

# 'Experience of a lifetime'

By Sgt. Jim Greenhill,  
National Guard Bureau

BISMARCK, N.D. – On the flight home, Sylvia Lynch would try to explain what happened to her and 300 high school seniors in North Dakota while taking part in the 200th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark Expedition during the third week of August.

But how could the youth coordinator for the District of Columbia National Guard possibly tell someone who wasn't there about the Lewis & Clark Youth Rendezvous 2006 sponsored by the National Guard Bureau and hosted by the North Dakota National Guard?

There was too much to tell. "It was a once-in-a-lifetime experience," Lynch concluded before falling asleep, like all of the equally exhausted 10 youths she escorted to the event. "This was the big National Guard event of the entire bicentennial," said George Donnelly, senior program analyst for the National Guard Bureau. "One of the primary reasons for the Corps of Discovery's success was the military decorum and the military values."

The National Guard has taught thousands of students beyond those who attended Youth Rendezvous 2006 about

***"When I heard of this trip, I really thought of what they did for us as a nation, and it's a lot more than any old superhero ever did."***

**Nicholas Claudel,  
Augusta, Maine**

them their tickets.

To write the essays, the students researched the 1804-to-1806 Corps of Discovery expedition credited with opening the West for the young United States.

"My great heroes consisted of Superman, Wonder Woman and all of those comical heroes," wrote Nicholas Claudel of Augusta, Maine. "When I heard of this trip, I really thought of what they did for us as a nation, and it's a lot more than any old superhero ever did."

When the students – many making their maiden plane flight, some traveling 24 hours – landed in Bismarck, N.D., on Aug. 13, they abandoned the dry history of their textbooks.

"History will come alive for them," promised Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen, adjutant general of the North Dakota National Guard.

Did it ever.

For five days, the students were immersed in the Lewis and Clark story. Surrounded by Citizen-Soldiers of today's National Guard who had volunteered to make the adventure happen, the high school seniors learned about the opening of the American West, the military of the early 19th century and the 21st century Minutemen.

Lewis and Clark and about the nation's armed forces, Donnelly said.

"It's provided the opportunity to get the military story – primarily the Guard story – back into the classroom," he said.

"We have reached more than 130,000 students." The students came to North Dakota from every state and four territories. Contest-winning essays on Lewis and Clark themes earned



Photos by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp,  
119th Fighter Wing

(Above) Jordan Jacquet, Colorado, navigates the high ropes course in Medora, North Dakota.

(Right) Nadine Wiley, Delaware, and Tyler Harris, Alabama, engage in a Native American game of shinney sticks at Knife River Indian Village National Historic Site near Washburn, North Dakota.

(Below) Kayla Trunecek, Kansas, chomps down on a s'mores snack near the Washburn campfire during the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous.



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Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Fighter Wing



Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

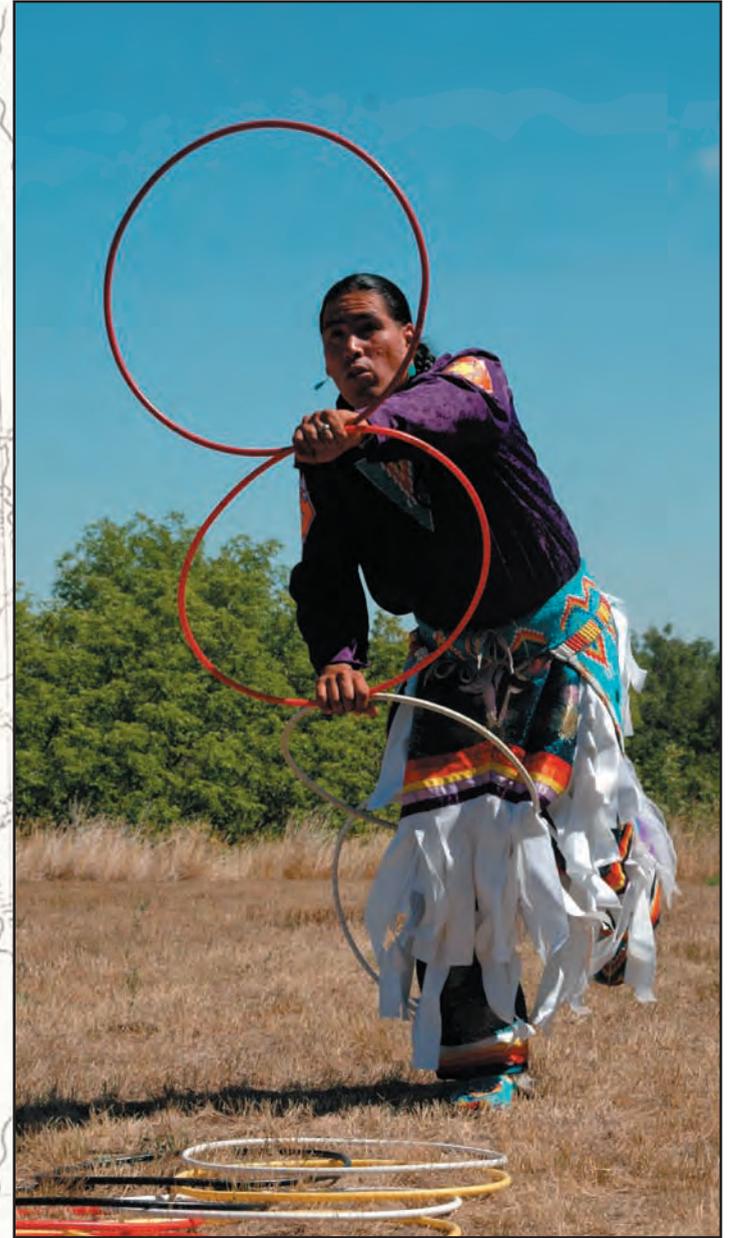


Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

(Above) Amanda Cornell, Minnesota, reaches out for a helping hand as she conquers the high ropes course in Medora. (Right) Wayne Fox performs a hoop dance at Fort Lincoln. (Left) The 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company performs a bridging mission as Youth Rendezvous participants observe the training.

The *Straight Arrow* is an authorized publication for members of the North Dakota National Guard.

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■ Printed by United Printing, a private firm in no way connected to the U.S. Government under exclusive written contract with the JFND. Reproduction is by the offset method with a circulation of 4,700.

■ The *Straight Arrow* is published by the JFND Public Affairs Office, Box 5511, Bismarck, N.D., 58506-5511, (701) 333-2129.

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## A big 'thank you' goes out to the National Guard

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"Oh, man, it's fun," said Samuel Duah, of Washington, D.C. The 17-year-old listed his highlights, pouring them out like .45-caliber rounds had poured from the Gatling's Battery Gun the students saw fired at Fort Abraham Lincoln.

The mild weather. Traveling the furthest West he had ever been. Sleeping for a night in an army tent. Eating military rations at Fort Mandan. Meeting people from all over the United States. Learning more about Capt. Meriwether Lewis, Capt. William Clark and the Corps of Discovery.

"I already said I loved it here, right?" Duah concluded. "I'm glad I won the essay, and I'm glad I took the time to write it."

Still, Duah had only scratched the surface.

The places they saw: Knife River Indian Village. Fort Mandan. The Missouri River. Fort Abraham Lincoln. Medora. Bismarck. Washburn.

"I wish it was longer than a week, just from what I've seen already," Adrian Tutein, 17, of the Virgin Islands, said on the first full day.

The challenges they undertook included rafting on the Missouri River, climbing on a high-ropes confidence course, riding on a wagon train, learning Native American dances.

"This is a great experience for us," said Ashley Ames, 16, of Montana, after riding a zip line on the confidence course. "It's something you don't do every summer."

They heard stories about Sakakawea, from Amy Mossett, a scholar of the Native American woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark; about York, the African-American slave Clark so highly valued for his service during the expedition but resisted setting free; and about the two leaders and the sergeants and privates who made the military expedition.

"I really liked talking one-on-one with the re-enactors when they stayed in character," said Elisabeth Garrett, 17, of Pennsylvania. "I ate lunch with President Lincoln, and he answered all our questions just like he was President Lincoln and we were in that time period."

The students traded stories about themselves and their families on the long bus rides around North Dakota. They quizzed the Citizen-Soldiers who accompanied them about today's National Guard and why they enlisted or got commissions.

"It's a little bit different than what I'm used to," said Cody Boulware, 17, of Iowa. "It's a lot more structured. It's sort of interesting to know why they do it. It makes a lot more sense."

As the week came to an end, the students danced with Native Americans, Citizen-Soldiers, their adult escorts and with each other. They signed each other's T-shirts and promised to stay in touch. Some of them cried.

They were unequivocal in their thanks to the National Guard in general and to North Dakota in particular, which had shone in its generous hospitality like the sun had shone on its Great Plains.

"I'm very thankful to the National Guard for doing this," Duah said. "I've gained a new respect for them. Now I see what they do, and it's pretty cool."

North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven echoed those sentiments, if in different words.

"The National Guard has been just a tremendous part of the whole event," the governor said. "They are No. 1, whether it's taking care of us at home, border security, or fighting a war abroad. They are outstanding, and we appreciate them."

"I cannot express to you how much this trip has impacted my life, while it was only a week, those memories will last a lifetime. Even though as time passes I may forget the details, I will not forget the important things.

The way history came alive, right before my eyes. The way I felt connected to those who had been in that very spot some 200 hundred years before, people like me, with hopes and dreams. The way I met kids just like me from all around the nation. The way the National Guard became apparent to me. Instead of seeing soldiers as nameless and faceless, I now have faces and names to think of. People who for various reasons decided to serve their country.

I think that is what I will remember most about this trip. The Patriotism. This was a celebration of a group of men's journey for the honor it would bring to their country. Men and women did that this week, in the form of giving 300 high schoolers the experience of a lifetime."

Jasmine Wilson

"Writing this note of thanks to you and all other individuals who made possible my participation in the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous will never adequately express my appreciation.

It is difficult to explain. When I submitted my essay last school year, I had no idea that shortly after, I would be hospitalized and miss over thirty days of school. Nor did I realize that my 2006-2007 school year would begin the same week I was scheduled to be in North Dakota. I struggled countless hours in making a decision between this opportunity to experience history and the possibility I would jeopardize my class rank.

Today, as I look back on my experiences of last week, I am still not sure why I made the decision I did. However, I am convinced the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous has provided me with the chance for reflection beyond compare.

I believe today the vision I have of myself is a little clearer because I shared a week with approximately 300 other youth who shared my vision of a future based upon an understanding and appreciation of the past.

Furthermore, the values exhibited by the National Guard are no longer just ideals to me, but rather attainable goals which should be shared by all American citizens.

Again, thank you and may you always find satisfaction in knowing the memories I have of the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous will never fade as a result of time or distance."

William Andrew Duncelman



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Brenda Benner, Texas

"I wanted to thank someone for the fantastic adventure my daughter had this week. Here is the email she sent to our family newsgroup last night:  
 'Oh my gosh! I had so much fun. I really wasn't expecting the trip to be this great, but man...it was awesome. We did pretty much everything you can imagine. All of the soldiers were just so nice, and the reenactors also. It was amazing...I have so many pictures to show you all! ... I had such a blast. It really was the opportunity of a lifetime. I can't wait to go back to North Dakota. Wow. I can't believe I got the chance. It was great. I'd go into detail, but that would take another 40 hours... I met so many people from all over the United States. Two of my good friends I met there were from Arizona, others from Alabama, Louisiana, Kansas, Wash. D.C., Iowa, Utah, everywhere! I'm still in shock from the trip.'  
 As you can tell, she had a great time which she'll remember for a lifetime!"

Ramona Forthofer (Parent of Tia)



Photo by Laura Paton, Rhode Island

(Above photo) Michelle Skibyak, New Mexico, dangles in the air during the high ropes course. (Right photo) A Youth Rendezvous participant takes aim during the paintball competition at Fort Lincoln.



Photos on pages 4 and 5 by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Fighter Wing



Virgin Islands

"This is just a short note to express our utmost thanks and appreciation for all your assistance. I stopped talking about this trip yet. He got home safe and sound on Friday and all we have had adventures in the Lewis and Clark expedition. Just listening to him talk about the trip, we were in the Caribbean, we don't have access to experiences like this. He can't stop thanking me for it. Finally he was hemming and hawing about having to write 1500 words. He now says, 'I would have loved the experience. It was worth it.' I must admit, it was an educational experience for our family when we first heard of Lewis & Clark, we thought of Superman. Here in the Caribbean, we are participating in the Lewis and Clark expedition. This essay competition educated an entire community. I'm not just a teacher, who knows her history book inside and out, about Lewis and Clark and her responsibility for a wonderful experience for our entire family." Masserae Webster

# L&C Youth Rendezvous

Maine

"On behalf of Logan Edwards, who was one of the Maine representatives on the 'trip of a lifetime,' I would like to say thank-you. Logan has talked and talked about the trip and he was once a quiet fellow! He gained friends, confidence, and a sense of the bigness and goodness in the world. Your superb organization and attention to detail, safety and fun made the trip so memorable for Logan. Our heartfelt thanks to all involved..." Steve & Andrea Edwards (Logan's mom and dad)

Alabama

"I just wanted to thank you for everything that you did to make the Youth Rendezvous possible for me. Going to North Dakota was so exciting. I immensely enjoyed the beautiful landscape. I also learned about American culture as well as the tools and weapons used by Lewis and Clark. None of this would have been possible for me if it wasn't for you. You gave me the experience of a lifetime; and I will never forget it." Elliott Waters

"Just a note to thank all of the people who helped make my trip to North Dakota exciting and memorable. Elaina had a great time with her kids and participating in all the activities. She was so brave for conquering the high ropes! Many thanks to all who made this possible. She came away with so many happy memories!" Rita and Bob Giolando





nce. My son Adrian has not heard about since then is all his feel like we were there also. Here for making him write the essay; in- did have written 5000 words for the and many of our friends because did not know anything about the t kidding. I asked a US history nse was: Superman... Thanks again

"I can't thank you and the staff enough for this past week. It was truly a once in a lifetime experience. And I felt so well taken care of! Almost as much as I do at home. Almost. Do you think something like this could ever happen again? More kids need to experience this kind of learning, these kind of relationships, and what the National Guard is all about. I need to go to bed. I'm whipped."  
Carrie Steffen

Michigan

# us: Lasting Impressions

u did to make the Lewis and Clark in Dakota was a great experience. o loved getting to see the Native s used during the time of Lewis and ne to witness had it not been for , I am forever grateful."

"I recently had the honor of representing the state of Tennessee at the Lewis & Clark Youth Rendezvous. I cannot express to you in words just how grateful I am for all of your hard work and dedication. It is because of your efforts that I was able to have the experience of a lifetime. The LCYR opened many new doors for me. I conquered my fear of height in Medora, flew in an airplane for the first time, and most importantly, made friendships that will last a lifetime. It is also quite possible that I will attend college in North Dakota, and return to Medora as a park ranger. (I had already planned to become a ranger, but not in ND.) Thank you once again. I truly feel as if I am one the luckiest kids in America."  
Chance Finegan

Tennessee

New York

make our daughter's trip to a wonderful time meeting the especially proud of herself those who planned the trip.



# An adventure in the making...

By Maj. Davina French,  
L&C Youth Rendezvous Project Officer

Walt Disney once said, "All our dreams can come true, if only we have the courage to pursue them." These words personify the spirit of the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous. A program that was developed and implemented with the synergy of diversity, teamwork, pride and a belief that the Youth Rendezvous could truly be a once in a lifetime opportunity.

It is not often that so few people can make such a grand difference. For years, the Youth Rendezvous was an idea, a concept, and a mark on the calendar of events to happen, and in August of 2005 the concept began to take shape.

Plans were drafted, budgets were requested and the Lewis and Clark Team in North Dakota was put into action. The questions were numerous: How to market a military contest nationwide? What events would the youth be interested in? How would we score and select the winning essays? Who would the individual states assign to assist with this program? The questions were endless, but it quickly became apparent that we needed to do one thing and do it well... Believe!

With only a few weeks notice, our first group of leaders stepped up to the plate and in unison sang out, "Put me in coach!" The Youth Coordinators from National Guard Family Support Programs raised their hands and put their trust in our team to lead them through a worthwhile program. In no time, all 54 states and territories volunteered one representative to be our state point of contact (POC). The diversity of the 54 personnel was a melting pot of youth coordinators, historians, commanders, Lewis and Clark Outreach Coordinators, recruiters, communications specialists, Public Information Officers and other staff members from the family support programs. It was a jamboree of experts, civilian and military, male and female, Air Guard and Army Guard. Technical abilities, diversity, enthusiasm and passion for youth had been corralled.

Flyers and posters started to cover the bulletin boards at high schools, National Guard newsletters, emails, conferences, and news releases were sent to thousands of local newspapers across the nation, and direct mailings went to educators – any way possible to spread the word. The message was clear... enter the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous essay contest; take a chance on winning a once in a lifetime trip to experience the adventure.

Months later and after thousands of miles driven, hours of never-ending marketing and an endless supply of stamps, we had 471 youth entrants who answered the question, "In your opinion, what military values most describes the Lewis and Clark Corp of Discovery journey and why? (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity or personal courage)," all hoping for their chance to be a part of something bigger than just a contest.

The National AMVETS rallied volunteers from across the country to methodically read and score the essays. These veterans echoed clearly one message as they turned in their final results; "We have selected 283 youth who signify to us that the future is bright. The young adults clearly understood that duty, sacrifice and spirit are what this great nation is founded on and this next generation will continue on with the traditional values that will ensure greatness in the future."

Throughout the scoring timeline, the Lewis and Clark team planned training schedules, coordinated communication plans for the youth, created data bases and continued to "Believe," even under the umbrella of adversity. Funding was late, training sites unavailable, regulations challenged reality, and through it all, it was the state POC's who banded together and provided strength for the Lewis and Clark Team to continue moving forward.

"A once in a lifetime experience" was promised and with only 90 days to go, the picture slowly became clearer. The team sent mail-outs to students, recruited staff members, signed up re-enactors, gained media interest, planned operating and logistical procedures all in cooperation with state POC's, youth and parents and a small leadership team of North Dakota soldiers. Administrative specialists, supply technicians, transportation wizards and creative site supervisors began to make the dream a breathing, living exercise.

Parents were beginning to trust our process as we pushed out more information and began to develop the national transportation plan. The massive coordination of flights, charter planes and ground transportation was an undertaking that eventually needed efforts from state POC's, parents and the airlines. As hoped and planned for, all the pieces fell into place.

On August 13<sup>th</sup>, a total of 78 flights ascended on the Minneapolis, Minn., airport within two and a half hours and delivered over 260 students and 150 staff members from across the nation. Simultaneously, the Bismarck airport handled another 100 students and staff and the vans were driving in from South Dakota and from around North Dakota. More than 100 military vehicles were delivering supplies across western North Dakota. Tanks from Minnesota and field artillery

Continued on next page



(All photos on left) Youth Rendezvous participants took part in various week-long activities with soldiers, airmen, re-enactors and the 957th Multi-rolld Bridge Co. Lewis and Clark team pictured at left. (Top three photos by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp; bottom two photos by Sgt. Ann Knudson)

Look for upcoming event videos to be posted on [www.lcyouthrendezvous.com](http://www.lcyouthrendezvous.com)

*Congratulations on a great job with the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous. Opening ceremony was phenomenal and, from all accounts, so was everything else!! You made Governor Hoeven and I extremely proud! N.D.'s First Lady Mikey Hoeven*

**'The dedication of generations'**

*Continued from previous page*

pieces from Wyoming were conveying to be a part of the military displays in Medora, the gatlin guns and horses staged at the cavalry post in Bismarck, and the St. Louis Corp of Discovery set up in Washburn. The gears were turning on the machine, the adventure was beginning.

As I stood in front of the crowd at the opening ceremony, I took in the grandeur of the event. From every state and territory, there were 271 students sitting on the hillside in their red lawn chairs, black back packs positioned to their fronts and 12 different t-shirt colors that separated the youth by squads - and all I could feel was a synergetic buzz flowing through the evening air. I wondered if they noticed the beauty of the Missouri River, the butterflies in the air and the diversity they were surrounded in? The different language dialects, those who were city slickers, some were small town folk, the southern courtesies, east and west coast mannerisms, different races and various religions and beliefs were represented. At that very moment they were all winners, all unique, but all looking for the same thing. A chance to be part of the Lewis and Clark adventure and to experience living history.

***"This program was designed from the heart, worked from the soul and the event was spirited by all who believed in the youth and the energy of a bright future."***

**Maj. Davina French,  
L&C Youth Rendezvous  
Project Officer**

The helicopters buzzed overhead grabbing the attention of all as the American Flag was passed symbolically from the Lewis and Clark Team to the modern military and then back in time to the Calvary, the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Native Americans. As the drum beat echoed in the air, I could feel history come to life as President Jefferson commanded both a patriotic and historic tour through time with Presidents' Lincoln, Madison and Roosevelt. To hear from the presidents of the past the symbolism of the pledge of allegiance, that it not only was a pledge to the ideals of our fore fathers, the men who fought and died in the building of our great nation, but also is a pledge to ourselves to fulfill our duties and obligations as citizens to uphold the principles of the constitution. All of us were reminded that the greatest pledge we could make was to maintain our freedoms cherished by all Americans. How proud I was to be standing amongst the leaders of tomorrow, the strength of today and the wisdom of the past.

For four continuous, exhausting and exhilarating days, a staff of 607 military and civilian volunteers assisted the youth in attaining their dreams of experiencing history through adventure, education and first hand experiences. Sakakawea at the Knife River Indian Village, 7<sup>th</sup> Cavalry at Bismarck, Lewis and Clark re-enactors at Ft. Mandan, York's telling tale as a slave on the expedition and Pierre Cruzatte fiddling fireside on the Missouri River, were all just a part of the dedication of generations past.

Reliving history was exciting to orchestrate, but to watch the youth and staff build bonds of friendship in such a short period of time and confidences flourished as the youth challenged themselves on the high ropes course and extracurricular activities. The Lewis and Clark theme was facilitating much more than history. It had fostered a belief among us all. Sometimes we are given the opportunity to do something more, to do something worthwhile and to do the unforgettable. At the conclusion, after we had pushed the staff and youth past exhaustion, challenged a logistical system and provided opportunities for excellence, we had also pushed the differences into likenesses. The cultures merged as one as the Native American Honor dance turned into a breathtaking friendship dance. Tribal elders led us in dance, music and tradition and then the 900 students and staff joined in to create a giant ring of people moving in the same direction to the same beat with different styles.

Closure is bittersweet and filled with wonderful stories and memories. As we all parted, not only will the Lewis and Clark experience forever be a part of us all, but the Youth Rendezvous was a true adventure that will last forever. This program was designed from the heart, worked from the soul and the event was spirited by all who believed in the youth and the energy of a bright future.

I would like to thank the men and women of the U.S. National Guard who, in conjunction with the National Guard Bureau made this all possible. Thank you all for your participation, personifying the spirit of volunteerism and for making a difference in our lives and providing us with the experience of our lifetime!

*The Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous closing ceremony culminated in an honor dance that led into the final friendship dance. All participants joined in the final dance.*



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Fighter Wing

*Sylvia Lynch, Washington, D.C., gives a pep talk to motivate her team during the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous.*



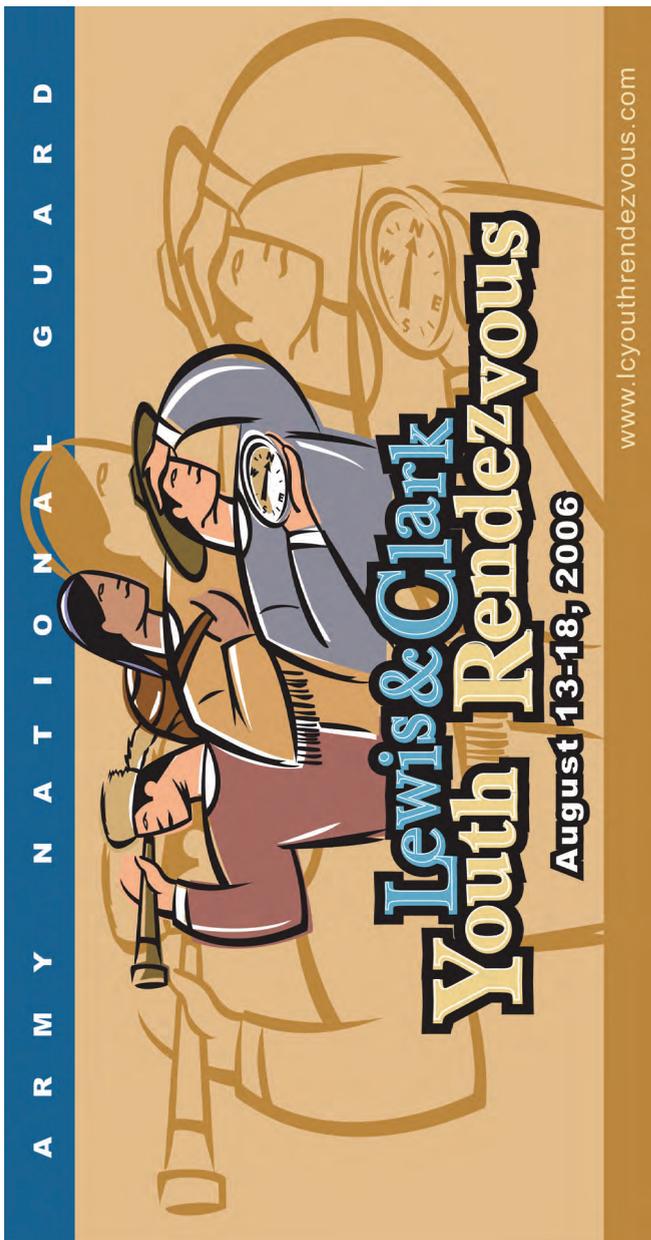
Photo by Laura Paton, Rhode Island

*National Youth Coordinators from across the nation played a large role in the overall success of the Youth Rendezvous.*



Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

**For more photos, visit [www.lcyouthrendezvous.com](http://www.lcyouthrendezvous.com)**



# Special Edition

Summer 2006

A look at the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous, hosted by the North Dakota National Guard August 13-18, 2006.

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## A RETURN TO THE PAST FOR THE FUTURE OF

*Caitlin Gill, Washington wraps her arms around President James Madison, portrayed by John Douglas Hall, as the president expounds on his historical viewpoint. Multiple re-enactors made history come to life during the Lewis and Clark Youth Rendezvous. Among those portrayed were Lewis, Clark, Sakakawea, York, Pierre Cruzatte and Presidents Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt. The re-enactors wore clothes typical of the time and people they portray.*



TOMORROW

Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp, 119th Fighter Wing