

SD Department of Veterans Affairs
Secretary Zimmerman March 2018 Column

Veterans' Stories Endure

As I pondered on what message to focus my column on this month, the word community kept bouncing into my thoughts. Webster defines community as a group of people with diverse characteristics who are linked by social ties, shared common perspectives, and who engage in joint action in geographical locations or settings.

Communities have played a major role in all our veterans' lives. The individuals who form our communities are the ones who are there when our young men and women deploy, they are there to assist families when loved ones are serving, they are there when our heroes return from deployments, and they are there to help them adjust back into their civilian lives.

For communities, the opportunities to assist our veterans continue to grow. South Dakota Joining Forces is just one example. Joining Forces is an entity to identify all of the resources available for our military personnel, our veterans, and their families. It's our goal to have a one-stop-shop for these heroes to find the resources they may need. I encourage you to visit <http://sdjf.sd.gov/> to learn more about this great program; scroll to the right and click on "contact us". Get your community involved by identifying all the wonderful resources you have to assist this elite group of heroes.

Benjamin Disraeli once said, "The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example." As a community, it is important that we capture the history from our heroes. Each of us knows of or has a veteran in our life, so I encourage you to take time to sit down and talk with them - capture their legacy and remind them of the difference they have made in their community and their country.

Many of the men and women that served this great country were often children when they went off to war; young men and women that were thrown into hellacious predicaments that robbed them of their youth and innocence.

I have shared my father's military story of serving four plus years in New Guinea with my daughters; as well as the story of my mother who prayed and waited patiently for his safe return. I remember at age 85 he still loved to proudly wear his army uniform to VFW events in his community.

Capturing these stories is a gift for our children and their children. Each of us can help document these stories for family, friends and veterans in our community. There are so many valuable lessons to be learned and collected. As a community, I encourage you to get involved and help secure these heroes' stories.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary