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For more information, contact: Audry Ricketts (South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs) at 605-773-8242 or audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

SD Department of Veterans Affairs
Secretary Zimmerman October 2018 Column

Ghosts, Goblins, and Ghouls!

As soon as that first glimmer of autumn sparks, it occurs. The Halloween decorating begins and pumpkins, cornstalks, hay bales, scarecrows, witches, ghosts, goblins, and ghouls are everywhere. It's a tradition that most of us enjoy. But for some veterans, it's a reminder of the ghosts, ghouls, and goblins they live with every day.

Ghosts, ghouls, and goblins our veterans deal with every day might include: flashbacks, PTSD, survival guilt, chemical exposures, rape, harassment, mental illness, or physical injuries.

If you ask a veteran what serving was all about, you'll get as many different answers as the variety of treats that trick-or-treaters get. Always help them remember they are not alone. Listen patiently, offer encouragement and remind them that there are resources to help them.

Connecting veterans with resources to help them is the best treat that you can give them. Here are just a few of the numerous resources to assist veterans and their families:

- National Call Center for Homeless Veterans
<https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/NationalCallCenter.asp>.
- Coaching into Care (<https://www.mirecc.va.gov/coaching/>), a VA telephone service to educate, support, and empower family members and friends who are seeking care or services for a veteran.
- Center for Women Veterans (<https://www.va.gov/womenvet/resources/index.asp>).
- VA Mental Health services are provided at VA Medical Centers, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, Vet Centers, and mobile Vet Centers. Additional resource tools can be found at: (<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/VAMentalHealthGroup.asp>).
- Behavioral Health Services (<http://dss.sd.gov/behavioralhealth/>).
- Veterans Crisis Line for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 800-273-8255 and press 1.
- Primary care providers.
- County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers - located in all 66 counties and on all nine reservations --- <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>

- South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs - 605.773.3269 or check us out on the web: (vetaffairs.sd.gov).

A wound gets worse when it's neglected. Everyday we have signs and messages that inspire us. We need to take the time to notice the signs and put them to use.

Don't let veterans' past skeletons control their todays and tomorrows. By reaching out you can help veterans through a difficult time.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs