



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



WELCOME HOME CEREMONY SCHEDULED FOR 112TH AVIATION

A welcome home ceremony is scheduled for the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 1, Company B, 1/112th Aviation on Saturday, February 10th, at 10:00 am (MT).

The event is being held at the Aviation Readiness Center located next to the Rapid City Regional Airport (4750 Guard Road).

The public is encouraged to attend the event as over 20 soldiers with the Rapid City-based unit returns from a year-long federal deployment in support of Southwest Border Operations.

The 112th Aviation was split between two separate locations and provided aerial surveillance and support to Customs and Border Patrol agents.

Planned speakers for the ceremony include Gov. Kristi Noem, Maj. Gen. Mark Morrell, SDNG adjutant general, and Capt. Quincy Oliver, 112th Commander.

The Soldiers were deployed from October 2022 through October 2023.

Table of Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|-------|
| SDNG Recognitions | 2-3 |
| Veterans Never Forgotten | 4 |
| SDDVA Update..... | 5 |
| VA App..... | 6-8 |
| MJFSVH Update..... | 9 |
| American Legion Fundraiser | 10 |
| Upcoming Events..... | 11-12 |



SDNG PRESENTS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARDS

The South Dakota National Guard presented three awards for distinguished service to retired service members, a family, and an employer during the annual SDNG Dining Out held at the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Pierre, Thursday, February 1, 2024.

The annual event reunites SDNG soldiers, airmen, legislators, and guests from across the state for a formal evening to honor the organization's history and to recognize achievements from the past year.

The awards presented include recognition of outstanding volunteerism by a SDNG family, outstanding support from a South Dakota Reserve Component employer, and a public servant for their service and support of the SDNG mission.

The event keynote speakers included South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem and SDNG Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Mark Morrell.

The Williamson Militiaman Award recipient was Chief Warrant Officer 5 (Ret) Terry Beckler of Aberdeen. The Williamson Militiaman Award was established in 1987 by Maj. Gen. Ronald F. Williamson. The award recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-soldier or airman as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard, and the defense of the country.

Beckler joined the SDNG in 1986 during his college sophomore year and served in the 147th Army Band. Beckler initially joined as a drummer and held several positions before being assigned as the 147th Army Band commander in 1998 and held that position for 24 years. He earned several awards during his career to include Warrant Officer of the Year and the Colonel George S. Howard Citation of Musical Excellence. Beckler concluded his career as Chief of Army National Guard Bands. He retired from the SDNG in October 2022.

Beckler earned a bachelor's degree in South Dakota State University, a master's from the University of Northern Colorado, and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. Beckler is a professor of music at Northern State University in Aberdeen. He volunteers his time in assisting students at area schools and mentoring students pursuing a career in music.



SDNG AWARDS (CONTINUED)

The Sterling Company was awarded the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Pro Patria Award. The Pro Patria Award is presented annually to one South Dakota employer who provides exceptional support to national defense through leadership practices and personnel policies that support employees serving in the National Guard and Reserve.

Sterling is headquartered in North Sioux City and owned by Brad and Jean Moore. They have over 300 employees, with over 160 working in the North Sioux City area.

Sterling was nominated by Maj. Chris Barondeau as he stated, "Sterling values the leadership, work ethic, and values that the National Guard and Reserve bring to the table. They provided me outstanding support during my deployment and when I returned from the Horn of Africa." ESGR Representative Lona Christensen presented the award to the Moore's and thanked them for their support of all Soldiers and Airmen.



The Adjutant General's Family Award recipient is Chief Master Sgt. (Ret) Bruce and Faye Lee. The award recognizes family members who support their soldiers and airmen in a truly exemplary manner while managing family and careers during their military career.

Bruce and Faye have been essential members of the Family Volunteer Group for the Air Guard for the last 12 years and are the backbone of the family programs. Bruce retired from the 114th Fighter Wing and they continued serving as Key Volunteers for the 114th Operations Group, part of the 114th Fighter Wing in Sioux Falls. They volunteered over 240 hours in 2023, supporting airmen with multiple events and fundraising for the Family Readiness Group.



The Lee's were instrumental in supporting Operation KUDOS (Kids Understanding Deployment Operations). KUDOS provided forty children the opportunity to experience the different events that airmen experience prior to deploying. They wore protective equipment, 'qualified' with paintball guns, and were exposed to the different specialties that it takes to deploy an Air Force Wing.

The Lee's also volunteer at the St. Francis House and the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance and are members of the St. Lambert Knights of Columbus.

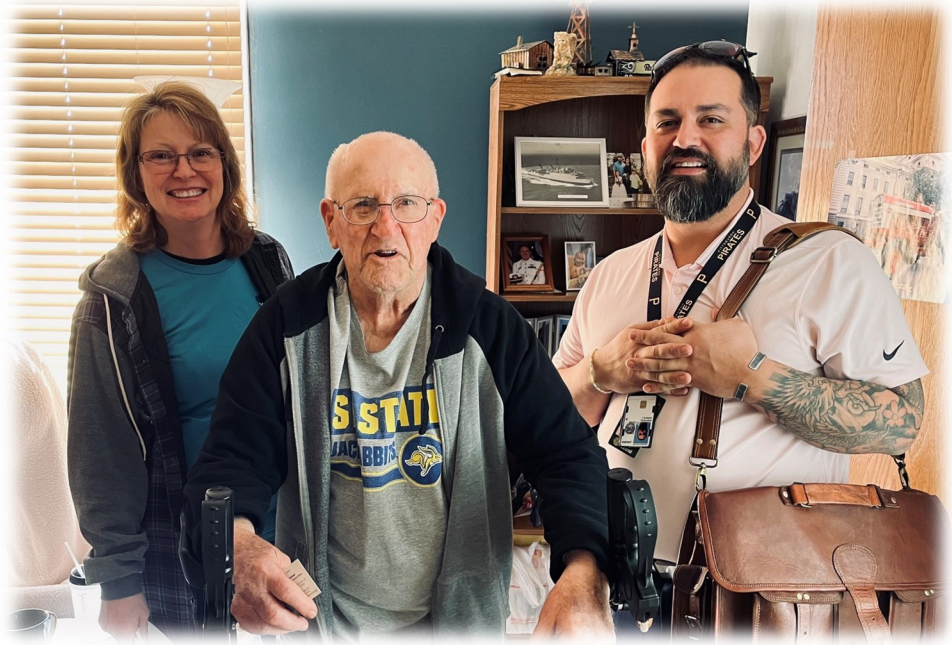
VETERANS NEVER FORGOTTEN

In November of 2023, SDDVA launched a new outreach program, Operation VNF (Veterans Never Forgotten). VNF affords us the opportunity to communicate with our veterans in long term care facilities and assist them with benefits.

This past week, SDDVA Field Service Officer DJ Montreal and Union County Veterans Service Officer Lisa Schenzel

visited facilities in Alcester, Beresford, Dakota Dunes, and Elk Point.

VNF also affords our team a chance to hear stories from veterans and their families and learn more about their sacrifices.



SDDVA UPDATE

SDDVA's Jeri Smith was randomly selected after completing a survey distributed to State of South Dakota employees participating in the BISON (Business Information System for Operational Needs) project with the South Dakota Bureau of Finance and Management.

Project BISON is a multi-year implementation of a modern Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to replace the State's current financial systems, of which some are more than 35 years old. The lives of our critical systems infrastructure have been extended numerous times through ongoing investments, which has allowed the State to continue meeting its obligations, however the systems are fast becoming obsolete.

Following a feasibility study in 2022, Governor Noem requested the introduction of Senate Bill 23 during the 2023 Legislative Session. After receiving wide bipartisan support, the bill was signed into law.

The survey in which Jeri participated in, requested feedback from employees who watched demonstrations by software vendors the State is considering for the new ERP system. BFM reports that em-

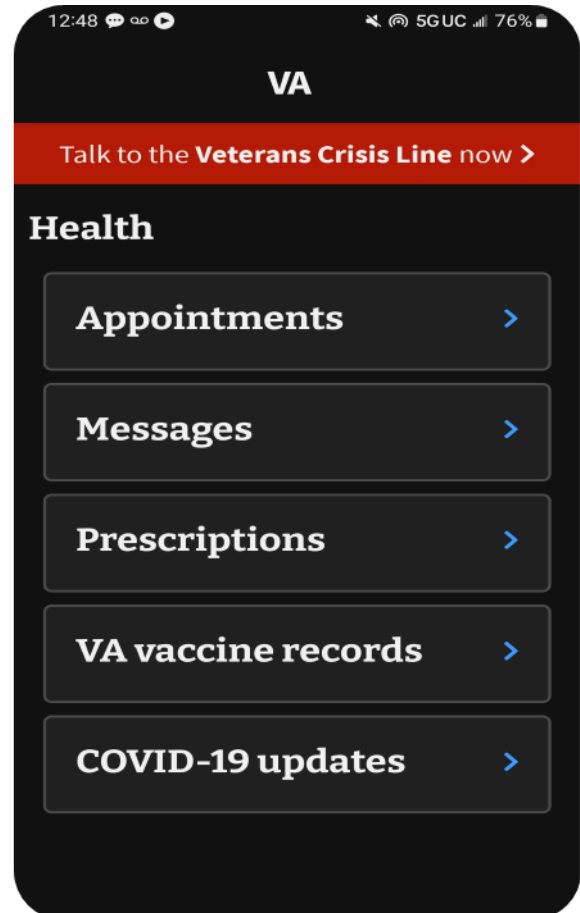
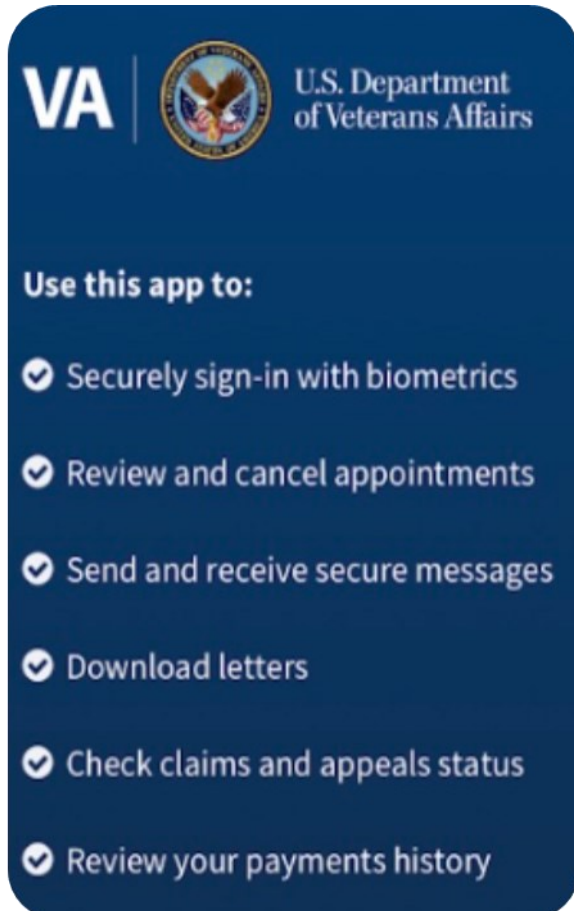


ployee feedback is critical throughout the project to gain input from everyday users.

Project BISON will transform the way South Dakota conducts its financial business for decades to come. The new system is tentatively planned to go live in Fiscal Year 2027.

Pictured with Smith (L to R) are Jason Lutz (BFM) and SDDVA's Deputy Secretary Aaron Polard.

VA APP



SDDVA has received this information from Sioux Falls VA Health Care System Patient Advocate Don Kranz. Here is a quick little guide to the new VA App. This can be shared with all veterans with a smart phone and MyHealtheVet account. Travel Pay is also coming to this app this summer.

Veterans can use their phone's built-in security features—like fingerprint and face recognition to securely access their information.

Healthcare tools can be used to refill and track VA prescriptions, send and receive secure messages from VA health care team, review appointments and add them to their calendar, and get vaccine records.

Benefits tools afford the ability to check disability ratings, review claim or appeal status, submit evidence for claim or appeal, and download VA letters.

Payment tools allow veterans to review payments that have been sent to them and update their direct deposit information.

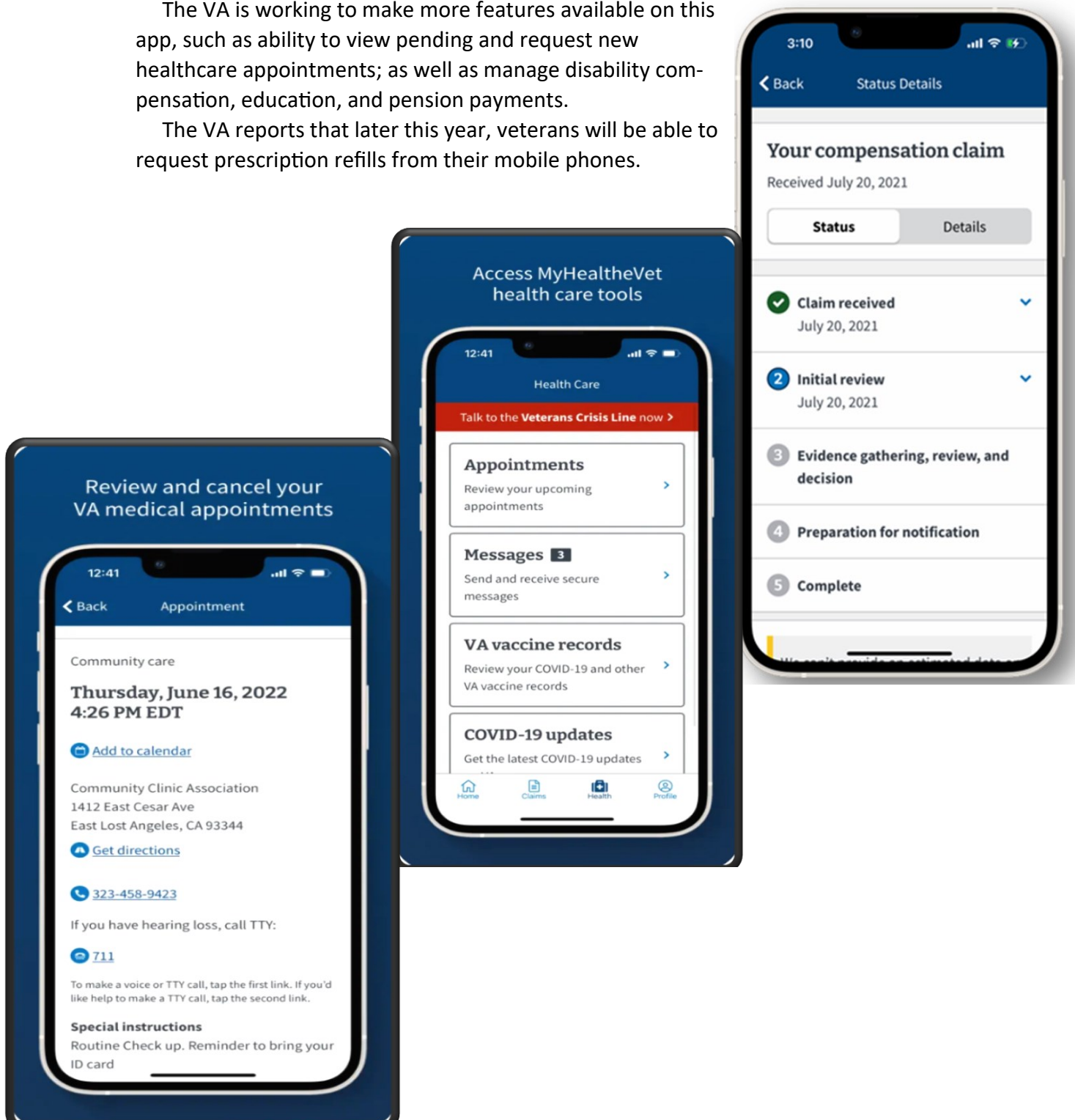
There is also the VA facility locator feature, quick access to VA Crisis Line, and the ability to show proof of veteran status.

[Click here to view an informational video.](#)

VA APP (CONTINUED)

The VA is working to make more features available on this app, such as ability to view pending and request new healthcare appointments; as well as manage disability compensation, education, and pension payments.

The VA reports that later this year, veterans will be able to request prescription refills from their mobile phones.



VA: Health and Benefits



Manage your VA health care, benefits, and **payments** from your mobile phone.

With the VA: Health and Benefits app, you can access:



Health Care Tools

- Refill and track your VA prescriptions.
- Send and receive secure messages from your VA health care team.
- Review appointments and add them to your calendar.
- Access your VA vaccination records.



Benefits Tools

- Check your disability rating.
- Submit evidence for your claim or appeal.
- Review your claim or appeal status.
- Download common VA benefits letters.



Payment Tools

- Review payments VA has sent you.
- Update your direct deposit information.



Facility Locator

- Find VA facilities and services near you.



Veterans Crisis Line

- Get quick access to the Veterans Crisis Line.

Get started today!

Download the app via the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Connected Care

Last Updated: April 2023

MJFSVH UPDATE

Please join the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs in welcoming two new members to our team at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

Julie Schaffner is our new social worker. She is originally from New Jersey. She and her family moved to Hot Springs six years ago.

Julie and her husband served in the U. S. Army and her dad retired from the Air Force. She has worked in different fields in social services and as an addiction counselor.

Family time is important to Julie; and she and her family love all that South Dakota has to offer for outdoor activities.



Julie Schaffner



Brittany Bartholomew

Brittany Bartholomew has also joined our team and will be working in the accounting office. She is a California native that moved to South Dakota in 2010. She has served as a direct support professional for individuals with disabilities, a CNA, a correctional officer, and has worked with DSS and DOT. She loves people, animals, and hiking.

Please join us in welcoming Brittany and Julie to our team.

To learn more about joining our team at the Home, we encourage you to visit our careers page on our website— [SD Department of Veterans Affairs](#).

JUST BECAUSE IT'S TIME TO DANCE



TABLE FOR 8 ON DANCE FLOOR = \$500

ONE TIER UP TABLE FOR 8 = \$360

ONE TIER UP TABLE FOR 6 = \$270

GENERAL ADMISSION
ADVANCED \$15 / AT THE DOOR \$25

FRIDAY
APRIL 19 6-10:30

At El Riad Shrine - 510 S. Phillips in Sioux Falls

AN EVENT BENEFITTING American Legion Post 15

 **AMERICAN
LEGION**
Veterans Strengthening America

Tickets available for purchase with cash, check or most credit card
at the American Legion Post 15 Office located at 1700 West Russell in Sioux Falls.
CALL 605-336-3470 FOR MORE INFO

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 10-11—Yellow Ribbon Post Mob for 1/112th Aviation—Rapid City
Feb 16—18—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Deadwood
Mar 25—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—Drive to Fly @ Great Shots—(2505 W. Benson Road)—Sioux Falls—2:00—5:00 pm (CT)
Mar 26—Yankton County What's Brewing—VFW Post 791—(209 Cedar Street)—Yankton—10:00 am (CT)
Apr 4—Brule County What's Brewing—Chamberlain Community Center—(112 N. Main Street)—Chamberlain—1:00 pm (CT)
Apr 5—Melissa Stockwell Program—South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls
Apr 12—Day County What's Brewing—VFW Post—(521 First Street West)—Webster—6:00 pm (CT)
Apr 16—McPherson County What's Brewing—Eureka School Multi Purpose Room—(805 10th Street)—Eureka—1:00 pm (CT)
Apr 17—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 1273—Rapid City—9:00 am (MT)
Apr 19—American Legion Post 215 Mogen's Heroes Dance—El Riad Shrine—(510 S. Phillips)—Sioux Falls—6:00 pm
Apr 26-27—DAV State Convention—Deadwood Lodge
May 7—Corson County What's Brewing—McIntosh Pavilion—(Main and First Avenue)—McIntosh—10:00 am (MT)
May 7—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 18—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Avenue)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
May 21—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 19—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Avenue)—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—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Avenue)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
Jun 7—8—VFW State Conference—Holiday Inn—Spearfish
Jun 14—Midwest Honor Flight Day of Sweetness—Sioux Falls Chick-fil-A—(4005 W. 41st Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 am—10:00 pm
Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre
Jun 30—Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride—South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—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—Aberdeen

(Continued)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 1—2—South Dakota Suicide Prevention Conference—Sioux Falls Convention Center
 Aug 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Yankton
 Aug 26—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—The Barrel House—(4701 E. 54th Street)—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
 Sep 3—5—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—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 Street)—Sioux Falls
 Oct 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—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 Street)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—8:00 pm (CT)
 Nov 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—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 14—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)

2025 Events

Jan 8—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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