



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



GOVERNOR HOSTS BILL SIGNING REENACTMENT

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs was honored to be a part of Governor Kristi Noem’s bill signing reenactment for Medal of Honor Day in South Dakota.

Moving forward, the twenty-fifth day of March will be known as Medal of Honor Recognition Day and will be observed in this state as a working holiday.

South Dakota’s only living “Medal of Honor” recipient Michael J. Fitzmaurice participated in the bill signing, along with legislators and SDDVA Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard.

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SDNG WORKING WITH NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

The South Dakota National Guard’s Army Aviation Support Facility (AASF) and seven soldiers from the 109th Engineer Battalion partnered with the National Park Service to remove fallen trees and debris around Mount Rushmore National Memorial.

“It’s a project and partnership that has been in the works for some time and we were glad to be able to safely remove the downed trees. The alternative would be a burn, and it’s just a higher risk to the national memorial that we can avoid,” said CWO3 Anton Oerlline.

The AASF provided support with the use of a HH-60M Blackhawk for the airlift mission that removed three loads of fallen trees and debris around Mt. Rushmore.

“We sincerely appreciated the outstanding service and dedication that the SDNG demonstrated in completing the haul mission,” said Mount Rushmore National Memorial Superintendent Michelle Wheatley. “We are honored to have had the opportunity to work with this

team.”

The AASF utilized the use of a heli-basket to support the lift operation.

“Mt. Rushmore is a major monument in South Dakota and the United States, so it is important that we maintain, respect it, keep it clean, and be good stewards,” said SFC Shawn Dempsey, 109th combat engineer and project coordinator lead for the unit.

The SDNG remains a ready force of citizen-warriors; and partnerships like these are vital to the community and provide valuable training opportunities for the soldiers and airmen.



SDDVA TEAMS PURPLED UP

SDDVA's Benefits Division in Pierre and the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home "purpled up" last week in support of our resilient military kids. There's an emphasis in United States military culture on "the total force", the "whole person concept" and similarly-themed philosophies that hold that troops, their families, and their extended families are more than the sum of their parts. The notion of the "total force" should rightfully include families as they are the lifeline between military service (especially overseas) and individual officers or enlisted members. With that in mind, former Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger established the

Month of the Military Child as a Department of Defense-wide commemoration in 1986.

Why Purple?

Purple indicates that all branches of the military are supported. All the service colors are represented including Air Force blue, Army green, Navy blue, Marine red, Space Force blue, and Coast Guard blue; said to combine for the mutual benefit of all into the color purple.



WHAT'S BREWING IN DAY AND MCPHERSON COUNTIES

Last week the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs team participated in the Day County "What's Brewing" event in



Webster. A special shout out to Day County VSO Jeff Nelson and Assistant Marcia Solberg for their reach out to veterans. There were over 100 in attendance at this event.



During this "brewing" event, our SDDVA team addressed questions about veteran's benefits; including compensation, education, pension, healthcare, burial, state veterans cemetery, state veterans home, and the Pact Act of 2022.



Joining VSO Nelson on the stage were Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, MJFSVH Director Chuck Johnson, SD Veterans Cemetery Director Erin Brown, and Field Service Officer Guy Arnold.

Former Day County VSO Kevin Bohn was also in attendance.



Continued on next page

WHAT'S BREWING (CONTINUED)

This week our team traveled to Eureka for the McPherson County "What's Brewing" program and had over 40 veterans/spouses in attendance.



Special thanks to VSO Samantha Boshard for all her efforts in securing a great crowd.

SDDVA's Secretary Greg Whitlock, Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard, Field Service Officer Kevin Bowen, Claims Manager Brett Dickerson and Cemetery Director Erin Brown provided briefings.

Former McPherson County VSO Curt Pfeifle joined the group.

These events are great opportunities for the Department to visit with veterans and hear about the challenges they might be experiencing first-hand. As the advocate for South Dakota veterans, we need to know what challenges our veterans and their families are facing.

The schedule for remaining "What's Brewing" events is:

May 7—Pavilion in McIntosh at 10:00 am (MT)

May 9—American Legion Post 6 in Gregory at 5:00 pm (CT)

May 21—VFW Post 791 in Yankton at 10:00 am (CT).



GREGORY COUNTY SEE WHAT'S BREWING

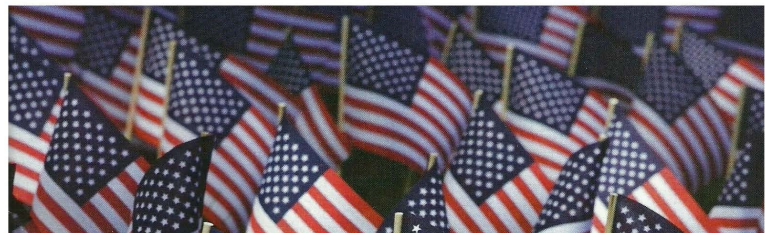
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a “Coffee and Conversation” program in Gregory. This program is in partnership with Gregory County Veterans Service Officer Dale Reber. The department welcomes the opportunity to visit one-on-one with veterans and see what’s brewing!

The “What’s Brewing” program will be held Thursday, May 9, at the American Legion Post 6 Alfred Hutchinson (223 Main Street). Dinner starts at 5:00 pm and the “What’s Brewing” conversation starts at 5:30 pm.

“What’s Brewing’ is a great opportunity for us to visit with veterans and hear about the challenges they might be experiencing first-hand. These programs also allow us the opportunity to speak with them about new benefits and services,” said SDDVA Secretary Greg Whitlock. “As the advocates for South Dakota veterans, we need to hear about the things our veterans are facing. We walk among veterans every day, and yet we may not even realize the magnitude of their sacrifices to serve our country.”

The SDDVA team and CVSO Reber will address questions about veteran’s benefits including compensation, education, pension, healthcare, burial, state veterans cemetery, and state veterans home.

We encourage veterans to join us if they can. As always, they can reach our SDDVA team at 605.333.6869, or they can locate their county or tribal veterans service officer by visiting <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>.



**Veterans,
See
What’s
Brewing!**



We invite all veterans to join us for a
“Veterans Dinner and Networking.”
 Free dinner while you chat with new and old friends alike and
 learn more about veterans benefits from the
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.
 Thursday—May 9, 2024
 5:00 pm Dinner /5:30 pm Conversation
 American Legion Post 6 Alfred Hutchinson
 (223 Main Street—Gregory)
 Please RSVP by May 5th by calling 605-830-0131




VETERANS RESOURCE FAIR



The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs participated in the Sioux Falls VA Veterans Resource Fair this week in Sioux Falls.

SDDVA Field Service Officer DJ Montreal and Minnehaha County Veterans Service Officer Tyler Grotewold manned the SDDVA booth.

The Fair afforded veterans the opportunity to learn more about the PACT Act, healthcare benefits, and advanced care planning.



STATE VETERANS HOME UPDATE



Patty Asmus and her granddaughter delivered “worry worms” to the residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home this week.

Worries and fears can be like worms sometimes – wiggly and hard to catch! Attached to each worm was this message for the veterans — I’m your little worry worm. Keep me close, keep me near. When a worry pops in your head, hold me tight and whisper in my ear. I will take away your worry, so, you have nothing to fear.



It’s been said that “life is like a banana split, once it’s gone, it’s gone. But always remember how sweet and wonderful it was until the very end.”

A big shout out to the Custer VFW Post and Auxiliary for serving delicious banana splits this week to the residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. What a welcome treat!





SATURDAY, JUNE 15th 11am - 3pm

PRIZES • GIFT CARDS • BAR TABS • COSTUME COMPETITION
AT ALL YOUR FAVORITE DOWNTOWN SIOUX FALLS BARS



REGISTER TODAY! • DON'T MISS OUT ON THE FUN!
4 PERSON TEAMS • \$120 PER TEAM
ALL MEMBERS MUST BE 21 LIMITED NUMBER OF TEAMS

REGISTER ONLINE AT [EVENTBRITE.COM](https://www.eventbrite.com), SEARCH FOR SIOUX FALLS PARS AND PUBS

This event takes your regular old pub crawl and combines it with mini golf to make an exciting and fun social event that we call Pars and Pubs. Teams of 4 will go from bar to bar, playing a total of 9 challenging and fun custom made mini golf holes. All bars will be downtown within walking distance. Costumes are encouraged, but not required. There will be a prize for the best team costume, so get creative and have fun with it! There will also be prizes for best team score, worst team score, and plenty of individual hole prizes along the way. The event will start at 11:00am and end at 3:00pm. At that point, teams will take their scorecards to Wiley's, where we will hand out awards at 3:30pm. Teams that are present at Wiley's will have the opportunity to win door prizes as well.

 [Eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) • Search Sioux Falls Pars and Pubs

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**A PORTION OF
THE PROCEEDS
WILL GO TO**



**MIDWEST
HONOR FLIGHT**



MINGO

(MUSIC BINGO)

FRIDAY, APRIL 26

6:30 PM - 9:30 PM



**HAY CAMP BREWING CO.
601 KANSAS CITY ST
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**\$5 MINGO CARDS
\$25 FREEDOM BUNDLES
\$1/PINT DONATED BACK**



PROCEEDS BENEFIT



**MIDWEST
HONOR FLIGHT**

midwesthonorflight.org



SCAN TO DONATE

PROUD EVENT SPONSOR



UPCOMING EVENTS

- Apr 19—Mogen's Heroes Dance—El Riad Shrine—(510 S. Phillips)—Sioux Falls—6:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 23—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pennington County Conference Room—(321 Kansas City St)—Rapid City—10:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
- Apr 24—SDDVA Mini Conference—Post 8 AL Cabin—(520 S. Pierre St)—Pierre—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 24—Operation Chow Line—Vermillion Eagles Club—(114 W. Main St)—Vermillion—4:00—7:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 25—SDDVA Mini Conference—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 26-27—DAV State Convention—Deadwood Lodge
- Apr 27—Operation Chow Line—Vern Eide Marine—(4501 E. Arrowhead Pkwy)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—1:00 pm (CT)
- May 6-18—Fareway Round Up Campaign at participating stores
- May 7—Corson County What's Brewing—Pavilion—(Main and First Ave)—McIntosh—10:00 am (MT)
- May 7—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 18—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- May 9—Gregory County What's Brewing—American Legion Post 6—(223 Main Street)—Gregory—5:00 pm (CT)
- May 21—Yankton County What's Brewing—VFW Post 791—(209 Cedar St)—Yankton—10:00 am (CT)
- May 21—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 19—Welcome Home Ceremony—Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- May 27—SDDVA Memorial Day Program—SD Veterans Cemetery—12:00 noon (CT)
- Jun 5—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 20—Welcome Home Ceremony—Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- Jun 7—8—VFW State Conference—Holiday Inn—Spearfish
- Jun 14—Midwest Honor Flight Day of Sweetness—Chick-fil-A—(4005 W. 41st St)—Sioux Falls—7:00 am —10:00 pm (CT)
- Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre
- Jun 30—Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls—Registration—1:00 pm/Ride Begins at 2:30 pm (CT)
- Jul 15—6th Annual Tee it up for the Troops Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—Arrowhead Country Club—(3675 Sheridan Lake Road)—Rapid City—7:15 am (MT)
- Jul 17—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 17—(802 S. Main St)—Aberdeen
- Aug 1—2—South Dakota Suicide Prevention Conference—Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls
- Aug 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 791—(209 S. Cedar)—Yankton
- Aug 26—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—The Barrel House—(4701 E. 54th St)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—8:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 29—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair—Northwest Energy Freedom Stage—Huron
- Aug 29—Sep 2—SD State Fair—Huron

(Continued)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sep 3—5—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls
 Sep 18—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Rapid City
 Oct 12—Midwest Honor Flight Third Annual Elvis Night—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—
 Sioux Falls
 Oct 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post—(1229 Western Ave)—Brookings
 Nov 9—Fifth Annual Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair We've Got Your Six—Sturgis
 Nov 18—Wreaths Across America Fundraiser—The Barrel House—(4701 E. 54th St)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—8:00
 pm (CT)
 Nov 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV—(1519 W. 51st St)—Sioux Falls
 Nov 20—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Sioux Falls
 Nov 21—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Watertown
 Nov 22—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Rapid City
 Nov 23—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Pierre
 Dec 3—Governor's Budget Address—1:00 pm
 Dec 14—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—
 11:00 am (CT)

2025 Events

- Jan 14—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm
 Jan 14—Legislative Session starts
 Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Pierre
 Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
 Jun 12—15—VFW State Convention—Ramkota—Pierre
 Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
 Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—
 11:00 am (CT)

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