

# OUR MILITARY KIDS

# THE BRIEFING



## MILESTONES

9,200 grants  
totaling \$3,507,095  
have been awarded  
as of May 31, 2009

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 2

SUMMER 2009

### A Message From the Co-Founders

Phenomenal is the word to describe the growth that has occurred in the grant program. To help us meet this demand some exceptional volunteers have stepped forward and we have also been able to hire some great talent. They are a welcome addition to the office.

With this increase in volume, we have had to redouble our fundraising efforts. We are a true public-private partnership, relying on the generosity of individuals and corporations and also state and federal government to help us meet the demand. We are very pleased that the Army National Guard recognizes the program's value and has committed substantial funding to the program and we are working to secure additional federal funding for 2010.

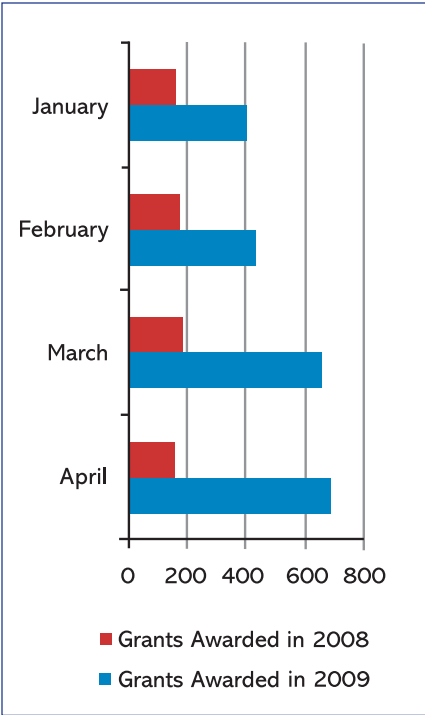
Finally, families continue to be the best spokespeople for the program and we love sharing their letters. Now that we are both grandmothers, we find ourselves especially touched by those grandparents who are assuming the responsibility of helping raise their grandchildren while their service member son or daughter is serving our country. We share with you one especially touching letter in this newsletter.

Thank you for all of your support.  
—Linda and Gail

### We Keep on Growing!

In April 2008, Our Military Kids celebrated giving out its one millionth dollar in grants. A little over a year later, Our Military Kids has given out another two million dollars bringing the grand total in grants awarded to \$3.3 million. Such rapid growth has kept everyone at the office quite busy, staff and volunteers alike, so Our Military Kids has added a few new faces over the past several months to help handle the record volume of applications.

Terry Morrow recently started working part time at Our Military Kids as the Accounting & Development Coordinator. With a background in accounting and extensive office management experience, Terry is a welcome addition to the staff. "I've known Linda Davidson for a while and had heard about Our Military Kids being such a worthwhile cause," Terry said. "I was looking for a way to give back in my retirement and this turned out to be a great fit!" Michelle Nufable also starting working at Our Military Kids this past spring as a temp and will become a full time member of the staff in early summer. A graduate of Virginia Tech, Michelle is a computer and technology whiz. "She's been a huge help entering information into the database and has exceeded all of our expectations," said Gail Kruzell.



Gloria Schaefer, a long time friend of Our Military Kids, has started coming in once a week as a volunteer to assist Mary Carolyn with her outreach efforts to the severely injured. Mary Carolyn is pleased to be working with a fellow William & Mary alum and has been impressed by Gloria's dedication and enthusiasm for the cause. Another W&M grad, Sara Feder, has also recently come on board as a volunteer. Sara comes in once a

*Continued on next page*

# Grant Recipients Give Back



One of the best aspects about working at Our Military Kids is the constant stream of heartwarming stories

that come our way about the Guard and Reserve families we serve. It is truly inspiring to hear about these families' efforts to give back and we honor them for their service.

Our Military Kids was particularly touched by a recent thank you letter from grant recipient, Olivia Tumino, age 9, telling us about a special project she helped to organize at her school, Assumption Academy, in Emerson, New Jersey. With the help of their parents, Olivia and her younger brother Johnny, age 6, held a toy drive. The project was called Operation Shoebox because over 200 shoeboxes were filled with toys and crafts that were sent over to Iraq to the children's father, Major John Tumino, who is a member of the New Jersey National Guard and is deployed with the 50th Brigade Combat Team. Major Tumino delivered the shoeboxes to a local orphanage in Iraq.

"It was really fun," Olivia remarked. "We sent jump ropes and bouncy balls." She is proud of her father's service and that "he continues to do good will" even though his military responsibilities keep him busy. "I miss my Dad a lot but it helps that I get to talk to him on the webcam."

Last fall Olivia received a grant to continue taking piano lessons while her



**Olivia and Johnny with their father, Major John Tumino.**

**"My daughter and son have grown up faster than other kids. My deployment has been hard on them."**

brother received a grant to play baseball. Olivia has been taking piano for two years and plans to begin taking guitar lessons with her father when he returns from Iraq.

"My daughter and son have grown

at Langley High School. "Everything has come full circle!" Gail said.

The staff of Our Military Kids is extremely grateful to all of our volunteers for their strong support of the program, particularly Angela Kolares who has been coming in each week for over three years. —*Mary Carolyn Voght*

up faster than other kids," notes Major Tumino. "My deployment has been hard on them." He and his wife, Celeste, are "very thankful and appreciative that Our Military Kids reaches out to help the citizen soldiers who are bearing the brunt of this war." —*Mary Carolyn Voght*

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week to help process grant applications and prepare award packets mailed to the children. Brenda Whalen, a friend of Gail Kruzell, began volunteering with Our Military Kids this past year as well. Gail used to volunteer for Brenda when she was the Director of the Career Center

My granddaughter recently received a grant from Our Military Kids to take piano lessons while her father is in Iraq. This is his second deployment to Iraq in her 8 years of life. Since her mother and father are now divorced, I care for my grandchildren on my son's visitation days while he is in Iraq. That is only 8 days a month to keep them in contact with their father. We are so thankful to have found a piano teacher at Milliken University with an opening on Mondays when I have them! So now, every Monday, Sicily and I will go to her piano lesson knowing that at that very moment in time Daddy knows where she is and what she is doing. And after the lesson we will email and write letters and send pictures to keep Daddy up to date on her lessons. She plans on her Daddy attending her first piano recital when he gets back home.

Sicily has wanted piano lessons for a long time. She knows that her Daddy



**“Our Military Kids has given this father and daughter something wonderful to share – a goal – a conversation – a connection – a memory. That is priceless.”**

is far away but has worked hard to get the paperwork together to apply for the grant. Then Our Military Kids made it all happen for them. It is hard enough when children are separated from a parent by war. It is incredibly sad when they are separated from a parent by both divorce

and war. Our Military Kids did much more than give Sicily something to do and a musical skill. Our Military Kids has given this father and daughter something wonderful to share – a goal – a conversation – a connection – a memory. That is priceless. THANK YOU. —Jane

## Our Military Kids Finds Support on Both Sides of the Potomac

With the retirement of Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, the outgoing Director of the Army National Guard, Our Military Kids loses one of its avid “inside the Pentagon” backers. Gen. Vaughn found the program to be an efficient, effective and meaningful way to support his troops and their families, and authorized funding to ensure the availability of grant awards to all children of deployed Army National Guard soldiers.

While a great champion of the program is moving on, Our Military Kids has found support in the new leadership.

In early March, Linda Davidson and Gail Kruzel briefed Air Force Gen. Craig McKinley, the chief of the National Guard Bureau, on Our Military Kids. Recognizing the value of the program, McKinley invited Our Military Kids’ leadership back to the Pentagon the following month to address all the Military Branch Reserve Chiefs in a briefing that was well received.

Additionally, Davidson and Kruzel have spent considerable time on Capitol Hill educating the staff of new and returning congressional members on the availability and value of the grant

program to children of deployed service members. A number of those legislators have shown their support for the grant program, including House Representatives Patrick Kennedy (RI), Gerry Connolly (VA), Jim Moran (VA), Solomon Ortiz (TX) and Mary Jane Kilroy (OH), who have all submitted funding requests for Our Military Kids this congressional session.

Our Military Kids relies on the support of corporations, individuals and government, and it is very encouraged that this private-public partnership continues to thrive. —Gail Kruzel

### GOING GREEN

In an effort to save trees and money, the Our Military Kids newsletter, *The Briefing*, will be available in electronic format. If you would like to have this newsletter sent to you electronically, please send an email to [gkruzel@ourmilitarykids.org](mailto:gkruzel@ourmilitarykids.org) and you will be put on the email listing and will be removed from the postal mailing.

## Severely Injured Outreach



On Saturday, April 25, Our Military Kids participated in KidsFest at Fort Detrick in Maryland.

In honor of April as the Month of the Military Child, the Soldier Family Assistance Center at Fort Detrick organized the event which included pony rides, a moon bounce, and craft activities. Children with parents stationed at Fort Detrick and children of severely injured service members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center had a blast!

Our Military Kids set up a table with information about our grant program along with several fun activities. Markers and crayons were provided for children to draw patriotic pictures to be displayed on the Our Military Kids website. Kids also took part in our Candy Guess, estimating how many red hots were in a large glass jar. The three children who guessed closest to the actual number



won Target gift cards. Last, Our Military Kids held a free raffle for tickets to the Washington Nationals baseball game

on May 2. Many thanks to Target and General Dynamics for providing the gift cards and tickets. —*Mary Carolyn Voght*

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Our Military Kids, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3), non-profit organization that wants to ensure school-age children of deployed and severely injured Reserve and National Guard military have the opportunity to participate in youth sports, fine arts, and tutoring programs without the expense of such programs creating a financial burden on a family that has already been asked to make sacrifices and accept new challenges.

**SUPPORTING NATIONAL GUARD AND MILITARY RESERVE FAMILIES**  
*One Child at a Time*