it about politics."

Well that is exactly what Jose has been asking himself for some time now. Since he himself served four years in the U.S. Air Force and did two tours of duty, he knows firsthand the sacrifices that deployed soldiers and their families go through. That is why this Memorial Day weekend he wanted to do something special.

Jose decided the best way to remember and honor the fallen soldiers from Iraq would be to place a flag in his yard to represent each one. He began sharing his Memorial Day Fallen Soldier Tribute idea with family, friends and co-workers. He soon found out that he was not alone in wanting to remember and honor these soldiers. People began inquiring from as far away as Washington D.C. and Puerto Rico, as to how they could "sponsor" a flag. Jose had no idea his tribute would draw so much attention. By no means had he planned on this becoming any sort of money making idea. So a friend suggested that people could "sponsor a flag" for \$1.00 with proceeds being donated to the Nebraska Operation: Military Kids (OMK) program.

To familiarize himself with OMK, Jose began doing some research. He found that OMK is a nationwide initiative designated to provide support to the children and youth of military families that are impacted by the Global War on Terrorism. OMK accomplishes its mission by implementing four core program support elements. One of which is the Hero Pack Initiative. The 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. Jose then decided to send the proceeds from the Memorial Day Fallen Soldier Tribute to OMK. His donation will go towards the Hero Pack Initiative and to send SOMK youth to camp."

To accommodate the 4100 flags, Mr. Soto had a grid laid out on his front lawn. There were strings on both ends marking the 41 rows & another string running between them marking the locations for the 100 flags to be placed. While each Fallen Soldier's name, age and state they were from was being read off, a volunteer would place a flag in the ground. Beth Kaiser who attended the Fallen Soldier Tribute said "This was a very visual and humbling reminder of the greatest sacrifice a soldier makes while serving our country." This Fallen Soldier Tribute was done totally by volunteers and took approximately 5 hours to complete.

## READY, SET, GO TRAINING NOW KNOWN AS HIDDEN HEROES TRAINING

The OMK State Team decided early this year to change the *Ready, Set, Go Training* name to the *Hidden Heroes Training*. This new name better reflected who the training represented. When military parents living in civilian communities are mobilized, their lives and the lives of their families and children dramatically change. These youth suddenly become military kids even though they still look the same to teachers, friends, and the rest of the community. Their lives are turned upside down. They become the "Hidden Heroes."

These trainings are held to give participants and understanding and appreciation of the unique stressors that military families may face during a deployment. It also provides tools and skills to engage your community in the *Operation: Military Kids* program. Since many of these military youth live in geographically dispersed areas of our state it is even more crucial for them to have community support. Supporting military youth in Nebraska is an important job and we cannot do it without your help. We are excited for you to join our team. Working together we can have a strong impact on military families in your own backyard.

OMK has just completed the Hidden Heroes Trainings they had planned for this year. We met with community members in Ogallala, Lexington, Norfolk, Omaha, Beatrice, and Lincoln. These trainings are free and open to the public. If you would like to hold a Hidden Heroes Training in your community or business please contact Beth Kaiser at (402)440-9580 or [bkaiser2@unl.edu](mailto:bkaiser2@unl.edu) or Mark Simmons at (402)444-4237 or [mesimmon@unlnotes.unl.edu](mailto:mesimmon@unlnotes.unl.edu).

## HERO PACKING EVENTS

Beth Kaiser along with the whole OMK team would like to thank the Nebraska City Church of Latter Day Saints and the Wilber Czecherettes 4-H Club for choosing to do a Hero Packing event as one of their community projects. Both groups worked with their local communities to get additional donations to add to the Hero Packs. These Hero Packs will be distributed to military youth on July 11 and 12 at Camp Ashland.

For more information about your group or organization holding a Hero Packing event for its next community project please visit our website at [www.nebraskaomk.org](http://www.nebraskaomk.org).



The Wilber Czecherettes 4-H Club youth getting items for the Hero Pack backpacks.



The Wilber Czecherettes 4-H Club shown with their completed Hero Pack backpacks.



Sara Cease receiving a certificate from Don Suchy, the OMK America Legion partner, thanking her for her dedication and all her hard work for Nebraska military youth.



*\*\*If you should have story ideas, for the OMK newsletter, please contact Michele Myer at [mmyer2@unl.edu](mailto:mmyer2@unl.edu)*



Sara Cease receiving a certificate from Mark Simmons on behalf of OMK for all her hard work and dedication.

### THANKS & FAREWELL TO SARA CEASE

Sara Cease began her career as the State Youth Coordinator for the Nebraska National Guard in October 2005. Soon after starting her career she meet with Mark Simmons who was just beginning a new military initiative called Operation: Military Kids in the State of Nebraska. The two of them quickly became a very strong well working team. Sara has been very instrumental in introducing OMK to both military youth and civilians. She became one of the main facilitators of the Hidden Heroes Trainings held every year throughout the State of Nebraska. She worked many hours up and beyond her normal work day to see that events or projects for military youth were completed.

Sara left her position as the State Youth Coordinator on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008. She has moved to Montana to be with her fiancée and is now working for NGCCP (National Guard Child Care Program). Her undeniable dedication to OMK and to the military youth of Nebraska will be greatly missed! Thank you and good luck, Sara!!

### OMK Contact Information

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