

# MIDDLE SCHOOL ON A MISSION



File Photo

Feinstein Behavioral Specialist Kim Sturdahl (at podium) is leading an effort to offer aid and support to military families in the Coventry school district.

## FMS spearheads drive to aid town's military families

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COVENTRY— For the second year, forms have been sent out to military families in the district in an attempt to offer aid and support to students whose parents are in the Armed Forces.

Kim Sturdahl, behavioral specialist at Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School, began the program last year after she realized how many children from military families there were in the area.

She explained that both her husband and oldest son were deployed last year, "and I knew that there was a large amount of mili-

tary kids whose parents were deployed with my husband."

Although the turnout was small, she said it was better than she anticipated for a first-year program.

"With the military it's always small anyways when you have programs because many families have their own way of dealing with it," she said.

The multiple units that were deployed this time last year have returned, but Sturdahl said two units are currently overseas, such as the 169th Military Police Company.

"Even though we have a lot less units that are deployed, that does not mean anything," she said. "We're still doing stuff to support

the military children during deployment and not during deployment."

She explained that there are many resources and services available to military families that most people are unaware of, especially new military families.

Sturdahl said she is working with the Family Assistance Center (FAC) to put together a video to inform people of services for the families.

Many times, the FAC will focus on the children and help them get involved with activities such as teen night and kids night.

"Also, the military kids have full access to Newport Navy Base and a lot of people don't

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# Drive aids military families

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know that either," she said. "They can use the common area; they can sign up for swimming lessons. They have the morale and welfare and recreation center they can use as well."

When it comes to the academic aspect, she explained that many military families had children in various grades.

Because of this, she said she realized that schools can help the students during the time when their family member is deployed.

She said there are school social workers and school psychologists on scene to help the child during the school day.

"If a student is having problems outside school adapting to a parent being gone there's a social worker that can meet anywhere and work with them," she said.

She explained that there is also a person who can meet with the parent who is maintaining the household alone, now that their spouse is deployed, and assist them anyway they can.

In the future months, Sturdahl said she plans to host various events to support the military child, depending on how much data she receives back.

She also hopes to host a family cookout event at Slater Park in Pawtucket once the weather becomes warmer.

Information sheets have been sent out to all military families in the district to fill out and return. Also, she said families can fill the sheet out online and it will be sent directly to her.



File photo

As part of a military families night at Feinstein Middle School last year, guest speakers from the military attended and gave gifts to children in military families.