

OPERATION HELP A HERO'S OPERATION RACK PACK



How to Involve Your Young Children and Establish an Appreciation for our Military at an Early Age

There are lots of ways your kids could get involved behind the scenes in support of Operation Rack Pack. Here are just some ideas:

1. Have a **play date**, inviting friends over to decorate **welcome home posters**.
2. Serve a **family dinner** one night with the table covered in butcher paper and crayons. Encourage your kids to draw pictures, write thank yous, etc. These can serve as **welcome home posters** or cut into smaller pieces for **thank you cards**, and kids love the surprise of getting to color at the dinner table.
3. Have your kids fold construction paper in half (to create cards) and bring them in to their classes. With teacher permission, **have classmates write thank you cards** during lunch, break or allow them to take home and return them.
4. **Host a lemonade stand or yard sale** and use the proceeds to purchase items on the list or donate to OHH, and we'll do the buying (although kids DO love to do the shopping).
5. Share a wish list flyer with neighbors and **host a collection box** on your porch. The kids can keep track of the donations that come in and write thank you notes.
6. Ask your child's school if they can run a **bake sale table** at lunch. Spend a night/weekend baking goodies, set up a bake sale table and allow your kids to purchase items for the barracks projects with their earnings.
7. Ask friends, teammates and classmates to come over or a **"Towels for Treats" party**. Plan a fun dessert bar for guests picnic style and have ribbon on hand for guests to roll their towels, with wash cloths and tie with ribbon before placing in a decorated box.
8. **Decorate welcome home bags** (we will provide them for you).
9. **Have a banner signing party**. Hang a piece of banner paper across your garage door or drape on your driveway with paints, markers and crayons. Invite friends and neighbors to come over and sign it.
10. **Have your kids to a "help for heroes" week at home**. Give your kids do needed chores around the house for small change and then at the end of the week take them to the store with what they've earned and a wish list. Challenge them to buy as much as they can with what they've earned.
11. **Have your kids hunt for donations already in your home**: magazines (no older than 3 months), books, DVD movies (only ones you want to give away!), extra bars of soap, etc.

12. **Assemble “kitchen kits.”** Set up an assembly line to include baggies, napkins, paper plates and plastic ware. Have your kids assemble plates, napkins and plasticware rolls for 3 Marines in each baggie.
13. **Assemble “entertainment kits.”** Entertainment kits are gallon baggies filled with magazines, a DVD movie (new or gently used), puzzle books, playing cards, popcorn, small games, etc.
14. **Assemble fresh baked goods for Marines/Sailors.** Pick a project, and 1-2 nights before the project— bake your hearts out. We ask bakers to put 3-6 cookies or brownies in a baggie for each Marine/Sailor. Just shoot us an email to let us know how many baggies of baked goods you are “pledging” so we count them in our plans. 😊
15. **Host a grocery store drive at your local grocery store.** One of the best ways to collect donations is through a simple, 2-3 hour grocery store drive. Have your child write a letter (or use one of ours) to your local grocery store asking for permission to set up a table and hand out shopping lists. We have a short list of needed items – hand out the list, collect bags when shoppers leave who have donated and thank them. We have a “grocery store drive” in a box kit for those of you interested in doing this.
16. **Share the gift of their creativity.** You’d be surprised how touched big, tough Marines and Sailors are by the acts of small children, especially after what they’ve experienced in the world during their deployments. If your children have a special crafting talent – drawing, clay work, planting flowers, etc. let them make something unique and special as a gift to a service member.
17. **Coins for Cuties.** Marines are health conscious. Although we pack their welcome home bags with snacks and treats they gladly consume, they would be happy to see healthy treats as well, and they especially love cuties/tangerines/oranges and fruits. Have your children come up with a creative way to collect change and use the change they collect to purchase fresh fruits. We find boxes of cuties go a long way for their cost.
18. **Neighborhood challenge scavenger hunt.** Have a fun afternoon play date, turning our wish list into a scavenger hunt challenge. Split the street or neighborhood up into sections assigned to groups and challenge them to get as many items on the wish list they can within a set amount of time. The neighbors may have fun finding one thing on the list they have on hand and contributing while your kids enjoy the challenge.
19. **Share the cause with relatives.** Have your kids write an email campaign to their family members and invite them to write thank you emails. Have the kids print out their thank you emails and decorate the print outs to put in our welcome home bags.
20. **Talk to your kids about their ideas.** Sometimes the best ideas have been developed by young children. Talk to them about the project and see if they have ideas of how they want to be involved.

