

Wayne County, KY 4-H Military Partnership Program

“Supporting Those Who Support Us”



**Presented By:
Toni Humble**

**Wayne County Extension Agent for
4-H Youth Development**

255 Rolling Hills Blvd. | Monticello, KY 42633 | P: 606-348-8453 | F: 606-348-8460 | wayne.ca.uky.edu



Executive Summary:

Wayne County 4-H assisted the local National Guard Unit in preparing for a yearlong deployment by providing resources, communications options, and financial support for the 82 soldiers and their families. Soldiers were from 37 Kentucky counties and one additional soldier from Georgia and Ohio respectively.

Description of Innovation

In September 2022, a notification stated the local National Guard unit would be deployed in 2023. In direct response to the announcement, community meetings began to determine how to support our military families to prepare for deployment. Wayne County 4-H became the leader of the support initiative and a service project of the Wayne County 4-H Ambassador Teen Club. Wayne County 4-H served as the point organization for all activities and resources for the deployment activities and programs.

In September 2023 events to support the military and their families began with a tailgate party at the local high school football game. This tailgate social goal was to raise funds for the Non-Commissioned Officer Fund. The event raised \$3800 in funds to assist soldiers and their families with any resources needed before and after deployment. An additional \$3000 was later raised for the fund for the future needs of military families.

A second need for military families was to keep the lines of family communications open during deployment and strengthen the family bond. Therefore, journals and stationery were requested as donations from local churches, businesses, and organizations by Wayne County 4-H. Additionally, bedtime recording story books with the option for servicepersons to record themselves reading the story to their child(ren). Lastly, a communication journal called “When Duty Calls” was provided for servicepersons or families to journal while their loved one is deployed to encourage positive mental health.

The donations along with several other items were placed in a backpack called a Hero pack for each service member that included: (a) a soldier pillow, (b) a journal, (c) community encouragement letters, (d) CES contact information, (e) bedtime recordings, (f) financial information, (g) military one source information, and (h) other community donations.

In December 2023, over three hundred soldiers and family members attended the pre-deployment Christmas meal. Wayne County 4-H Teen Ambassadors and adult volunteers assisted with a highly publicized event. Each service member was given their Hero pack during the event. Additionally, over \$2000 in gifts were donated for the children of deployed soldiers.

Continuation of educational material throughout deployment will be provided by Wayne County 4-H Youth Development Agent, as the agent will be in communication with the Battery Commander. Supplementing these materials will be the Wayne County CES newsletters that will be sent monthly through email to the families.

Collaborators:

Wayne Co. 4-H – Lead community partner. Served as point of contact for the 1/623D FA Himar Bravo Battery.

Wayne Co. Area Technology Center – Provided banners to be signed at the tailgate to show support for the local unit

Wayne Co. Public Library – Provided books for a bedtime story recording

In-Stitches Sewing Club – Completed sewing the soldier snuggle pillows for the Hero Packs

Monticello Elem (3rd, 4th & 5th grade) – Provided 750 letters from students to be given to soldiers.

Bell Elem. (1st & 2nd grade) - Provided 500 support letters from students for soldiers.

Walker Elem. (Pre-K & Kindergarten) – Provided 500 support letters from students for soldiers.

The Quilt Shoppe – Assisted in completing sewing the soldier snuggle pillow for Hero packs.

Wayne Co. Middle School (6th, 7th & 8th grade) – Provided 700 letters from students to be given to soldiers.

Wayne Co. Middle School Kindness Club - Collected snacks to be given to the soldiers as they boarded the bus for deployment.

Gideon International – Provided Bibles for soldiers.

First Christian Church – Provided journals and devotionals for inclusion in Hero Packs.

Community Telecom Services – Provided word search books and playing cards for soldiers. Also, providing free internet for soldier families to increase capabilities for communications.

Wayne County Judge Executive and Fiscal Court – Provided breakfast and manpower for departure.

Program outputs, outcomes, and impacts:

After deployment, a survey of soldiers, spouses, and parents revealed that 82% agreed that 4-H had been helpful during this experience, 93% noted the Hero packs contained helpful information, and 97% recognized the Cooperative Extension Service as a valuable resource for military families.

Program Replication Plan:

This program will be replicated as needed when times of deployment occur. All information (flyers, contributors, brochures, promotional information, etc.) has been filed electronically to be updated as needed. This program has been shared with other counties that have National Guard installments to replicate in their communities.