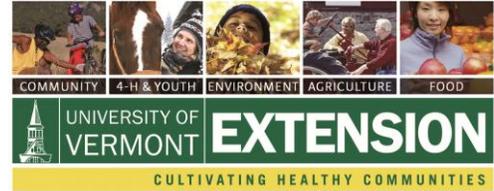


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TRANSCRIPT

EPISODE DATE: 4/04/11

EPISODE NAME: Supporting Vermont's Military Families through the UVM Extension
4-H Operation: Military Kids Program

Today on across the fence supporting the children are of our military men and women. Operation military kids reminds us that young people in service family's need community support and positive opportunity. Operation military kids or OMK use the United States army's collaborative effort with communities all across the country. In Vermont the effort is led by the University of Vermont extension four H program with partners in businesses schools and other youth serving organizations. Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I'm Judy Simpson. Over the past two years more than 500 Vermont families have been directly impacted by military service and deployment. With joyous homecomings in recent months it may be easy to think that everything is OK or back to normal but that's not always the case. Here to help us understand why is Stephanie Atwood. Stephanie is the four H operation military kids coordinator and she's been with the OMK program since 2009. Great to have you with us. April is the month of the military child. Why is that Federal declaration so important?

Stephanie.: It's important because it's our chance to recognize the children of are deployed service members and thank them for their service. Their parents have been gone a long time and it's not an easy time. They're serving to so it's our chance to say thanks for that. Yes we've been through this huge deployment recently. Our service members just came home November and December and that's affected over 1000 kids. That's a lot of families and a lot of kids.

Judy.: It's a long time to have your parents away for a year.

Stephanie.: Absolutely. It might be easy to think that because family's have come back together that everything's going to go back to normal and it will be OK but reunification and homecoming that phase can be just as stressful as deployment itself..

Judy.: Can you explain a little bit why it can be stressful?

Stephanie.: It's about a whole range of emotions that families are going through a lot through that period and learning to come back together to live as unit again can be really stressful.

Judy.: I know you brought some slides that can help explain the timeframe of what might be occurring.

Stephanie.: The slides that I've brought I've pulled from one of our ready set go trainings and those are trainings that we offer two community members to help explain the deployment process and what military families might be going through. The slides that pulled are from a series that focuses on the reunion and what you're looking at right now is a slide that explains about adjustment and renegotiation. This is about up to six weeks after the service member returns. This phase is about change and excepting those

changes. Families change a lot. A year is a long time. It's easy to see how much a child has changed any year. They grow you can tell but adults change too and one family's come back together it can be really difficult to accept those changes. An example is before the deployment may be the father always dropped a child off to school every morning and that was the routine. And when the pair was gone the mom dropped that kid off to school so when they come back together whose going to drop the child off to school now.

Judy.: You have to figure it all out again.

Stephanie.: You really do and something as simple as dropping a child off at school is not so simple in some cases.

Judy.: But also family members may feel a little overwhelmed.

Stephanie.: Absolutely as I said before this is about a whole range of emotions and a change its huge it's hard to deal with a situation like this and I know I would feel completely overwhelmed. You need to give time. Families need time and its okay.

Judy.: I think it's perfectly normal for a couple to think the spouse you been married to for 10-15 years you know pretty well then they come back in you think something has changed and you feel a little bit guilty for not being able to pick up on that or trying to roll with it and it's not going as smoothly as it could.

Stephanie.: It's about renegotiating and coming together again.

Judy.: After the initial six weeks or so is the judgment usually completed?

Stephanie.: It's different for every family but this next phase we call the reintegration and stabilization and a term that I really like you can see at the bottom of the screen is the New Normal. The reason I like that term in its use a lot is because before the deployment you have a routine there's a normal in place when the service member leaves there's a completely new normal. And coming together again there's a New Normal again. Its reestablishes those routines accepting the changes that have happened and not judging.

Judy.: You mentioned it's different for every family can you explain a little bit about that?

Stephanie.: It is different for every family there's no such thing as a perfect reunion. I think that's something that we as community members need to understand to. It's easy to assume that reunion is a joyous occasion in it is it's really happy but it can also be a really big struggle and some families are able to navigate it perfectly and it is a perfect reunion for them and other families' it may take a little bit more work.

Judy.: What do friends and neighbors need to keep in mind?

Stephanie.: Just showing our support that's what OMK is all about. Is showing that you care being there for the family's being there for the kids.

Judy.: What kinds of things is OMK a dueling specifically to help support military kids?

Stephanie.: As always we are hoping to connect with communities educating communities is a huge piece. As I mentioned before our Reddy said go trainings which we offer which helps better explain cycles. Anyone can request them. But we're also working with communities to offer events activities and a wide range of camps.

Judy.: Can you tell me a little bit about some of the work that some of the kids are doing at camp or some of the things it happen?

Stephanie.: Yeah it's really about connecting them and I'll talk a little bit more later about some of the opportunities that we have coming up the summer but it's giving them a chance to connect with another maybe share their experiences or understand that OK we've been through the same thing and it's OK to be a kid.

Judy.: Let's put one of those graphics up again and maybe we can talk more about that. Again it's all about reintegration and socialization getting people back together again in realizing it's not going to be perfect and there's going to be a lot of different changes but that's just what happens. And you've initiated a couple of local approaches bringing on board regional coordinators around the state. Joining us now is Lindsay Jones. Lindsey is an all OMK a regional coordinator for the northeastern region of Vermont welcome.

Lindsay.: Thank you Judy.

Judy.: So what your role as an all went a regional coordinator?

Lindsay.: As a regional coordinator my job is to provide outreach to the neighboring counties community members and organizations schools in to raise awareness about OMK. Am also in charge of identifying community partners who would be willing to sponsor OMK and events like the American legion boys and girls clubs local four H clubs schools. I'm also in charge of coordinating community organizations to provide youth focused events specifically for military families. Identify local volunteers to assist with OMK aid related activities. Promote military events to neighboring counties and also seek out donations for hero packs.

Judy.: Tell me which are currently doing in the northeast kingdom?

Lindsay.: Currently right now I am collaborating with the local four H coordinator in the northeast kingdom and we're hoping to provide military activities for youth through her local four H clubs. One in particular is the shooting sports club. In July there will be a three day event that the shooting sports club does and the first day they will offer free activities for military youth. That will be in July and that will be in Lyndonville. In April we're having a weeklong vacation camp that will be free for military use but is open to all youth. That will be April 18 to the 22nd and that topic is on mad scientists. And then also I will be attending the youth town meeting day at Lynden State College tomorrow presenting information on OMK. What's available to use and their families.

Judy.: What are some of the things that you hope to establish?

Lindsay.: I would like to collaborate with more partners in the northeast kingdom and maybe set up something through the saint Johnsbury Rec department and provide Daylong activities or weeklong activities for military youth in the northeast kingdom. I also want to recruit and train more volunteers for the northeast kingdom and also provide more opportunities for youth on a recurring monthly basis.

Judy.: Tell me why again it's so important that there are these programs in place for the kids?

Lindsay.: It's important because it creates a more localized to support network for them. Vermont isn't a very big state but still it's all spread out so it's nice if they feel there's a member in their community that they can access quickly who are showing support for them.

Judy.: So what you need?

Lindsay.: I need partners. I need organizations willing to facilitate these OMK events and volunteers are huge. Volunteers who want to help with these events of volunteers who want to be trained in the ready set go curriculum which Stephanie had mentioned. As well as delivering hero packs.

Stephanie.: Let me just point out the reason we created these regional networks is because we know that there are resources in each community that exist for youth. By working locally using the resources that already exist it makes sense to support the kids with those resources so it's really about bringing communities together.

Judy.: So tap into what is already there and expand on what they're doing.

Stephanie.: Yes.

Judy.: And I think you brought up a good point Vermont is a small state but we don't have a military base so there really is no base of support in one particular place which is why it's important I would imagine to spread throughout the state of Vermont.

Stephanie.: Absolutely and Lindsey is not alone. We have another racial coordinator in the south and we're looking to hire some more too.

Judy.: Looking forward this summer what can military family's expect from all OMK?

Stephanie.: We've had some positive camps in the past and we're looking to have the same positive camps this summer. As you can see there are some from years past. Three that we have this year we have an OMK camp of gratitude overnight camp. That's for teens in grades seven through 12. That will be in June on the UVM campus with various focusing on healthy futures. We have a second camp which is move in and groove in which is the OMK YMCA day camp and that will be in Franklin County for kids ages 5 to 12 and then finally we have our OMK family camp which will be an overnight camping week and at camp Thetford in August partnering with the girl scouts. And stay tuned for other opportunities too.

Judy.: Really important for these kids to be able to get the chance not only to be with other military kids but also to be able to relax a little bit and take some of the emotional weight off I would imagine.

Stephanie.: Providing those opportunities showing that we care and yes to help some to relax and have a good time and that's what it's all about.

Judy.: Also you mentioned vacation camps them us to be a big thrill for the kids.

Lindsay.: It's a lot of fun in I actually facilitate the mad scientists can't last year. It's just an opportunity for kids to come in and gets no other kids especially military youth that they may not have known they were affected by deployment so.

Stephanie.: And we have more a pro vacation camps too.

Judy.: That's terrific if people want some more information about four H military kids operation military kids you can check out the UVM extension website or you can call the toll free number that's 1-(800)-571-0668 1-(800)-571-0668 and before we leave maybe Stephanie you can talk a little bit more about how this is going to be different for every family.

Stephanie.: Yes it is going to be different for every family and every community. I think it depends across a state and the resources that are available in every community they differ but what stays the same is the fact that they need our support and hopefully we can be there to show them we care.

Judy.: And Lindsay maybe you could talk a little bit about the kinds of things you're looking for from the community or partners that you'd like to have with your community.

Lindsay.: It would be great to have an organization that is youth based to facilitate a program like a boys and girls club? Boy scouts girl scouts or organizations that have skills that they can pass on two Military youth and provide that at a free service. And just excited volunteers willing to learn more about OMK and be involved with OMK and give the support.

Stephanie.: That's true not just for the northeast kingdom but across a state we're always looking for volunteers individuals who want to give back in some way. Whether it's by providing an entire event or providing a coupon. There's a whole range of ways to show you care.

Judy.: Talk a little bit about the coupon is that may be interesting for company who's interested in helping out but not sure what to do.

Stephanie.: You may be familiar with our hero pack project and we're still distributing hero packs. I should mention we just completed this huge deployment but there are other deployments that are happening continuously. The air guard specifically. Shorter deployments but they still matter they're still kids who are being affected and need our support. A coupon that we can talk inside a hero pack to show a kid locally OK your local pizza place really cares about you and want you to have something. It's a way to show you care and from small to large it's still I think about the same.

Judy.: I want to thank both of you for coming in to talk about this it's a really important topic. That's our program for today I'm Judy Simpson we will see you again next time on across the fence.

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