

# South Dakota National Guard

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **State's Soldier, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year announced**

By 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson  
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota Army National Guard named Sgt. Jacob Vissia, of Harrisburg, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year and Spc. James Furry, of Sioux Falls, Soldier of the Year, Sunday, Oct. 14, 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.

Vissia and Furry have advanced through company, battalion, brigade and state-level competitions and will next represent the South Dakota Army National Guard at the Region 6 Best Warrior Competition held in Oregon in June, where they will compete against Soldiers selected from seven other states.

“It is a combination of excitement and relief to be done with the competition,” Vissia said. “The competition challenges us all physically, emotionally and mentally.”

“The competition with the other Soldiers pushed me to work harder,” said Furry. “It was fierce. I am tired and happy to get this far. I hope to represent the state well at the next level of competition. My hat is off to the other competitors. The competition was strong, organized well and definitely challenged us.”

Vissia and Furry will again face fierce competition in 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 and will see new events added at the regional level of the competition.

“There is a certain amount of relief that comes with the end of this competition, but I am proud to have the opportunity to represent the state at this regional event,” said Furry. “I am going to try to have fun with it.”

### **NCO OF THE YEAR**

Vissia, a combat engineer in the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper), Madison, joined the National Guard in March of 2006.

“I wanted to be in the Army ever since I was a little kid,” said Vissia.

He not only enlisted into the South Dakota Army National Guard, but three years later would deploy to Afghanistan for one year, where his unit’s primary mission would be route clearance.

In civilian side of life, Vissia lives in Harrisburg, where he is the restaurant and bar owner of the Fish Lake Country Club.

He said he attributes his success in preparing for the competitions to his unit’s Sapper school train-up program.

“I’m proud to have made it this far,” Vissia said. “I work hard to do well in this type of competition and don’t like to lose. I am appreciative of the opportunity to represent my unit and look forward to the next step.”

While Vissia will continue working hard preparing for the regional competition, he said his long-term goals with the South Dakota National Guard are to make it a full-time career.

“I plan on retiring with 20-plus years in the National Guard,” said Vissia. “I would love to find a full-time position with the Guard. My next big career goal is finding that full-time position.”

#### SOLDIER OF THE YEAR

Furry, a health care specialist in the 730th Area Support Medical Company, Vermillion, joined the National Guard in July of 2009.

“My older brother had been in the Guard for some time and enjoyed it,” said Furry. “After meeting my recruiter and discussing the many benefits and options the Guard offers such as Physician Assistant School - I was sold.”

Furry works at Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls in the Vascular Interventional Radiology Department. He lives in Sioux Falls with his wife, Brenna, and their four children, Sydney, 14, Sierra, 12, Jacob, 8, and Caleb, 4.

“I have been working on going to PA school through the Interservice Physician Assistant Program,” Furry said. “Becoming a PA has been a focus of mine ever since college and I hope to see that through.”

Hard work and staying focused on the task at hand are the things that Furry said have advanced him this far in the Soldier of the Year Competition.

“I was up against very tough competition in Spc. Koupal,” Furry said. “He actually won all the physical events with relative ease. I had to maintain a short memory so I could forget about the last event and focus on the next one. That kind of neck-and-neck competition made me work even harder.”

Furry said making it to regional’s is a big deal for him personally.

“It shows me that I can keep pace with some of the best Soldiers around,” said Furry. “I hope I continue to show my family and my unit that I deserve to be here. I couldn’t have made it this far without their support and help in preparing for this competition.”

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High resolution photos are available at [www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard](http://www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard)



**Noncommissioned Officer of the Year:** The South Dakota Army National Guard named Sgt. Jacob Vissia, of Harrisburg, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Sunday, Oct. 14, 2012, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. The award is the top honor for noncommissioned officers within the state’s Army National Guard. Vissia has advanced through company, battalion, brigade and state-level competitions and will represent the South Dakota Army National Guard at the Region 6 Best Warrior Competition held in Oregon in June, where he will compete against Soldiers selected from seven other states. (SDNG photo by Staff Sgt. Charles Butler) (RELEASED)



**Soldier of the Year:** The South Dakota Army National Guard named Spc. James Furry, of Sioux Falls, Soldier of the Year, Sunday, Oct. 14, 2012, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. The award is the top honor for the enlisted corps within the state’s Army National Guard. Furry has advanced through company, battalion, brigade and state-level competitions and will represent the South Dakota Army National Guard at the Region 6 Best Warrior Competition held in Oregon in June, where he will compete against Soldiers selected from seven other states. (SDNG photo by Staff Sgt. Charles Butler) (RELEASED)

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail [ngsd-pao@ng.army.mil](mailto:ngsd-pao@ng.army.mil)