

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brandon Valley teen receives national Youth Volunteer Award

By 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Casey Callies, a senior at Brandon Valley High School, was named the National Guard’s Family Program’s Youth Volunteer Award recipient Jan. 27. The annual award is presented to a National Guard military youth, 15-17 years old, who exhibits exemplary commitment to and support of the National Guard Family Programs.

Casey began participating in the South Dakota National Guard’s Youth Council as a high school freshman and for the last two years has served as the council’s president.

“The youth council is a group of teens, from across South Dakota, who has family members in or retired from the military,” said Callies. “Their purpose is to be there for other military kids through the enjoyable and difficult times of having a parent serve in the military.

“As a group we think of new ways to help military kids by getting trained in leadership, first aid and team-building activities,” continued Callies. “We also support local military sponsored events in our communities.”

Casey was first inspired to volunteer by his sister, Sarah, who was on the youth council.

“I attended a number of National Guard youth events prior to high school and wanted to give back because they meant a lot to me,” he said.

Casey comes from an Air National Guard family that includes his father, Lt. Col. Kevin Callies, brother, Staff Sgt. Kevin Callies and sister, Senior Airman Sarah Callies.

“I feel I was supported well by the National Guard’s Family Programs when I was young and think it’s important that I pass that support along to others,” said Callies. “Although it’s hard, what you get out of the helping at their events is worth the time you put in.”

“Casey is dedicated to representing military children in South Dakota and serving as a voice for them and the unique challenges they face,” said Taryn Broomfield, SDNG State Youth Specialist.

Casey’s volunteer work doesn’t end with the National Guard’s Youth Council.

“He has been a junior counselor at the S.D. Military Youth Camp for several years,” Broomfield said. “He has served as both a mentor to his peers and as a role model to more than 100 youth, from 10 to 13 years old, who are experiencing a week of camp activities away from home.”

While Casey said he was surprised with the national award and is happy about the recognition, his biggest reward comes from working with younger kids.

“Watching the younger kids have fun with other military kids at the youth camps and family day events has been the most rewarding part of volunteering,” said Casey.

While time for most high school seniors can be stretched in many directions, Casey still finds time for extracurricular activities outside of the National Guard Youth Program.

“He is involved in many activities at our school, such as band, cross country and tech theatre,” said Ann Sittig, Brandon Valley High School advanced placement/honors English teacher. “He is also a member of our National Honor Society and senior leadership team.”

Casey is also an active participant in 4H, where he has been involved for the last 10 years, and has served as his club’s vice president and treasurer.

He also actively participates at his church, where he is involved with the youth group, has attended church camps and a youth conference, and has volunteered to teach, serve meals and raise funds for the good of others.

“Casey is motivated to make a difference,” said Broomfield. “He is dependable and his sense of humor has a positive influence on those around him.”

“I always wonder what will become of my high school students when they graduate from high school and college,” said Sittig. “He is one that I predict will be a welcome and important addition to his community as he will continue to lead others through his example, help those in need, and keep smiling along the way.”

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Casey Callies (left-center), a senior at Brandon Valley High School, leads a group of military youth at the S.D. Military Youth Camp at Camp Bob Marshall near Custer in July. Callies was named the National Guard’s Family Program’s Youth Volunteer Award recipient Jan. 27, 2012. (Courtesy photo)

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