

OUR MILITARY KIDS THE BRIEFING

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MILESTONES

5,907 children
have received \$2,227,212
in grant awards as of
November 30, 2008

Season's Greetings From the Co-Founders

2008 is a banner year for Our Military Kids! We will have awarded \$1.5 million in grants by the time you read this newsletter—a 3-fold increase over 2007. Looking ahead, we will continue our outreach to even more families, especially those of the severely injured from both the active and reserve components.

The success of Our Military Kids is the result of work by many hands, heads and hearts. Our staff grew in size this year with the addition of two multi-talented individuals: Mary Carolyn Voght, joining in February, and Lorene Kitzmiller in September. We are also tremendously grateful for the many volunteers who help keep Our Military Kids running efficiently and effectively including our exceptional board members who contribute, free of charge, their time, energy and talent.

We especially appreciate each one of you who have made an essential contribution to the success of this program. We are grateful that you have chosen to join Our Military Kids in its mission to recognize and support the children of those great men and women serving our country. We know we can speak for the military families and tell you how much they appreciate and welcome your acknowledgement of their service and patriotism.

Our best wishes to all of you for a joyous holiday season. —Linda and Gail

The Year in Review

As we approach the end of 2008, Our Military Kids would like to take a moment to reflect back on the milestones of this year, taking stock of all that has been accomplished. A tally of this year's numbers (January through November) include: 2 new staff members, dozens of new volunteers, 6 new foundation contributors, 8 new corporate partners, hundreds of new individual donors, and certainly the most significant number of all, 3,500 grants awarded to military kids totaling \$1.4 million.

Our Military Kids has experienced exponential growth thanks to the combined efforts of volunteers, staff, contributing foundations, corporate partners, and individual donors. Together we have all made a positive difference in the lives of thousands of children living in hundreds of communities across our nation. Our Military Kids has also received considerable support from the military. General Clyde Vaughn, Chief of the Army National Guard, has been a particularly strong advocate of the program, helping to ensure that a record number of Guard children received grants this year.

So much has been achieved in 2008, due in large part to the generous support of new and repeat donors alike. The holiday season is a special time of year, one of both thanksgiving and gift giving. Our Military Kids gives thanks to our brave troops and their families for selflessly serving our nation and we encourage all of our wonderful supporters to continue to give to the program so that many more children may also receive the gift of a grant-funded extracurricular activity. Giving kids the opportunity to pursue their interest and dreams is truly a priceless gift, indeed. Warmest holiday wishes and many blessings to you all. ★



The staff of Our Military Kids (l to r): Mary Carolyn Voght, Lorene Kitzmiller, Linda Davidson, Gail Kruzel, Michelle Nelson.

www.ourmilitarykids.org

Lorene Kitzmiller Joins Our Military Kids Team



Anyone who has called the Our Military Kids office since mid-September may have noticed a new friendly voice on the other end of the line. That voice belongs to Lorene Kitzmiller, our new Assistant Director of Family Programs. Lorene joined our staff to help process the growing number of applications we are receiving and to assist the families who call us with questions. She has only been here three months, but already the office seems to be running more smoothly. Gail Kruzal said, "Lorene has far exceeded our expectations. She is a delight to work with, and her warmth and enthusiasm have made her a welcome addition to our team."

A self-described "military brat," Lorene spent part of her childhood at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where her father was an Army 1st Sergeant. She also has a grandfather who served in the last mounted cavalry during World War II and then later on in the 82nd Airborne. After graduating from high school, Lorene decided to continue her family's military tradition by joining the Navy as a diesel mechanic. She then held several administrative positions in the Army Reserve and Army National Guard before joining the Air National Guard. Currently, Lorene holds the rank of 1st Sergeant with the



Lorene Kitzmiller

118th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron. She is responsible for managing the health, morale, and welfare of all the enlisted soldiers in her unit. "Being a 1st Sergeant has allowed me to provide folks with the tools they need to grow as people," she said. "It's been so rewarding." Her fellow service members think she's doing a great job. Lorene was recently nominated for the Air Guard 1st Sergeant of the Year Award by her superior, Colonel Scott McCullough.

Lorene has a genuine desire to help others and is excited about Our Military Kids' mission to support Guard and Reserve families. "I've been so impressed by the difference this program makes for our soldiers and sailors serving abroad," Lorene said, noting, "It's easier for them to focus on their mission if they know that their kids are being taken care of." She also thinks that "it's nice for Guard and Reserve families to know that civilians recognize and appreciate the sacrifices that they make."

When she is not busy working at Our Military Kids or looking after her soldiers, Lorene likes to spend time with her

husband, Dusty, and her two nieces, Jena and Julie, who she and Dusty are raising. As a family, they enjoy doing outdoor activities and taking day trips together.

All of us at Our Military Kids are pleased to welcome someone so committed to children and the military into our "office family." ★

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Letters from the Homefront

Words cannot express the dedication and hard work of your organization.

Taina is my daughter and you recently paid for her karate lessons. She was always an intelligent girl for her age, but as I left again for deployment she sank into depression.

I saw a poster of your organization at my unit and decided to do the paperwork. Taina was always fascinated by karate. This gave her the opportunity to learn karate and the culture that comes with it. Today, Taina is doing great at school and at her karate academy. As a matter of fact, Taina will be competing in a karate tournament representing her academy.

Again, thank you for your ultimate kindness.

Best Regards, A soldier dad serving in Iraq ★



Taina shows her karate prowess

Faces of Giving

What do a family bowling night, a book drive, a holiday party, and a dance recital all have in common? They are just some of the creative ideas caring people across the country have thought up to help Our Military Kids. We are incredibly grateful for all of the contributions we receive from donors, large and small, and we would like to extend a special thank you to several people who have organized special events on our behalf.



Bowl a Strike—Help Those Who Fight

Students at Saint Francis Xavier School in Burbank, California, held a family bowling night in May to raise money for Our Military Kids. Jimmy Villarreal, the student body president, spearheaded the project after he read an article in the *LA Times* about three boys who lost their mother in Iraq. “The story made us think of the hardships faced by so many children of our military soldiers,” Jimmy remarked. “We felt that as student council leaders, we could get students in our school to help other American kids in need. Kids helping kids.” Flyers for the event advertised that participants would receive “a t-shirt, food, drinks, two games of bowling, and the chance to repay the people who have served us.” The bowling night drew such a large crowd that the school ended up renting out the entire bowling alley for the event, which raised \$1,512.53 for Our Military Kids.



Jimmy, Jackie and Tony Villarreal



Books for the Brave

The Clarendon, Virginia Barnes & Noble Bookstore, chose Our Military Kids, along with several other organizations, to benefit from its efforts to collect and distribute



books to military children in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area during the holidays. Our Military Kids is working with the Family Readiness Group leader at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and the State Youth Coordinator at the D.C. Armory to have the books delivered to each site for their upcoming holiday parties for service families. “Our Military Kids is thrilled to be partnering with Barnes & Noble to put books into the hands of local military children,” said Linda Davidson, co-founder. “We appreciate the opportunity to do something special for these children at this time of year.”

Giving Thanks With Gift Cards

John Mason, a retired Army colonel and the former mayor of Fairfax, Virginia from 1990-2002, is asking that guests to his holiday party bring a gift card for children of the severely injured service men and women at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. “What a nice way to celebrate the holidays and honor the sacrifices of military children at the same time,” said Gail Kruzell, co-founder. “We really appreciate the efforts of people like Mr. Mason who recognize the children of Guard and Reserve soldiers.”

Dance Benefit for Deployed and Injured Soldiers

Jodi Riley, a military wife from Illinois whose children have received activity grants from Our Military Kids, decided to give back by organizing a benefit dance recital. Jodi said, “I think Our Military Kids is a great organization and that it would be wonderful to help other children by donating to it.” She is working with several dance schools around DeKalb, Illinois, to put on a fundraising performance in late February 2009. Efforts like Jodi’s support military families across the nation that take advantage of Our Military Kids grants for children.

The challenges that families of deployed soldiers and the severely injured face are numerous, but so are the opportunities to reach out and support them. Let us know how you would like to support the mission of Our Military Kids. From school service projects to unique special events, there are many ways to give back and make a difference in the life of a child. ★





THE MILITARY KIDS BRIEFING

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Our Military Kids

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for military kids

Patriotic Holiday Cheer ▶



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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