

Taking care of our heroes, because they took care of us

It's that time of the year when we are rushing off to the card shop, candy store and flower shops to find the perfect Valentine's Day gift for our loved ones. It's also my favorite time of the year to visit Mount Rushmore and pay tribute to four great heroes who are carved into the mountainside in the Black Hills.

In his own words, master carver Gutzon Borglum, says he selected George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt to commemorate the founding, growth, preservation and development of the United States of America. As I sit at the base of Mount Rushmore, I can't help but ponder on the many chapters of American history that these four men were a part of – Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, purchase of the Louisiana Territory, construction of the Panama Canal, ensuring the rights of the working man, the American Revolutionary War, the Civil War, preservation of the union, and abolishing of slavery. Accomplishments that enriched all our lives.

One of my favorite Abraham Lincoln quotes is "Honor to the soldier and sailor everywhere, who bravely bears his country's cause. Honor, also, to the citizen who cares for his brother in the field and serves, as he best can, the same cause."

That quote causes me to think about all the care we provide our veterans at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. Our Home stands as a tribute to our heroes who answered their country's call to arms. We provide our heroes with high quality, long-term care and our warm, friendly, and compassionate staff are dedicated to the health and welfare of our heroes.

I challenge all of you to visit our website and take a virtual tour of this state-of-the-art facility (<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranshome/Features.aspx>). Every veteran has a private room with a private bath. The rooms are organized into neighborhoods. Amongst the neighborhoods is our beautiful Town Square which is comprised of a library, game room, chapel, post office, barber/beauty shop, pharmacy, gift shop, and bistro. We have on-site physical, speech, and occupational therapists.

Please call our team (605-745-5127) to learn more about the home and the admission criteria. We are here to serve those who have served us all.

In 2014 we launched the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home Endowment Fund to enhance and maintain the quality of life for our residents at the home. The goal is to build a \$3 million permanent endowment. The investment income from the fund will be used for activities for the veterans, robotics, new medical equipment, a columbarium, and a veterans' memorial garden to name a few. You can learn more about the fund at:

<https://sdcommunityfoundation.org/for-donors/find-funds/michael-j-fitzmaurice-state-veterans-home-endowment-fund/>

We believe this fund embodies those 17 great words that Abraham Lincoln used in his inaugural address – “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan.”

There is something about military service that creates a bond between veterans that no one else can fully understand. The fact that we fought together and survived together is a bond that will never be broken and will never be exhausted.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary