OHIO
OPERATION: MILITARY KIDS
Serving military families in our own backyard

ANNUAL REPORT 2012
MISSION & GOALS
Our mission is to support the youth of military families throughout the deployment cycle. We do this by:
- Creating community support networks for military youth “in our own backyard” when they experience a loved one’s deployment.
- Educating the public on the impact of deployment on a service members’ children, families, and communities through awareness building and educational trainings with schools and community organizations.
- Delivering recreational, social, and educational program for military youth in civilian communities geographically dispersed throughout the state.

2012 HIGHLIGHTS
- Reached over 4,000 youth and adult program participants.
- Supported 16 camps totaling 890 hours.
- Supported 32 Yellow Ribbon events and 6 military family events around the state.
- Provided 42 informational or training opportunities for camp counselors, volunteers, corporate and community partners, educators, and parents.
- Involved 200 volunteers who contributed 20,000 hours — a $435,800 value.
- Involved with 46 organizations and businesses as funding and program partners.
- Raised $268,000 in grants and $100,000 in donations to support our programs.
- Leveraged $500,000 worth of in-kind support in goods, services, and personnel.

"Thank you, OMK! You have had a big hand in my children being so well adjusted...thanks for all YOU do!"
- Service member spouse, Marine Reserve

VOLUNTEERS & PARTNERS
Since 2005, Ohio OMK has created win-win situations resulting in quality programs for military youth and families, increased financial support, and demonstrated impact. We couldn't do it without two special groups: volunteers and partners.
- **Volunteers** are the heart of what we do! They freely give of their time and talents to extend our efforts in so many ways, whether it's as a camp counselor, craft instructor, face painter, photographer, or registration volunteer.
- **Program and funding partners** are vital to Ohio OMK’s success! We are thankful to have long-term partners such as the Ohio National Guard, Ohio 4-H and the Ohio 4-H Foundation, and the USO of Central and Southern Ohio. We are always looking for new volunteers and partners who share a common interest in supporting military youth—please contact us to learn how you can become involved.

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Life has its ups and downs. Military youth dealing with deployment know this all too well. Think of three good things that happened today and you're on your way to hunting the good stuff, even when you have to look hard for it. This approach promotes optimism, gratitude, and positive thinking. From cabin chats to treasure chests, we keep thinking of many fun and creative ways to get “good stuff” into our programs!

On your mark, get set, go! The OMK 5K and Fun Run was a great way to start the summer. Over 100 people came out to run and show support for military youth. This event combined a healthy family-focused activity with some fundraising for OMK programs.

Lions, and tigers, and bears – oh my! Add millions of lights and you have Wildlights at the Columbus Zoo. Add hundreds of military family members, food, photos with Santa, music, and munchies – and you have the makings of many great memories. The end of the year is also a great time to recognize our volunteers for all that they’ve done throughout the year. Thank you, USO of Central & Southern Ohio for supporting this event since 2005!

“My husband enjoyed having GRIT explained to him.”
- Service member spouse, Marine Reserve

“Our family loves this event; the zoo has become part of our holiday tradition. These events mean a great deal to us and they are greatly appreciated.”
- Navy Reserve Family
Troop & Family Camps welcomed entire families! Families had a chance to get away from it all and enjoy the thrills of climbing the Alpine Tower, kayaking on Lake Erie, playing ga-ga ball, tie dyeing a t-shirt, and roasting marshmallows. Here’s the highlights:

- Held 4 weekend residential camps and 1 day-long camp.
- Reached 80 military families with 335 family members.
- Developed resiliency and team building skills to ease coping with military life stressors.
- Promoted stronger family bonds and better communication.

Who can say that they have pet a penguin, slept with the sharks, made bouncy balls from goop, run hurdles with OSU athletes, or spelled O-H-I-O on the 50-yard line at the ‘Shoe? OMK Hero Camp participants, that’s who! Hero Camps are short-term experiences for 6- to 12-year-olds, each with a specific focus, such as science or healthy living. A Strong Family workshop runs concurrently for parents. A total of 187 youth and 45 adults participated in one of these fun experiences:

- Newport Aquarium - Newport, KY
- Imagination Station - Toledo, OH
- OSU Sports Sampler - Columbus, OH

“It’s great knowing that the boys get to have a great time at camp with other kids and counselors who understand, while I am deployed to Afghanistan.”

Service member, Army National Guard

For 8 years now Kelleys Island has been “home” for hundreds of military youth for a week of camp on the shores of Lake Erie. Campers were “up for the challenge” with this year’s Olympic theme. Cabins, climbing walls, canoeing, campfires, community service, and crafts – Camp Kelleys Island has it all! Campers and parents alike claim that the best part of camp is the opportunity to make connections with other military youth.

A quick recap includes:

- 261 campers ages 9 to 15 years old
- 68 camp counselors, with 50% from military families
- 3 Black Hawk helicopters landing with military leaders, including Maj Gen Ashenhurst, the Adjutant General
- 48 military service members from 3 branches, staff, and volunteers supporting operations, programs, and wellness (e.g., nurses, medics, cooks, resilience)
Operation: Military Kids is a partnership of Army Child, Youth and School Services, 4-H National Headquarters/USDA and the Ohio State University Extension 4-H program.

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