

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: pao@sd.ngb.army.mil

Web: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil>

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October 5, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SD Guard announces NCO and Soldier of the Year

By Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota Army National Guard named Sgt. James Dvorak, of Yankton, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. Tyler Eissler, of Rapid City, Soldier of the Year, Sunday, Oct. 2, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. Each award is the top honor for both the noncommissioned officer and enlisted corps within the state’s Army National Guard.

SDARNG State Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman said the NCO and Soldier of the Year competition recognizes the best Soldiers to represent the state in regional and national competitions.

“We have chosen the NCO and Soldier of the Year, but all five of the Soldiers who participated in this competition are all winners,” said Zimmerman. “These Soldiers have already surpassed their fellow Soldiers at the company, battalion and brigade levels and came here to state and did a fantastic job.”

Dvorak and Eissler will represent the SDARNG at the Region 6 Best Warrior Competition held in Idaho, June 2012, where they will compete against Soldiers selected from seven other states.

They will again be tested both physically and mentally with events they’ve seen before such as an interview board, a land navigation course, an obstacle course, a weapons qualification test and a physical fitness test.

NCO OF THE YEAR

Dvorak, a plumber with the Training Center in Rapid City, joined the National Guard in September of 2000.

He is a combat veteran who deployed to Iraq with the 153rd Engineer Battalion from 2003-2005.

On the civilian side, Dvorak lives in Yankton with his wife, Crystal, and two daughters, Ashlyn, 7 and Alexis, 5. He works for the South Dakota State Human Services Center as a psychiatric nurse. When Dvorak is not working or spending time with family, he participates in triathlons and marathons.

Dvorak recognizes that it takes support from his unit and family to be successful in the Soldier of the Year competition because of the time it takes to prepare.

“My unit has been very supportive giving me extra time if needed to study, and motivating me to do my best in all of the events,” said Dvorak. “My wife is going to be very proud of me, because she put up with a lot of my training by allowing me to take the time to study. I trained to be the best Soldier that my unit and family expected me to be for this competition.”

Dvorak competed against Sgt. 1st Class Tom Martin, supply sergeant with the Combined Service Maintenance Shop in Rapid City and Staff Sgt. Tom Rauenhorst, fire direction control chief with Charlie Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion in Yankton.

“I want to thank the other two NCOs in this competition for making me step up. They made it challenging,” said Dvorak. “I am going to try my best to represent South Dakota well at regions and bring home that title.”

SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

Eissler, a motor transport operator with the 1742nd Transportation Company, Sioux Falls, joined the National Guard in October of 2008.

He is currently a full-time college student at Western Dakota Tech in Rapid City where he is studying fire science with the goal of becoming a firefighter. When Eissler is not studying, he is working part-time as a state wildland firefighter and a parenting specialist at Wellspring.

“I feel honored to earn the title of South Dakota’s Soldier of the Year,” said Eissler. “I trained and studied during my time off and pushed myself to learn everything I could to prepare myself for this competition.”

Eissler said his mother has helped push him to go beyond what is expected of him.

“She is always proud of what I do,” said Eissler. “She is always encouraging me to go after what I want.”

Participating in the Soldier of the Year competition has taught Eissler the importance of becoming a well-rounded Soldier.

“It has made me realize that you have to do well at more than just your job,” said Eissler. “You have to be proficient at everything you do as a Soldier.”

After three years in the Army National Guard, Eissler does plan on staying in the organization until retirement, and may even become an officer.

“I love everything about the Guard,” said Eissler. “The structure, the organization, the physical fitness and all the guys in my unit, there are like my brothers.”

Zimmerman congratulated and presented each of the Soldiers with a coin of excellence for participating in the competition.

“It gives me shivers just to think about how you two are standing up above and beyond the 3,400 Soldiers in the South Dakota Army National Guard,” said Zimmerman to the two winners. “The South Dakota Guard stands out as one of the top five in the nation. You two are nothing but top-notch. Train hard, work hard and be proud to wear the coyote patch, be proud that you are representing the South Dakota Army National Guard.”

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PHOTOS: High-resolution photos for this release are available upon request or at: www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard



011011-A-M5804-033: Spc. Tyler Eissler, of Rapid City, flips Spc. Christopher Punt over during an unarmed combatives bout for the South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier of the Year competition Oct. 1, 2011, in Rapid City, S.D. Eissler went on to win the competition, becoming the Soldier of the Year. (SDNG photo by Spc. Julieanne Morse)(RELEASED)



011011-A-M5804-087: Sgt. James Dvorak, of Yankton, weaves through a wooden ladder on West Camp Rapid's obstacle course during the South Dakota Army National Guard Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition Oct. 1, 2011, in Rapid City, S.D. Dvorak went on to win the competition, becoming the state's NCO of the Year. (SDNG photo by Spc. Julieanne Morse)(RELEASED)



110910-A-CW157-141: Spc. Tyler Eissler, of Rapid City, studies his map before beginning the land navigation course during the South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier of the Year competition Oct. 1, 2011, in Rapid City, S.D. Eissler went on to win the competition, becoming the state's Soldier of the Year. (SDNG photo by Spc. Julieanne Morse)(RELEASED)



110910-A-CW157-141: Sgt. James Dvorak, of Yankton, plots points on a map for the land navigation course during the South Dakota Army National Guard Noncommissioned Officer of the Year competition Oct. 1, 2011, in Rapid City, S.D. Dvorak went on to win the competition, becoming the state's NCO of the Year. (SDNG photo by Spc. Julieanne Morse)(RELEASED)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Maj. Brendan Murphy at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail brendan.murphy1@us.army.mil.