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Survey Shows Importance of Extracurricular Involvement for National Guard Children

Grants from 'Our Military Kids' Have Positive Impact on Mental Health during Deployment

McLEAN, Va. – December 8, 2011 – The increased stress levels and other negative psychological symptoms children experience as the result of a military parent's deployment can be abated by participating in extracurricular activities, according to a new survey report from the nonprofit organization Our Military Kids.

The survey was taken by 780 National Guard families that received a grant from Our Military Kids to pay for a child's participation in a sport, fine art, or tutoring program. The results show 80 percent of respondents reporting increased stress and anxiety in their children during a deployment, and 98 percent said that participation in the activity paid for by the grant benefited their children.

"The Our Military Kids grant program is undoubtedly essential to children's well-being while a parent is deployed overseas," said Linda Davidson, Executive Director of Our Military Kids. "These families face unique challenges because they are dispersed all over the country – nearly half live at least 50 miles from the nearest military base where they would have access to family support services. Our Military Kids fills a crucial gap for thousands of children each year."

The survey yielded other interesting results, including:

- Nearly everyone (99.4%) reported that the Our Military Kids grant program contributed to the overall well-being of their entire family;
- The most commonly reported symptoms in children with a deployed parent were emotional reactivity, anxiousness/depression, and clinginess;
- Over 98 percent of respondents believe the Our Military Kids program contributed to improved morale for the deployed Service Member; and
- When asked if they would have been able to enroll their children in an activity without the Our Military Kids Grant, 28% of respondents said no, and 62% said maybe, but it would put a financial strain on the household.

"I think that if my oldest would not have had a positive way to get his anger out, he would have possibly committed suicide," said one respondent. "He was really struggling with his attitude and having anything in common with anyone in the household. Being able to do something outside the family that made him feel good about himself saved his life!"

The Our Military Kids grant program is available to National Guard and Reserve families during overseas deployments. Additionally, children of Wounded Warriors from all branches of the military are eligible for grants. Since its inception in 2004, the organization has provided more than 33,000 grants to children, totaling over \$13 million.

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About Our Military Kids

Our Military Kids was founded in 2004 to support children ages three to 18 of National Guard and Reserve families during a deployment. The organization provides \$500 grants for extracurricular activities such as sports, fine arts, and tutoring programs that nurture and sustain children while a parent is serving our country overseas. Additionally, the program is available to children of Wounded Warriors in all branches of the military. Our Military Kids is funded by corporations, private donors, and government grants. For more information, please visit www.ourmilitarykids.org.

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