



## ***In This Issue:***

- ✓ ***April is the Month of the Military Child!***
- ✓ ***Home Front Hearts Helps Military Children***
- ✓ ***How You Can Help Military Children***
- ✓ ***A Story "From the Heart"***
- ✓ ***Would You Like to Thank a Military Child?***
- ✓ ***Resource Links for Military Children***
- ✓ ***Family Activity for Your Military Child***
- ✓ ***FUN-raiser to Benefit Military Children***
- ✓ ***Calling All Service Members: Military Spouse Appreciation Day!***

## **April is the Month of the Military Child!**

Did you know there is an entire month dedicated to military children? Military families make tons of sacrifices when their service member parent works long days, leaves for weeks of training, or is away for months or year-long deployments. Sometimes the sacrifices of military children can be forgotten. Home Front Hearts is dedicated to making all Americans aware that military children deserve to be recognized, since they often bear the brunt of these sacrifices.

Sometimes newborns go months without meeting their service member parent for the first time. School-aged military children often have only one parent in the crowd at school assemblies and tee-ball games. Many children celebrate the holidays or their birthday without their service member parent.

This is why Home Front Hearts wants to say THANK YOU to each and every MILITARY CHILD!!

## **Home Front Hearts Helps Military Children**

Home Front Hearts helped over 500 military family members this past holiday season; most of these were military children. Toys, gifts, food, toiletries, clothes, and winter wear were distributed to families in 11 different states.

Here are some of the ways Home Front Hearts reached out to military children:

- ❖ Distribution of winter wear, food items, and gifts to the USO at the Pensacola, FL Airport in

support of our service members and their families who were traveling during the holidays.

- ❖ Over \$8,500 in toys and toiletries distributed to NJ National Guard families as well as a local food pantry/soup kitchen that serves homeless vets and families.
- ❖ Toys and clothes sent to families with military children in 9 other states across the nation!

## **Serving the Families that Serve our Country**





Boxes ready to be shipped to military families nationwide!

## How You Can Help Military Children

Home Front Hearts receives requests on a daily basis from military families in need.

### Would you like to assist Home Front Hearts in fulfilling the needs of military families worldwide?

Here are some items military children would love to have, but often cannot afford:

- ✓ Gift cards to stores like Target so Home Front Hearts can donate much needed items (toys, clothes, toiletries) to military families
- ✓ Tickets to an amusement park or ballgame to provide military children with some entertainment
- ✓ Backpacks, pens and

pencils, notebooks, or other school supplies

- ✓ Books
- ✓ Coupons for free ice cream
- ✓ Gasoline gift cards to assist military families with transportation expenses
- ✓ Packaging and shipping material (boxes, tape, bubble wrap, etc.)

No donation is too small and every little bit adds up.

**For more information on donating items to assist military families, please contact Randi Cairns, Executive Director, at [rscairns@homefronthearths.org](mailto:rscairns@homefronthearths.org)**

## A Story "From the Heart"

Mike\* had served three tours of duty over the past several years as a National Guard combat veteran. In August of 2010, he returned to his pregnant wife and three year-old child and a new civilian position - thrilled to take off his uniform, spend time with his family, and await the birth of his new child.

Shortly after his return, his wife went into premature labor and delivered their infant seven weeks prematurely. The baby was born with underdeveloped lungs and was immediately transferred to a specialized hospital two hours from their home. Extra expenses - gas and travel expenses, food, child care for their toddler, and a looming car insurance premium - piled up as Mike missed work to make the long commute back and forth to the hospital.

Because he'd recently returned from a deployment, Mike hadn't been working with his civilian employer long enough to qualify for family leave pay. But he also wasn't going to miss this precious time with his critically ill newborn.

Home Front Hearts agreed that Mike (or anyone for that matter) shouldn't have to pick work over a family crisis and stepped in to provide some immediate assistance. We rallied communities in three different states to support this family. We were able to provide gift cards for gas and food, diapers, clothing, and

other miscellaneous items for the new baby, and funding for the car insurance payment. This assistance gave Mike's family some breathing room to tend to what really mattered.

We're happy to report that the baby is doing well at home and Daddy is back to work. Home Front Hearts was able to serve this military family by linking them with community resources and donations to meet their short-term needs.

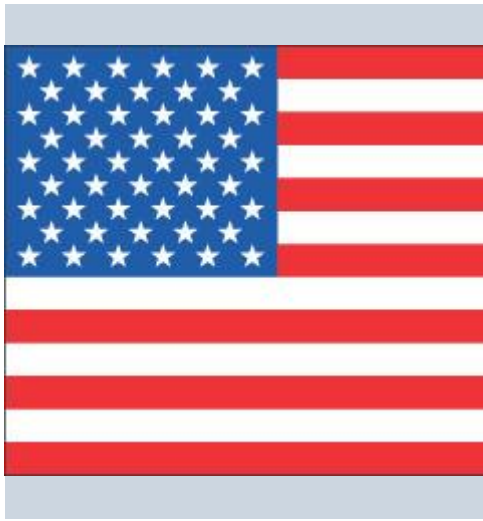
We are honored to assist these military families who have given so much for our country and who ask for so little in return.

*\* Name has been changed*

**Would you like to thank a military child for all of the sacrifices they make as their parent service member serves our country?**

Send a note to Randi at [rscairns@homefronthearths.org](mailto:rscairns@homefronthearths.org).

Home Front Hearts would like to share these words of thanks on its website and in future newsletters.



## Resource Links for Military Children:

**Armed Services YMCA** – The ASYMCA continues to enrich the quality of life and resiliency of service members and their families by providing educational, recreational, social, and religious support services across the nation. Children's programs include: Operation Kid Comfort, Operation Hero, and a student art and essay contest.

[www.asymca.org](http://www.asymca.org)

**FitFamily** is a family fitness program website that provides resources, ideas, and goal setting tools to help families be active, make healthy choices, and have fun in an effort to promote overall wellness.

[www.usaffitfamily.com](http://www.usaffitfamily.com)

**Our Military Kids** provides tangible support to children of deployed Guard and Reserve personnel, as well as severely injured service members through grants for enrichment activities and tutoring.

[www.ourmilitarykids.org](http://www.ourmilitarykids.org)

**Operation Purple Program** currently includes traditional summer camps, teen camps, teen leadership camps, family camps, and day clinics in overseas locations.

[www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/operation-purple](http://www.militaryfamily.org/our-programs/operation-purple)

**United Through Reading Military Program** helps ease the stress of separation for military families by having deployed parents read children's books aloud via DVD for their children to watch at home. This program is available to all deploying military units and at select USO locations.

[www.unitedthroughreading.org/military](http://www.unitedthroughreading.org/military)

## Family Activity for Your Military Child

One of the most difficult parts of the military lifestyle for both parents and children are deployments. Here is an activity that your family can participate in to help when a parent service member is deployed. Have the service member create a list of messages, well wishes, and encouragement for their military child. Write or print messages and put them in a special "Message Jar".

Here are some message ideas:

- ✓ Smile! Your smile is as bright as a twinkling star.
- ✓ Roses are Red, violets are Blue, You are a good kid...that's so true!
- ✓ I miss you! I love you!
- ✓ You are a one and only – great kid!
- ✓ Sooooo, what's up with such a great kid!
- ✓ Next...will the greatest kid in the world take a bow!
- ✓ IOU – giant bear hug!
- ✓ Shoot for the moon, even if you miss, you'll land in the stars.



Now whenever your child is feeling sad, or even better when they have done something you are proud of, pull out a special message of encouragement for them. The positive reinforcement will be a boost to help encourage good behavior, and the messages will help them feel closer to their parent service member.

Home Front Hearts thanks Month of the Military Child.com for this activity idea. For more ideas on projects you can do with your military child, visit their site at: [www.monthofthemilitarychild.com/projects](http://www.monthofthemilitarychild.com/projects)



"Home Front Hearts helped my family during the holiday season. My husband came home from deployment and didn't have a job. We had been living in Florida but times got very hard so we moved back to NJ thinking the job market would be better. My husband and I were actively seeking work but unsuccessful. The holidays were coming and we didn't have anything we reached out to Home Front Hearts. They helped us out tremendously and we had a very beautiful holiday thanks to them."

### Contact Us:

**Home Front Hearts, Inc.**  
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East Brunswick, NJ 08816  
(732) 698-2389

**Executive Director:**  
Randi Cairns  
rscairns@homefronthearts.org

*Serving the  
Families that  
Serve our Country*

## FUN-draiser to Benefit Military Children

Home Front Hearts will be hosting a fundraiser on **April 14** from **11 a.m. – midnight** to benefit military families at the following Applebee's location:

**Applebee's - Milltown, NJ**  
Ryders Crossing Shopping Center  
Milltown Road & Ryders Lane  
April 14 from 11 a.m. – Midnight  
Ph: (732) 651-8151



You must bring in a flyer for your donation to be counted (or mention it during your call-in order). Please contact [rscairns@homefronthearts.org](mailto:rscairns@homefronthearts.org) for a flyer to be emailed to you! **Spread the word!**

If you have an idea for a fundraiser, would like to host one in your area, or would like to volunteer to help with Home Front Hearts' mission we would like to hear from you.

Visit our website at [www.homefronthearts.org](http://www.homefronthearts.org) to learn more or contact Randi Cairns for more information.

## About Us

The organization was born of the desire to honor those who serve and their families. At Home Front Hearts, it is our intention to give voice to the families who also serve when their loved ones are called to duty. And to call to action the communities in which they live.

The mission of Home Front Hearts is to serve the families that serve our country by: providing support and resources to the families of service members, increasing public awareness of the struggles and sacrifices of military families, and engaging both individuals and businesses in building communities that are responsive to the needs of these families.

Home Front Hearts, Inc. (EIN # 26-

1661564) is a non-profit organization exempt under the 501(c)(3) section of the IRS code.

### **Calling all service members!**

### **Military Spouse Appreciation Day is next month.**

*Do you have a very special military spouse you'd like to honor?*

*If so, let Home Front Hearts know!*

*Send an email to:  
[rscairns@homefronthearts.org](mailto:rscairns@homefronthearts.org)*

*We'll make sure to recognize your military spouse in our next newsletter!*

**Donate Now**  
and show your support  
[www.homefronthearts.org](http://www.homefronthearts.org)

