Program to Promote Reading Among Military Children Debuts

Books on Bases, Smiles on Faces, a Joint Effort of K.I.D.S. and Blue Star Families

Kick-off event for United We Serve, White House Initiative

June 22, 2009 - Virginia Beach, VA – Kids in Distressed Situations, Inc. (K.I.D.S.) and Blue Star Families (BSF) have joined forces to bring the joy of reading to military children by donating new books to military-impacted libraries and schools, and providing individual kids with books of their own. Today’s Books on Bases, Smiles on Faces program also helps kick off the White House’s summer service initiative, United We Serve. The distribution of donated books took place at Bayside Elementary School in Virginia Beach, VA, with local military children and their families and friends participating in reading and craft activities.

“The goal of this program is to have a positive impact on children from military families through book donation,” said Claire Woodward, executive director of Blue Star Families, Inc. “Blue Star Families is excited to partner with K.I.D.S. to provide books to military-impacted and base libraries and schools. Our program also fits in perfectly with the United We Serve initiative from the White House, which encourages everyone to service their communities.”

Hosted by Blue Star Families and K.I.D.S., the Books on Bases, Smiles on Faces event featured several readers from the local military community, including Colonel Dennis Cunniffe, USMC; Captain Diana Novak, USN; Lieutenant Commander Brandy Jackson, USN; and Lieutenant Benjamin Inman, Virginia Port Authority Police Department.

Blue Star Families connects military families from all branches of service worldwide to each other and to support organization that strive to make military life more sustainable. In addition to the support systems they provide, BSF helps make resources to enhance military family life.

“Through our connections with children's book companies, K.I.D.S. was able to secure donations of books for the Bayside Elementary School and we are looking forward to working together with Blue Star Families to coordinate building up the book collections of military-impacted libraries and military bases across the country,” said Janice Weinman, president of K.I.D.S.

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www.KIDSdonations.org      www.BlueStarFam.org
For 23 years, K.I.D.S. has brought hope and self-esteem to children and their families by providing new clothes, shoes, toys, furnishings, books and juvenile products donated by leading manufacturers and retailers. The donations move through K.I.D.S.’ network of more than 1,000 community-based social service agencies in the United States to reach children in need.

The children participating in today’s event created craft items to be sent to deployed parents, and all children attending the event also received a free book. Bayside Elementary has been home to thousands of military families for many decades and will be one of the many military–impacted schools that will benefit from the Books on Bases, Smiles on Faces program. The Hampton Roads region of Virginia houses one of the greatest concentrations of military families in the nation.

The Books on Bases, Smiles on Faces donation event and fair was timed to be part of the United We Serve program, a White House priority to increase volunteerism across the United States. The event was also supported by the Virginia Governor’s Advisory Board on National and Community Service and the Armed Services YMCA, among others.

More information about Blue Star Families and K.I.D.S. is available online at BlueStarFam.org and kidsdonations.org.

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