



## A Quick Overview on How to Put Together a Hero Pack

### **What are Hero Packs?**

Hero Packs are backpacks filled by community groups and non-military youth with mementos and items designed to help kids connect with their deployed parent. They are a way to hand-deliver a salute to military children and youth for their strength and sacrifice while their parents are deployed.

### **Who builds Hero Packs?**

YOUTH! Any group of youth that wants to get involved! They could be from a Boys & Girls Club, a local baseball team, 4-H members, a church youth group, etc. This is a youth-led, adult supported project.

### **What goes inside a Hero Pack?**

1. Three connection/communication tools such as a disposable camera, photo album/scrapbook, journal/pen, and stationary.
2. Locally donated items which show the child their community supports and appreciates them.
3. FUN items such as stickers, a stuffed animal or Frisbee!
4. A handwritten appreciation letter from a youth to the child expressing thanks for his or her service and sacrifice. Why? Because kids serve, too!
5. Local partner and support information for parents

### **Where do these mementos and items come from?**

4-H, Boys Scouts, Girl Scouts, U.S. Army Child & Youth Services, state partners, local businesses, community organizations, and individuals. Locally donated items assist the OMK initiative in building community awareness and the local support network. This is how each community is able to personalize their packs and give “suddenly military” families a little touch of home.

### **How are these packs paid for?**

In addition to asking for donations from the community, groups may choose to hold fundraisers, form partnerships with community organizations (groups may consider asking the local B&GC, 4-H program, The American Legion, VFW, scouts, school, church, store, library, or another club if they might be interested in teaming up to create Hero Packs), or grants ([www.ysa.org](http://www.ysa.org), [www.youthventure.org](http://www.youthventure.org), [www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org), [www.nationalservice.org](http://www.nationalservice.org) ). Don't forget, Operation: Military Kids Vermont is

here to support groups taking on the Hero Packs Project with advice, answers to questions, and resources.

### **How are the packs assembled?**

Once all items have been collected, the backpacks and contents are set out in a place visible to all “packers”. An assembly line is an efficient way to assemble the backpacks: youth can either fill the entire backpack by carrying it along the line, or backpacks can be passed down the line, having each youth in charge of a particular item. Assembly day might also be a good time for each youth to write his/her letter to a military child.

### **Hero Recognition and Pack Distribution**

Hero Packs are hand delivered to young heroes at special events, meetings, school, clubs, or after-school activities. The hand delivery is significant in that the youth who worked so hard can see their efforts are going to support actual people, and the kids receiving the packs can see just how much their community cares about them.

### **Interested in starting the Hero Packs Project in your community?**

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