

OUR MILITARY KIDS

THE BRIEFING

VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

WINTER 2009

MILESTONES

14,000 grants
totaling \$5.6 million
have been awarded as
of December, 2009

Letter from the Executive Director

As the Executive Director of **Our Military Kids**, I have seen a lot of changes since its founding in 2004, particularly over this past year. We have added new staff members to our team, developed new award packets for our grant recipients (thanks to a creative marketing team at Target), and worked with new corporate and foundation partners to help raise awareness and funds to support military children.

Despite all these exciting changes one thing has remained the same, our commitment to our mission of supporting and recognizing the children of deployed Guard and Reserve military personnel and the children of wounded, ill, and injured service members. We are honored and proud to help take care of these families because they all have a loved one working hard to protect each and every American family back home.

Our Military Kids hopes that you and your family enjoy a safe and blessed holiday season. We also ask that you remember all the military families separated from loved ones who are deployed overseas. What better gift to give this time of year, than the opportunity for a military child to participate in a meaningful extracurricular activity to help them cope with the stress of a deployment or having a parent recovering from severe injury. A donation to **Our Military Kids** is both a way to say thank you and to give something back to those who have already given so much for us all.

Thank you for all of your support.
—Linda

Happy Birthday Our Military Kids!



Our Military Kids marked its 5th anniversary this fall with a special celebration at the Advisory Board meeting on October

19, 2009. An anniversary cake and red, white, and blue balloons made it a festive occasion but the real highlight of the evening was the distinguished guests in attendance.

Our Military Kids' staff and board members were extremely honored to have General Craig R. McKinley, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Lieutenant General Harry M. Wyatt III, Director of the Air National Guard, Major General Raymond W. Carpenter, Acting Director of the Army

National Guard, Louis A. Cabrera, Assistant Chief and Comptroller of the National Guard Bureau, and Alex Baird, Chief of the National Guard Bureau Family Programs all attend and speak at the meeting. Members of the National Guard Bureau leadership expressed their gratitude for the program and stated that there is a real need for Americans to support the families of deployed service members. Moreover, General McKinley indicated that this need will remain for years to come as our country



(Above) Board members Roger Schultz and Paul Weaver converse with LtGen. Harry M. Wyatt III, Director of the Air National Guard. Gen. Craig R. McKinley (left), Chief of the National Guard Bureau, expresses his appreciation for the program.



continues to fight wars abroad.

In addition to receiving a briefing from the National Guard Bureau's top brass, advisory board members also discussed the organization's considerable growth and accomplishments over the past five years. "Five years ago, I had no idea that **Our Military Kids** would expand to be the size that it is today," remarked Linda Davidson. "Thanks to the continued support of the National Guard Bureau and major corporate partners like

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Our Military Kids Gets a New Poster Child

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For several months now, **Our Military Kids** has been looking for a new picture to update our printed materials. We receive so many great photographs from grant recipients in the mail, through email, or posted to our official fan page on facebook. Mistie Ford, wife of Captain Mike Ford and mother of Hannah, age 5, and Jacob, age 10, recently sent us pictures of her family taken right before her husband deployed to Iraq in August. The staff was so moved by the photograph of Hannah and her father; we knew we had found the new face of **Our Military Kids** once we saw it. The picture captures the mix of emotions that families experience during a deployment: anxiety and loss but also pride and love.

Hannah received a grant from **Our Military Kids** to take gymnastics while Jacob received a grant to attend a weekend sleep away camp. Hannah loves “getting to do tricks on the bars” and Jacob thinks that “getting to go horseback riding will be the most fun part of camp.” “Keeping my children busy during this time has really helped to pacify their worries,” Mistie Ford noted.



Grant recipient, Hannah Ford, hugging her father before he deployed in August, 2009.

The children’s father, Mike Ford, is the Company Commander of the HHC 36th Sustainment Brigade deployed out of Temple, Texas. He has served a total of 12 years in the Army National Guard and is expected to return home in mid June of 2010. “The absence of a parent is tough when you are a close knit family,” said Mistie Ford. “Dinner time and bedtime are the hardest for my kids. That’s when they miss their Dad the most.” Jacob also misses “playing baseball out in the yard” with his dad and Hannah misses laying her head on her Daddy’s tummy at the end of the day.

Another challenge the Ford children face during their father’s deployment is living in a civilian community where there are very few other children with a parent deployed overseas. “It’s difficult for them not having friends going through the same thing,” their mother said. Mistie Ford reached out to both Hannah and Jacob’s schools to let them know about her husband’s deployment and was extremely heartened when faculty at both schools responded with ideas about ways to support the troops. Hannah’s kindergarten class has made American flags to send overseas and Jacob’s fifth grade class has chosen his father’s brigade to be the beneficiary of their class service project. On November 11, Hannah’s school held a special Veteran’s Day Program where Captain Ford spoke to the entire school on Skype. “The folks in our community may not understand exactly what military families go through,” Mistie Ford remarked, “but they are very supportive of us and we are so grateful for that.” ★

General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, and Target, **Our Military Kids** has been able to award \$5 million in grants since its founding. We are truly grateful to all of our contributors who have helped us support and recognize so many military families.” ★

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More Than Money

Picture this: a child receives a large white envelope in the mail addressed to him or her. Inside the envelope is a bright red folder sealed with a shiny gold “TOP SECRET” sticker. Inside the folder the child finds a congratulatory letter and an award certificate recognizing him/her for their service to our country, along with an **Our Military Kids** button, bandana, picture frame, and bumper sticker. Thanks to our friends at Target, the creative marketing team, this new and improved award packet became a reality for **Our Military Kids**’ grant recipients this fall.

Target has made a significant financial contribution to **Our Military Kids** each year since 2006 and supported the organization’s mission in other ways as well. In addition to devoting countless “creative” hours to developing a



The new award packet for grant recipients, designed by Target’s creative marketing team.

new award packet for **Our Military Kids**, Target supported the Art & Essay contest in 2008 by providing gift cards for prizes and the Holiday Party for Wounded Warrior families at Walter Reed last December by supplying generously filled gift bags. “Target is a true

partner of **Our Military Kids**,” says Linda Davidson. “We are so appreciative of their wonderful financial support as well as the fact that they come up with other creative ways to support our program and the military families we serve.” ★

Kathleen Anderson Joins Our Military Kids

You may remember seeing Kathleen Anderson’s face on the cover of **Our Military Kids**’ fall newsletter. Her three children received grants this past summer while her husband was deployed overseas and her son, Riley, was chosen to throw out the opening pitch at the Nationals baseball game honoring Our Military Kids on July 21.

After the game Kathleen continued to stay in touch with the staff of **Our Military Kids**. In August, when it became apparent that a new staff member

was needed to keep pace with the growing volumes of applications, we did not have to look far. Kathleen was the perfect candidate. No task is too small or too large for her to handle and Kathleen’s smiling personality is an added bonus. “Kathleen has excellent organizational skills,” notes Linda Davidson, “and has helped the **Our Military Kids**’ office run more smoothly since she has joined the staff.”

Prior to joining **Our Military Kids**, Kathleen worked at H&R Block for twelve years as a Certified Tax Advisor. She also has had previous experience



working as an office administrator and as a licensed P&C insurance agent with USAA.

As the spouse of an Amy National Guardsman and

the mother of three very active children, Kathleen personally understands the challenges that Guard and Reserve families face when their loved one is deployed overseas. She is strongly committed to **Our Military Kids**’ mission of supporting military children. ★

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 mcvoght@ourmilitarykids.org and you will be put on the email listing and will be removed from the postal mailing.

Confidant Solutions and Our Military Kids Launch Joint Campaign

Protect your family and help support **Our Military Kids** at the same time! On November 11, **Our Military Kids** and Confidant Solutions Inc. launched a joint promotion that will run through January 10, 2010. Confidant Solutions Inc. provides an innovative, secure online technology that provides families with an easy, secure way to share important information in case of a family emergency. Confidant makes readily available online information such as the location of vital documents, contact details for key people, the institutions where accounts and policies are held, and the location of important objects, using an intuitive icon-driven interface with bank-standard security.

Our Military Kids and Confidant Solutions are collaborating because of the philosophical alignment of their missions: protecting families by providing innovative solutions to address important gaps.

“The American public recognizes the need to protect their own families, as well as the special needs of military families who are making sacrifices on behalf of all of us” says Confidant founder Samuel “Sandy” Haviland. “We are very pleased to partner with **Our Military Kids** in promoting a way that families can serve both needs, by donating a portion of their Confidant subscription fees to help fund grants for military children.”

The larger the number of Confidant subscriptions, the larger the number of grants that will be funded to support children of deployed Guard and Reserve personnel and the children of severely injured service members. Confidant can be found online at www.beconfidant.com. New subscribers can ensure support of the **Our Military Kids** grant program by entering the promotional code “OMK” at the time of their subscription enrollment. ★



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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