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Media Advisory

USU Professor working with Sesame Street Muppets to Support Military Families

BETHESDA, Md. – A professor from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU) here is participating in a new initiative aimed at helping young children of service members deal with the stresses of military life.

Army Col. (Dr.) Stephen J. Cozza, who is the associate director of USU's Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Child and Family Programs, and chief of the psychiatry department at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., is a member of the project advisory board for the Sesame Workshop, the non-profit educational organization behind Sesame Street. Dr. Cozza, along with a number of subject matter experts, participated with Sesame Workshop personnel to help develop a Sesame Street Muppet production that will address issues related to separation, fear, family transition, and reintegration of military service members following a deployment.

Research shows that more than 600,000 children of active duty, Reserve or National Guard members are under five years of age. Sesame Workshop plans to create and distribute a bilingual (English/Spanish) kit that includes a DVD starring the Muppets that is directed primarily towards children of this age group. A print guide and poster for children, parents and caregivers will also be included in the kit. With the assistance of a \$1 million donation from Wal-Mart, Sesame Workshop will give out 125,000 of these kits at no cost to schools, child care programs, family support centers and other organizations serving the needs of military families. A particular emphasis will be made to reach families of the Reserves and National Guard.

As associate director of USU's Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress (www.usuhs.mil/centerforthestudyoftraumaticstress), Child and Family Programs, Dr. Cozza's work has highlighted the impact of deployment, injury and death on the children

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and families of military service members. The Center conducts research and offers education, training, and consultation on preparing for and responding to the psychological effects and health consequences of traumatic events. Such events include natural (e.g., hurricanes, floods and tsunamis) and man-made disasters (e.g., motor vehicle and plane crashes, war, and terrorism). Their work spans studies of genetic vulnerability to stress, individual and community responses to terrorism, and policy recommendations to help the U.S. and its military and civilian populations.

Established by the U.S. Congress in 1972, the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (www.usuhs.mil) is located on the campus of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md., and is the nation's only federal school of medicine and graduate school of nursing.

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