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News Release

Helping Children Cope with War: USU Professor assists Muppet Elmo with Parent's Deployment

BETHESDA, Md. – Col. (Dr.) Stephen J. Cozza, (ret.), a professor from the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USU), is participating in an initiative with the Sesame Workshop aimed at helping young children of service members deal with the stresses of military life.

Dr. Cozza, a psychiatrist and retired Army colonel who is the associate director of USU's Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Child and Family Programs, 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 military family groups and subject matter experts, participated in the development of 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 half a million children of active duty, Reserve or National Guard members are younger than the age of five. In the DVD entitled "Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping Families Cope with Military Deployment" which is primarily geared towards children of this age group, beloved Sesame Street Muppet, Elmo, has to cope with the absence of his father who is deployed. Familiar Sesame Street characters are used to help children to cope with stressful situations while providing information for parents and caregivers on how to identify signs of stress and foster communication with their children.

Distribution of the bilingual (English/Spanish) kits (that include the Muppet DVD, a print guide, and poster for children, parents and caregivers) will begin August 1. With the assistance of a \$1.5 million donation from Wal-Mart, Sesame Workshop will give out 400,000 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. The kits may be requested or downloaded online at www.sesameworkshop.org/tlc.

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 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. For more information, please contact the Office of External Affairs at (301) 295-3166.

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