



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 trauma/loss during the holiday season

TOGETHER IN PATRIOTIC PRIDE

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

Stephanie Pickup and Marlene Lee co-founded *Our Heroes' Tree*sm
in 2005 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:

Marlene Lee
E-mail: info@earlylightpress.com
Website: www.earlylightpress.com

Stephanie Pickup
E-mail: taopublishing@comcast.net
Website: www.taopublishing.com

2009 - 5th Annual OUR HEROES' TREE PROGRAM GUIDELINES



Recommended duration for *Our Heroes' Tree* program is one to two hours. Consider variables such as: group size and composition, location, travel distances, etc., and adjust the time accordingly. Sample start time below is 3:30 p.m.

- 3:30 – 3:45 p.m. Hang ornaments; Decorate “Hero Pages” from *The Hero in My Pocket*
- 3:45 – 4:00 p.m. Welcome (5 minutes)
Pledge of Allegiance (5 minutes)
Patriotic song (group sing, 5 minutes)
- 4:00 – 4:25 p.m. Dedication of *Our Heroes' Tree*
- ★ Ask attendees to form a circle around tree (may be concentric circles or circle around room depending on tree placement, number of guests, and room size). Ask attendees to join hands.
 - ★ Remarks from Host about sharing the bonds of service, separation, and loss. Join in a moment of silence to remember those who are serving, those who have served, and those whose lives have been lost.
 - ★ Ask the oldest and the youngest child in attendance to explain their ornament (2 minutes each). (Ask for agreement before the Welcome).
 - ★ Encourage attendees to share a memory with another attendee during social time to follow.
- 4:25 – 4:40 p.m. Reading of *The Soldier's Tree*
- 4:40 – 5:00 p.m. Refreshments, Socializing

BE CREATIVE! *Our Heroes' Tree* stands for more than traditional seasonal holidays. Consider hosting *Our Heroes' Tree* on Veterans' Day or Valentine's Day. Additionally, *Our Heroes' Tree* is easily adapted for use by deployed units to honor families back home as well as fallen comrades.

Please let us know what YOU decide to do!

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

Stephanie Pickup

E-mail: taopublishing@comcast.net

Website: www.taopublishing.com

Marlene Lee

E-mail: info@earlylightpress.com

Website: www.earlylightpress.com



Reflect ~ Remember ~ Rejoice

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 reading *The Soldier's Tree* or drawing "Hero Pages" from *The Hero in My Pocket* at the library, school, or community center.

LOCATIONS TO CONSIDER FOR HOSTING *OUR HEROES' TREE*

DATES TO CONSIDER

TIMES TO CONSIDER

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

POTENTIAL SPONSORS/DONORS

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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 (Refer to Stephanie Pickup's book *The Soldier's Tree*)

_____ Ornaments made by family members. Notify families and teachers far enough in advance to allow time to make ornaments, decorate "Hero Pages", prepare pictures, etc. Write the loved one's name on the front of the ornament and the creator's 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, and the 21-gun salute. 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 culture or religions; be considerate of 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 additions, or ornament in need of repair.

_____ Party favors (optional)

_____ Guestbook or scrapbook (optional)

_____ Books available via Amazon www.amazon.com or Target's website www.target.com.

The Soldier's Tree by Stephanie Pickup E-mail: taopublishing@comcast.net

Website: www.taopublishing.com

The Hero in My Pocket by Marlene Lee E-mail: info@earlylightpress.com

Website: www.earlylightpress.com



Reflect ~ Remember ~ Rejoice

2008 - 5th 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 injury and death (e.g., 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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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 own experiences, Stephanie, a mother of four, authored *The Soldier's Tree*, a book for children (ages 3-6 years) whose loved one is deployed during holiday time. 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. Website: www.taopublishing.com

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. Marlene co-authored *That's My Hope*, a story of inspiration and resilience for families who have experienced trauma, illness, or injury. Website: www.earlylightpress.com

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Please let us know where YOU will host *Our Heroes' Tree*.

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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Our Heroes' Tree logo designed by franchise studios.

Visit: www.nicholasfrancis.com



SEEDS OF CREATIVITY

Sharing ideas!

- ★ **Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University** engaged public libraries throughout Indiana to honor Veterans' Day 2008 with *Our Heroes' Tree*. MFRI created educational literature, posters, and bookmarks to champion literacy, history, and family participation. MFRI also hosted a "Virtual *Our Heroes' Tree*" via their website. Website: www.mfri.purdue.edu
- ★ **Currituck BBQ Restaurant**, Currituck, NC, created ornaments using the logo of *Our Heroes' Tree*. They broadened the definition of Hero to include their local firefighters and police officers, many of whom dual-serve in the National Guard and Reserve. Website: www.currituckbbq.com
- ★ At the **United States Military Academy**, prior to *Our Heroes' Tree* ceremony in 2005, West Point Elementary School invited Stephanie Pickup to read her book, *The Soldier's Tree*, to all of its classes.
- ★ In honor of Veterans' Day, **Rogers Elementary School, Fairhaven, MA**, lined their gymnasium with yellow construction paper, creating a "yellow ribbon" of support. Children posted *Our Heroes' Tree* ornaments onto the ribbon.
- ★ **Rhode Island Governor** Donald and Mrs. Carcieri hosted *Our Heroes' Tree* in the State Capitol building in 2007 and 2008.
- ★ **Princeton (West Virginia) Public Library** received an outpouring of community support for hosting *Our Heroes' Tree* in 2007.
- ★ Organizers from **1st Armored Division**, Friedberg, Germany, decorated 10 trees outdoors with 2,000 ornaments in a popular area on post in 2006.
- ★ Families at McBride Elementary School, Ft. Benning, GA, made ornaments that **deploying soldiers carried to Iraq** to decorate their own *Heroes' Tree* in honor of their families.

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Reflect ~ Remember ~ Rejoice

THE *INSERT ORGANIZATION NAME* INVITES YOU

INSERT DAY, DATE, 2009, TIME TO TIME

INSERT LOCATION LINE 1

INSERT LOCATION LINE 2

INSERT RSVP INFO



OUR HEROES' TREE

Our Heroes' Tree has much to say
For families whose loved ones serve in harm's way.

People of all ages craft decorations,
Sharing the holidays of our great nation.

Drawing pictures and swapping stories,
They entrust my arms with family glory.
For I hold faces and places and holiday heart songs,
Each with a whisper: "Loving hearts, stay strong."

My lights are like stars. Silent and white.
Reflecting the honor of ultimate sacrifice.

See my ribbons of yellow, ripples of love,
USA flags, and guardian angel above.

Star wish for our children, brave heroes, too,
Our Heroes' Tree...Together with you.

*Marlene Lee and Stephanie Pickup, authors of books for military families,
developed Our Heroes' Treesm program in honor of
service members and those who love them – and miss them.*

For more information visit the website: www.taopublishing.com

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