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SD Department of Veterans Affairs
Secretary Zimmerman September 2017 Column

REAPING OUR HARVEST

For centuries, the arrival of autumn has been celebrated at the end of the growing season, commemorating all the hard work. It is an opportunity to look back and see what has been accomplished and what lies ahead for us.

A full cornucopia is a good sign of the bounty of harvest. In looking at what our team has accomplished from planting through harvest this season; I'd say our cornucopia is bursting. With a little germination, we grew our day-to-day goals of obtaining the maximum benefits for our veterans and their families. We supported and assisted war time and peace time veterans as well as reached out to educate, reintegrate, and facilitate the claims for those who have recently served.

Our outreach efforts yielded great results. The Department consistently put forth significant effort to enhance and expand its already extensive outreach operations. In August, we had the honor to address veterans at the Veterans Day at the State Fair and the Healing Wall ceremony in Chamberlain, as well as participate in numerous screenings of "The Vietnam War," the new 10-part documentary film series. We honored 52 South Dakota veterans for their service in Taiwan and awarded them the Republic of China mutual defense commemorative badge.

Our education team assisted veterans to secure all of their educational benefits, as well as enlist them in the on-the-job training and apprenticeship programs.

Our team at Michael J Fitzmaurice Veterans Home embodied the mission to honor and serve our heroes by providing high quality care in a setting that promotes dignity, independence, and a home like environment.

Fall brings many colors to our world in South Dakota. These very same colors play a role in the lives of our service members – ribbons, awards, medals, dress uniforms, daily uniforms, physical training uniforms, and vehicles for the environment they are sent to fight in. Colors are why we stand at ceremonies, games, and at our goodbye to our heroes at their last rights. Colors are an integral part of service to our country and our red, white and blue flag we fight for.

Fall is a time to reap the benefits of our harvest, and enjoy the rich brown, yellow, and red leaves scattered about. It's also a great time to remember and honor our prisoners

of war and our missing in action. Governor Daugaard has designated September 15 as National POW/MIA Recognition Day in South Dakota. They suffered the horrors of being a prisoner of war and those whose fates were never accounted for. They are our heroes, please honor them.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs