

Kids have Fun and learn to cope and at Operation Purple camp

By Rob McIlvaine, FMWRC Public Affairs

The National Military Family Association's Operation Purple camp program will once again be accepting applications online, beginning March 16, at www.operationpurple.org.

The program aims to help military kids experience carefree fun while also learning coping skills to deal with war-related stress, and fosters relationships with others who know what they are going through because they are experiencing it, too. Operation Purple camp also helps kids to gain confidence and teaches them to be stewards of the community and of the environment.



Each Operation Purple camp has a Military Day, where campers can interact with and talk to service members. – Photo courtesy of National Military Family Association

In 2008, military children ages seven to 17 had a chance to stay at the free, week-long, overnight camp at one of 62 locations in 37 states and territories. Camps are free to all participants, thanks to support from the Sierra Club and the Sierra Club Foundation. More than 20,000 kids have participated in the program since its inception.

War takes its toll not only on the troops who fight in the field, but also on the Families who wait and worry at home. More than 155,000 kids have at least one parent who is deployed in the war on terrorism. That number doesn't include those experiencing routine, but often lengthy, deployments and separations from loved ones through military service. Many of these children have more than one parent or Family member deployed.

The Operation Purple camp program, created in 2004, imparts the message on these young heroes that "they serve, too."

Any military child can apply, but priority is given to those who have a parent, guardian, or Family household member deployed between September 2008 and December 2009. If all spaces are not filled with campers who meet the deployment criteria, the remaining camp slots are filled with any military child from any service branch, the National

Guard, Reserve, U.S. Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association.

For more information about program, visit www.operationpurple.org. For information about the National Military Family Association, please contact the National Military Family Association at 703-931-6632 or at families@nmfa.org.