

OPERATION AT EASE

MAY, 2015

Operation at Ease (OAE) is well into its eighth year of providing a weekend of rest and relaxation for many military families that sacrifice so much to make our world a safer place. It might help anyone interested in learning about the program if we briefly review what it takes for us to host more than 50 families each year.



Approximately 15 dedicated volunteers are involved with each family. The process begins with an OAE board member confirming a soldier's eligibility for the program with the senior officer or company commander. Then another board member schedules the family's visit. Next, our condo scheduler works with the St. James rental office to secure housing. Our coordinator then notifies our volunteers of the needs for the coming month. Volunteers can sign up to be greeters, prepare a breakfast or dinner, take a family photo, provide a boat ride or fishing trip or, on rare occasions, be a golf companion.

There are also many "behind the scenes" volunteers who provide this infrastructure to make the family weekend as relaxing as possible. They ensure that the condos have a supply of snacks, Domino's gift certificates, breakfast coupons for Taylor's and Tommy Thompson's, copies of the *State Port Pilot*, aquarium tickets, money for the ferry and gas to and from Ft. Bragg, bags of ice for the beach and even small toys for the children. Other volunteers confirm that the welcome packages contain all of the above as well as beach passes, local area directions and maps, and directions and phone numbers for Oak Island

dining spots, like the Sub Shop, that have agreed to host the families.

There is beach equipment - chairs, umbrellas, boogie boards, coolers and children's toys - that needs to be cared for. Finally the monthly coordinator meets with the greeters to offer suggestions and guidelines, orients them to the OAE process and provides them with the supplies for delivery to each family upon their arrival.

A successful weekend requires a lot of communication, collaboration, coordination and planning to host a family (or several families a month). Somehow our board and our fantastic, dedicated volunteers make it look easy. After learning what it takes to keep the program running smoothly, it should be no surprise that OAE needs more VOLUNTEERS to help with all these tasks. If you would like to be a part of this wonderful organization, please call Penny Chesnut at 253-0710. We need you, and we know you won't be sorry you joined us!

Submitted by Don Hill for the Board of Directors



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