

Marion County 4-H'ers support local military families

The hardest part of deployment for military families is the separation between parents and children. Children of deployed parents often struggle with sadness, anxiety and depression, leading to changes in behavior and school performance. Community involvement and mentoring is critical; youth who feel supported by others show enhanced resiliency and are better able to cope.



The Iowa 4-H Operation: Military Kids program provides community support through positive youth development programs. In Marion County, nineteen 4-H'ers recently made matching pillowcases to help military kids and their parents feel connected during deployment. Pleasantville 4-H'er Taylor Wadle worked with Trae Hall, whose father is on active duty with the Iowa National Guard. Taylor said, "Helping a military kid was great because he got something out of the experience. He was excited to make something for his dad. We both learned something together." Twelve members of the Knoxville Quilt Guild assisted the 4-H'ers.

Iowa National Guard Staff Sergeant Kevin Hall received the pillowcase Trae and Taylor made. He said that while a pillowcase may seem like a small gesture, it is a daily reminder for the service members of what keeps them going. "Every night when they put their heads down, it reminds them of what they are fighting for," he said.



Dale Miller, Marion County Extension education director, thinks this project is a great example of how 4-H'ers serve others both in and beyond their home community. "Too often you hear people say they don't see kids involved in their communities. I say just look closer. These 4-H'ers not only learned sewing skills, but felt a real sense of pride helping each other and being part of something for the greater good," he said.

"Part of being a good citizen is reaching out to those whose experience we might not understand. Programs like this benefit our communities and help 4-H'ers become stronger leaders."

- *Chris Cook-Leitz, Assistant Director, Iowa 4-H Operation: Military Kids*

For more information contact:

Dale Miller, Marion County Extension Education Director, 641-842-2014, dmill@iastate.edu
Jennifer Snook-Hall, ISU Extension Youth Field Specialist, 641-842-2014, jsnook@iastate.edu

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