



**For More Information:**

Portia Young  
Sargento Foods Inc.  
920-892-3582

Sarah Larson  
Golin  
312-729-4258  
[slarson@golin.com](mailto:slarson@golin.com)

[portia.young@sargento.com](mailto:portia.young@sargento.com)

## **Sargento Employees Recognized for Supporting National Guard Co-Worker**

**PLYMOUTH, Wis. – March 9, 2016** – Two members of the Sargento family earned the national Patriot Award for supporting a fellow employee as he transitioned back from the battlefield to the workplace.

Steve Jesinski and Sonia Otte were given the award in recognition of extraordinary support provided to Wisconsin Army National Guard Reservist and Sargento employee Sgt. Yliyah Weber-Hawkins. The Patriot Award recognizes efforts made to support Sgt. Weber-Hawkins through a wide-range of measures including training, a flexible schedule and time off before and after deployment.

Steve and Sonia were awarded this honor by the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Committee, an agency of the U.S. Department of Defense. Sgt. Weber-Hawkins presented them with the award during a ceremony in Hilbert.

Steve is a supervisor at the Hilbert facility and helped Sgt. Weber-Hawkins with training during his re-entry at Sargento. Sgt. Weber-Hawkins works in the maintenance department and recently became a maintenance technician apprentice, where he learns on the job and attends school.

Sonia is in Human Resources and helped with time off and scheduling. She also organized preparing and sending care packages and Christmas cards for Sgt. Weber-Hawkins while he was deployed.

“Steve and Sonia were critical in helping me make the transition to and from deployment,” said Sgt. Weber-Hawkins. “I am forever grateful for their support.”

This is the first time Sargento received the Patriot Award. Receiving the Patriot Award makes Sargento eligible for the Freedom Award, the highest recognition given by the U.S. government to employers for their outstanding support of employees serving in the Guard and Reserve. The Freedom Award has been given to only 220 employers over the past two decades.

“In the true spirit of our company, Steve and Sonia made sure Yliyah felt good about leaving his role at Sargento and ultimately returning to that role,” said Sargento CEO Louie Gentine. “This dedication and generosity speaks to the caring nature of our employees.”

**About Sargento Foods Inc.**

Sargento Foods Inc. has demonstrated its passion for cheese and cheese-based meal solutions for more than 60 years. Founded in 1953 in Plymouth, Sargento is a leading manufacturer, packager and marketer of natural shredded, sliced and snack cheeses, cheese appetizers, ingredients, sauces and other culinary solutions. Sargento is owned and operated by the Gentine family, has net sales exceeding \$1 billion and more than 1,800 employees. For more information, please visit [www.sargento.com](http://www.sargento.com).

**About Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve**

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense agency established in 1972. The mission of ESGR is to gain and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law, and resolving conflicts through informal mediation. ESGR volunteers provide free education, consultation, and if necessary mediation for employers of Guard and Reserve employees.

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