



South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



SDDVA STAFF UPDATE

Last week, SDDVA's Steve Lund, Will Huffmon, and Erin Brown attended VFW National Accreditation Training in Annapolis, Maryland.

This is annual accreditation/recertification training, hosted by National VFW, brings new materials and law changes to the VSO's as well as hands-on training on claims work.

Special thanks to the VFW Department of South Dakota for their support of this training for our employees.



Erin Bultje

Caitlyn Engebretson and Erin Bultje join the SDDVA Sioux Falls Claims Office team.

Erin Bultje is the new claims examiner. Bultje, an Army Veteran with five years of active duty service, served overseas as part of the 1st Armored Division out of Wiesbaden, Germany. After her tour of duty, Bultje received her Associates of Arts degree in Radio/Television Broadcasting and then her Bachelors of Science in Business Management.

"Working for our veterans is a dream job for me,"

said Erin Bultje. Erin's email address is erin.bultje@va.gov.

Caitlyn Engebretson, veterans service officer, was born and raised in the Black Hills and just recently moved to the Sioux Falls area. Engebretson is entering her eighth year with the South Dakota Air National Guard. She is a lifelong and die-hard Red Sox fan and a general sports fanatic. Caitlyn is currently finishing a degree with South Dakota State University.

Caitlyn's email address is: caitlyn.engebretson@va.gov.



Caitlyn Engebretson

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VETERANS HOME UPDATE

During a recent resident's council meeting at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home, Clarence Jerke was recognized for his service to this great country.

Director of Operations Randy Meyers read a letter from the President of the Republic of Korea as Superintendent Brad Richardson pinned the Korean Service Medal on Jerke. The Korean Service Medal was awarded by the Republic of Korea in 2000, 50 years after the start of the conflict, as a way to thank the American Servicemen and women for their service.

This week, SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman had the honor to commend Candace Shelton, RN/ Special Care Unit Supervisor at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home, for her life saving efforts to a volunteer worker that was assisting in her unit.

She was recognized for her quick response utilizing the AED. Candace was proud of the dedication her entire team demonstrated and applauded their efforts.

Zimmerman presented Candace with one of his coins and thanked the entire staff for their unending commitment to our heroes.



VVA AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman had the distinct honor to be a part of the Vietnam Veterans of American (VVA) scholarship awarding ceremony in Rapid City this week.

The VVA is proud to provide these scholarships to cadets who are serving their country and are future leaders in the military.

VVA scholarships provide recipients the opportunity to develop their skills professionally, while furthering their knowledge.

This program is just one of the many ways the VVA enhances the lives of our young people and our veterans.



Cadet Justen Gelling, VVA member Don Hix and SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman

TOP SD SOLDIERS COMPETE IN BEST WARRIOR COMPETITION

The top eight soldiers in the South Dakota Army National Guard competed in the state's Best Warrior Competition in Watertown, April 17-18, to be named the Soldier or Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

Soldiers compete in a variety of events such as a timed five-mile ruck march, weapons marksmanship, obstacle course, land navigation, written exams and memory tests. In the end, the soldier and NCO with the highest overall scores are named Soldier and NCO of the Year respectively.

The competition pushes soldiers out of their comfort zones, challenging them mentally and physically, with a non-stop



U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Randy Pryor, a member of the SD Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment, Officer Candidate School, earned the title of NCO of the Year.



S. Army Spc. Patrick Moran, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 82nd Civil Support Team, Rapid City, S.D., earned the title of Soldier of the Year

schedule of basic warrior skills, said Sgt. Maj. Phillip Lakner, a competition facilitator. In addition to warrior tasks and battle drills, course facilitators add pressure and stress to the competition. One way facilitators add stress is to keep the competitors moving from one event to the next without knowing what will be expected of them.

Following the ruck march, competitors were tested on the weapons range with the M-9 pistol and M-16 rifle before moving onto an obstacle course and other timed-events until 1 a.m. Later that morning, competitors reported to a review board, where they were tested on a range of Army knowledge.

Once scores were tallied, Spc. Patrick Moran, of Rapid City, with the 82nd Civil Support Team out of Ellsworth Air Force Base, was announced as the 2015 Soldier of the Year and Sgt. 1st Class Randy Pryor with 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment, Officer Candidate School, in Sturgis was named NCO of the Year.

Pryor and Moran both said it will be an honor to represent South Dakota at the Region 6 Best Warrior competition at Camp Guernsey in Wyoming May. They will compete against soldiers from Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota to earn the Region 6 Best Warrior titles and advance to the national competition.

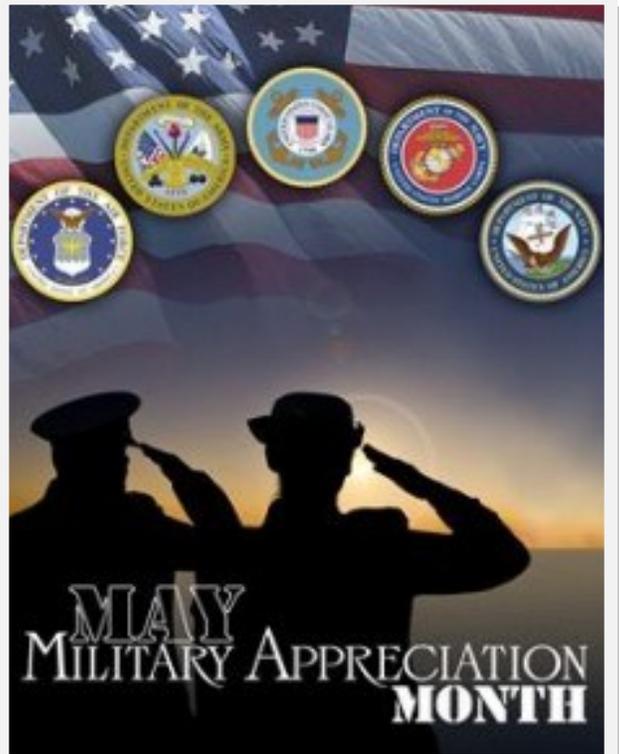
NATIONAL MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

At the encouragement of the South Dakota Department of the Military, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed May as "National Military Appreciation Month," a time for all to honor, remember, recognize and appreciate those who have served in the past and those now serving, as well as their families.

National Military Appreciation Month includes: Loyalty Day on May 1, Victory in Europe Day on May 9, Military Spouse Appreciation Day on May 8, Armed Forces Day on May 16 and Memorial Day on May 25.

These days provide an opportunity to learn more about military members and the families who have given of themselves to support and defend the principles we hold dear.

"Less than one percent of Americans currently serve in the armed forces to preserve the rights and freedom that we all enjoy," said Adjutant General Timothy Reisch, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of the Military. "May is the month that we recognize the patriotism, service and sacrifice of all military members, both past and present. We also recognize our military families who contribute in very meaningful ways as well."



DAVIDSON ADDRESSES KOREAN WAR VETERANS

Jessica Davidson, Davison County VSO, recently had the opportunity to address the Korean War Veterans Association.

During her presentation she explained the role of the VSO, who they represent and what services that are available to veterans and their family.

These events afford all of us the opportunity to connect with our veterans, to emphasize the benefits that CTVSOs afford our veterans and to assist them with any specific issues they might have. It's all about making the connection.



SKOGEN NAMED SD GUARD LIEUTENANT OF THE YEAR

The South Dakota National Guard announced a Brookings teacher as the 2015 recipient of the Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award, naming him the SDNG's Lieutenant of the Year.

First Lt. Kale Skogen, of White, who currently serves as the assistant operations officer in the Headquarters Company of the 153rd Engineer Battalion in Huron, was selected as the most exceptional lieutenant after competing against lieutenants from each of the SDNG's major commands.

The award was presented by the National Guard Association of South Dakota at its annual officers' conference in Huron, April 18.

"It was a great honor for me to be able to represent my battalion and brigade well," Skogan said. "I feel privileged to have been chosen among such tough competition and quality lieutenants that we have across the state."

Skogen, who has been a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard for nine years, first enlisted as a carpentry and masonry specialist in the 155th Engineer Company. While attending college at South Dakota State University, he enrolled in the ROTC program and commissioned in May 2011.

He served as a platoon leader (2011-2012) and an executive officer (2012-2014) in the 211th Engineer Company before moving into his current position.

In addition to his responsibilities in the National Guard, Skogen instructs at Brookings High School, where he teaches students the various aspects of residential construction and

woodworking skills. Throughout the year, he also operates New Horizons Construction, a construction company and snow removal business.

"I'm thankful for everything the South Dakota National Guard has done for me - in shaping my character and leadership," Skogan said. "Hopefully those characteristics have in turn benefited my community as well."

Skogen has volunteered on the Fire Department of White for the past three years and is a large advocate of the Habitat for Humanity Program within the Brookings area.

The Lt. Col. John J. Steele Award was established in 1968 to annually recognize the most outstanding lieutenant in the South Dakota National Guard. Selection is based on exceptional qualities of leadership, values and performance.

Other officers representing their major command for this year's award competition were 1st Lt. Edna Knutson, 109th Regional Support Group; 1st Lt. Adam Punt, 114th Fighter Wing, and 1st Lt. Justin Warfel, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).



On hand to present the award were Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG's adjutant general, and Lt. Col. Steven Stenomsma, president of the National Guard Association of South Dakota

HOEY NAMED SD GUARD WARRANT OFFICER OF THE YEAR

The South Dakota National Guard named a Sturgis man as the 2015 recipient of the CW4 Michael F. O'Connor Warrant Officer of the Year Award.

Chief Warrant Officer 2 Terry Hoey, who currently serves as commander of the 216th Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team), was selected as the most exceptional warrant officer after competing against warrant officers from each of the SDARNG's major commands.

The award was presented by the National Guard Association of South Dakota at its annual officers' conference in Huron, April 18.

"Being named the warrant officer of the year is extremely humbling," Hoey said. "I really feel that my soldiers and my staff, including the battalion staff, did all of the work. I simply followed the guidance that I was given."

Hoey, who has 21 years of military service, five as an active duty Marine and 17 in the South Dakota Army National Guard, manages both the 216th and 451st Firefighting Teams, a non-traditional command assignment for warrant officers.

"CW2 Hoey's leadership and dedication to this organization is reflected in the excellence of the firefighting teams," said Lt. Col. Michael Snow, commander of the 881st Troop Command. "His units are a cohesive group of highly motivated professionals. Under his leadership, they have proven themselves both at home and abroad."

Hoey deployed to Kuwait with the SDARNG's 155th Engineer Detachment from June 2002 to February 2003 as an electrician team leader. "When we were in Kuwait, five of us had the very unique opportunity to deploy from Kuwait to Djibouti, Africa," Hoey said. "So I spent three months in Djibouti as a team leader."

In addition to his responsibilities in the firefighting teams, Hoey works fulltime for the SDARNG's Training Site, where he manages facilities at Fort Meade, Sturgis and Belle Fourche.

"I can't wait to get back to drill so that I can personally thank each and every one of my soldiers in the 216th and 451st for helping make this happen," said Hoey. "It's a great honor to be part of such a cohesive team. "When my name was called I was completely stunned," Hoey said. "I knew how fierce the competition would be, because I know the other warrants that were boarded and they are extremely high caliber warrant officers."

Other warrant officers representing their major command for this year's award competition were Chief Warrant Officer 3 Wesley Walker, Joint Force Headquarters, and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Brent Simon, 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

The CW4 Michael F. O'Connor Award was established in 2000 to recognize the most outstanding South Dakota Army National Guard Warrant Officer of the past year. Criterion for the award is based on exceptional qualities of technical knowledge, leadership, dedication and initiative.



Upcoming Events

May 1-3—DAV Convention—Sioux Falls Holiday Inn City Centre
May 5—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sturgis (Veterans Club—868 Main Street) —10:00 am (MT)
May 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre (Post 8 American Legion—520 S. Pierre Street) —10:00 am
May 6—VABHHCS Veterans Town Hall—VFW Post 1273 (420 Main Street—Rapid City) - 5:00 pm
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sioux Falls (VA Regional Office) —9:00 am
May 23—VVA Chapter 959 Agent Orange Town Hall Forum—DAV Chapter 1 House—9:00 am—3:00 pm
May 23—9th Annual Greg Wagner Memorial Event—Alexandria—9:00 am
Jun. 18—SFVAHCS Veterans Town Hall—SFVAHCS Auditorium—5:00 pm
Jun. 18-21—VFW State Convention—Yankton, SD
Jun. 24—Black Hills Job Fair—Western Dakota Tech—Rapid City—12:30—5:00 pm (MT)
Jun.. 25-28—American Legion 97th Annual State Convention—Huron Crossroads Convention Center
Jul. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
Aug. 5-9—AVTT Traveling Vietnam Wall Comes to Sioux Falls (Sanford Pentagon Sports Complex)
Aug. 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre
Sept. 18—POW-MIA Ceremony—Sioux Falls
Oct. 9—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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