

Reflect ~ Remember ~ Rejoice

# **3<sup>rd</sup> Annual OUR HEROES' TREE<sup>sm</sup>**

## **START A TRADITION**

Our Heroes' Tree  
recognizes families whose  
loved ones are currently serving,  
Veterans, or deceased U.S. service members

## **SHARE COMMUNITY SPIRIT**

Our Heroes' Tree  
shares the bonds of military family service,  
separation, or loss during the holiday season

## **TOGETHER IN PATRIOTIC PRIDE**

Our Heroes' Tree  
promotes patriotic pride among  
families, organizations, and communities

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Marlene Lee and Stephanie Pickup co-founded *Our Heroes' Tree<sup>sm</sup>*  
to honor the service and sacrifice of our nation's military families.

*Our Heroes' Tree* program guidelines are distributed free of charge.

To request more copies of *Our Heroes' Tree* guidelines,  
ask a question, or share your group's story, please send an e-mail to:

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# **CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS FOR YOUR FAMILIES AND OUR HEROES' TREE**

## **PLANNING YOUR TIME**

Depending on the size of your group, location, etc., the duration of *Our Heroes' Tree* program may last between one and two hours. Consider scheduling time at least one week prior to the program for making ornaments, preparing photographs, etc., and for story time at the library, school, or community center.

### LOCATIONS TO CONSIDER FOR HOSTING *OUR HEROES' TREE*

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### DATES TO CONSIDER

### TIMES TO CONSIDER

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## **PLANNING YOUR BUDGET**

Some groups have been successful with asking local merchants or organizations to donate a tree or other goods (i.e., paper goods). Be resourceful, instead of purchasing, consider borrowing items, such as a tree skirt.

### BUDGET

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### POTENTIAL SPONSORS/DONORS

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For more information or if you have questions or suggestions, please e-mail:

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# CHECKLIST FOR SUCCESS FOR YOUR FAMILIES AND OUR HEROES' TREE

Continued

## PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM

### INVITATION

\_\_\_\_\_ Program invitation. It's easy to customize *Our Heroes' Tree* poem – at the top, just insert your organization name, program date, time, location, and RSVP info and it's ready to go.

### FOOD, MUSIC & SOCIALIZING

\_\_\_\_\_ Light refreshments and beverages

\_\_\_\_\_ Music. Selected pre-recorded music is fine; if logistics allow, consider inviting a military band, middle or high school band, or local harpist to play before and during the program.

\_\_\_\_\_ Can your organization arrange a simultaneous Videoteleconference with the deployed unit?

### TREE & DECORATIONS

\_\_\_\_\_ Ornaments made by family members. Notify families and teachers far enough in advance to allow time to make ornaments, prepare pictures, etc. Encourage ornament-makers to mark their loved one's name on the front of the ornament and their own name on the back.

\_\_\_\_\_ Create a brochure or flyer for attendees explaining the meaning of the white lights

\_\_\_\_\_ Tree (consider asking a local merchant or organization to donate or sponsor the tree)

\_\_\_\_\_ Tree holder and tree skirt

\_\_\_\_\_ Two small American flags (approximately 5 – 10 in.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Yellow ribbon (wide width works best; approximately 18 – 24 ft. in length)

\_\_\_\_\_ Before program begins and before ornaments are hung on tree:

- Place American flags at the 10:00 and 2:00 o'clock positions on upper tree branches
- Place one large bow of yellow ribbon approximately 3 - 6" from the top of the tree with ribbon length streaming to bottom tree branches. If ribbon is not long enough, drape to approximately 3 ft.

\_\_\_\_\_ Two strings of white lights (minimum 21 lights). The white lights symbolize those who have lost their lives. No other colored lights should be displayed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Tree topper

\_\_\_\_\_ BE CREATIVE! Consider hosting *Our Heroes' Tree* for Veterans' Day or Valentine's Day or to display children's artwork. Set up a display with symbols of the holiday, season, and/or religions; consider local customs.

\_\_\_\_\_ Arts and crafts supplies/table, including material for hanging ornaments. Even if ornaments were made prior to the program at home or school, have arts and crafts supplies on hand for the occasional lost ornament, last minute addition, or ornament in need of repair.

\_\_\_\_\_ Party favors (optional)

\_\_\_\_\_ Guestbook (optional)

\_\_\_\_\_ Book purchases offered at a discount to groups/organizations hosting *Our Heroes' Tree*.

*The Soldier's Tree* by Stephanie Pickup      E-mail: [taopublishing@comcast.net](mailto:taopublishing@comcast.net)

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*The Hero in My Pocket* by Marlene Lee      E-mail: [info@earlylightpress.com](mailto:info@earlylightpress.com)

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# **3rd Annual OUR HEROES' TREE BENEFITS**

## **START A TRADITION**

- ★ Family members decorate *Our Heroes' Tree* with homemade ornaments honoring their loved one who serves or who has served in the U.S. Armed Forces
- ★ Holiday theme and tree dedication
- ★ Program is inclusive of:
  - All branches of service (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, and including Merchant Marines) and all service components (Active, National Guard, Reserve)
  - All manners of death (conflict-related, accident, illness, etc.)

## **SHARE COMMUNITY SPIRIT**

- ★ Share the common bonds of service to our country, especially for those who are apart due to military deployment or who have experienced loss
- ★ Acknowledge sacrifices made by families
- ★ Program is inclusive of the service member's family, including spouse, parents, and:
  - Children, grandchildren, in-laws, and siblings (siblings are often overlooked; please reach out to include them)
  - Children of all ages, from birth to college (teens and college-age are often overlooked, please reach out to include them)

## **TOGETHER IN PATRIOTIC PRIDE**

- ★ Service member families may have temporarily or permanently relocated or be geographically distant. If they cannot attend, consider inviting them to send an ornament for *Our Heroes' Tree* as a way of remembering them and their loved one.
- ★ Families, organizations, and communities can explore such topics as culture, geography, and history
- ★ Patriotic program elements

For more information or if you have questions or suggestions, please e-mail:

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## **OUR HEROES' TREE CO-FOUNDERS**

### **Stephanie Pickup, Co-founder, Our Heroes' Tree**

Stephanie Pickup helped her young children through her husband's two Army deployments overseas during the holidays; she also led an Army Family Readiness Group for more than two years. Based on her experiences, Stephanie authored *The Soldier's Tree*, a book for children (ages 3-6 years) whose loved one is deployed during holiday time. A mother of four, Stephanie's charming story and colorful illustrations are sure to comfort and encourage children as they make, decorate, and celebrate their very own soldier's tree.

### **Marlene Lee, Co-founder, Our Heroes' Tree**

Inspired by her volunteer work with injured soldiers and their family members at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Marlene Lee authored *The Hero in My Pocket*, a keepsake book for children (ages 6-12 years) affected by the loss of a service member. With a master's degree in Thanatology (death, dying, and bereavement studies), Marlene designed *Hero* to help facilitate communication among children and adults on the difficult topic of grief and recovery. Coming Fall 2007: Marlene's second book, in collaboration with Lil Ingram, for children of wounded warriors.

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### **SUGGESTIONS? Thank you for sharing these tips:**

- Organizers from 1<sup>st</sup> Armored Division, Friedberg, Germany, decorated 11 trees outdoors with 2,000 ornaments in a popular area on post!
- Families at McBride Elementary School, Ft. Benning, GA, made ornaments that deploying soldiers carried to Iraq to decorate their own *Heroes' Tree*.

**Please let us know where YOU will host *Our Heroes' Tree*.** Groups/organizations hosting *Our Heroes' Tree* may qualify for a discount on book orders placed directly via the authors' websites. Permission is granted to reproduce these guidelines with appropriate credit given to *Our Heroes' Tree* co-founders Stephanie Pickup and Marlene Lee.

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