



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



DAVIDSON HITS THE GROUND RUNNING AND KNOCKS ONE OUT OF THE BALLPARK

Jessica Davidson, newly appointed Davison County Veterans Service Officer, stepped up to the plate and hit one out of the ball park.

Davidson was the guest speaker for the "Mitchell Lions Club". She used this opportunity to inform them on the benefits that are available to South Dakota's veterans. She addressed compensation, pension, VA healthcare, VA home loans, education, and burial benefits.

She reiterated why it is important to register DD 214's with the Register of Deeds and to safe guard this important document that is needed to secure benefits.

Davidson provided an overview of Operation RAV and talked about the next phase — Operation Ketchup. Davidson pledged her support to utilize out-reach projects in an effort to reach all veterans in Davison County.

Davidson was thankful SDDVA Field Officer Kevin Bowen had shared a power point presentation for her to use during this briefing. Jessica appreciates all that Bowen has done to assist her in transitioning into this position.



Inside this issue:

Cogdill Recognized by Wrestlers	2
SFVA Variety Show	2
MJFSVH Construction Progress	2
Hoekman Appointed to Senior Enlisted Position	3-4
Colman Egan Heroes Support Heroes	4
Volunteers Recognized for Service to National Guard, Reserve	5
Upcoming Events	6



COGDILL RECOGNIZED FOR HIS LEADERSHIP IN THE WORLD OF YOUTH SPORTS PROGRAMS

Recently Charles Cogdill, an Army veteran at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, was honored and recognized for the role he played in starting and growing the wrestling program at Hot Springs.

During the Hot Springs JV/Varsity wrestling triangular, Hot Springs head wrestling Coach Ray Ringstmeyer, read a 1967 article that highlighted Cogdill's leadership in securing and maintaining a great wrestling program.

Wrestlers one by one stepped up and thanked Charles for his leadership and shook his hand.



SIoux FALLS VA TO HOST 25TH ANNUAL VARIETY SHOW

The Sioux Falls Dept. of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System invites Sioux Falls area residents to the 25th annual VA Variety Show Saturday, February 14, 2015. Veterans of all ages and branches of the service, volunteers and VA staff will share their talents in performing arts including comedy, vocal music, skits, dance, and more.

This annual event was created by recreation therapy staff in 1990 to demonstrate creativity and talent have no boundaries.

The show takes place at 2:00 PM in the fourth floor auditorium. It is the finale of National Salute to Veteran Patients Week. There is no admission cost, and everyone is invited and encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served.

SDDVA DEPUTY SECRETARY POLLARD TOURS CONSTRUCTION SITE OF NEW VETERANS HOME

SDDVA Deputy Secretary Pollard was on site this week at the new state veterans home in Hot Springs. MJFSVH Superintendent Brad Richardson and State Veterans Service Officer Matt Steffen provided a very detailed tour of the construction site and gave Deputy Secretary Pollard an update on the construction progress.

Area C of the new building, which is the area furthest along, is being painted with most of the bathroom tile installed. The other areas continue to be framed, drywalled and painted as the contractors work their way across the building. The contractor has taken advantage of the warm weather and has made progress on paving the loop road and parking areas. The building envelope continues to progress with the siding, trimming and wood beams. The biomass building is also progressing well to enclose the equipment that has been set in place.



SD ARMY GUARD APPOINTS HOEKMAN TO SENIOR ENLISTED POSITION

The South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) appointed a Brandon man to the highest ranking enlisted position in the state during a change of responsibility ceremony Saturday, Feb. 7, in Pierre.

State Command Sgt. Maj. James Hoekman replaces State Command Sgt. Maj. Susan Shoe as the new state command sergeant major and will now serve as the assistant adjutant general's personal advisor on all enlisted matters for the Army Guard.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Hoekman has a wealth of knowledge and experience that he brings to the position," said Brig. Gen. Kevin Griese, assistant adjutant general of the SDARNG. "He has served in three major commands within our state. He holds himself to the highest of standards and is very passionate about serving in uniform. I look forward to working with him as he joins the command team for the SDARNG."

Hoekman becomes the ninth state command sergeant major since the position was first established in the state in 1975.

"The SDARNG has a history of great leadership and I will continue that history in this position," said Hoekman. "I am humbled to have the opportunity to take care of the soldiers in the South Dakota Army National Guard. "I will be a 360 degree leader," continued Hoekman. "I will lead south to the Soldiers under my care, I will lead north by influencing those with authority over me, I will lead east and west impacting my peers, but most importantly I will stay humble, yet vigilant, while ensuring my own moral compass needle is centered."

Shoe served in the position since February 2013 and retires with more than 25 years of military service – 16 of which was in the National Guard.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Shoe is one of the best noncommissioned officers I have ever worked with," said Griese, of Shoe's service. "She was without a doubt the right person, in the right place, at the right time. She did a tremendous job as the state command sergeant major for the SDARNG and will be truly missed."

Hoekman, who has over 29 years of service in the National Guard, will be responsible for assisting and advising Brig. Gen. Griese, as well as advising the state's senior enlisted leader, State Command Chief Master Sgt. James Welch, on all soldier issues that affect the enlisted and NCO Corps within the nearly 3,200 members of the Army Guard.

"We talk about getting back to the basics, and I believe if we all lived by the soldiers creed we would be in a very good place," said Hoekman. "It is a template for what to do. These principles define who soldiers are and who they aspire to become as individuals and as part of a team, the foundation of our organization."

Hoekman will also observe unit training in all 22 SDARNG communities, attend mobilization and demobilization events, ensure Soldier morale and wellbeing and make certain soldiers and their families know that all key leaders have their best interests at heart.



HOEKMAN (CONTINUED)

Hoekman enlisted into the SDARNG in December 1985 with the 200th Engineer Company as a combat engineer/bridge specialist and attended basic and advanced individual training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. He obtained secondary occupational specialties as a chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear specialist with the 200th and went on to serve as motor transport operator with the 1742nd Transportation Company in 1994.

He has served in nearly every key noncommissioned officer position from squad leader to command sergeant major.

In January 2006, he was selected as the first sergeant for the 727th Transportation Company until the unit's deactivation in September 2007. He then went on to serve as the first sergeant for the 740th Transportation Company. In April 2009, he was selected as the command sergeant major for the 139th Brigade Support Battalion followed by the 109th Regional Support Group in April 2012.

Hoekman's deployments include service with the 1742nd Transportation Company during Operation Iraqi Freedom from March 2003 to June 2004 and the 139th Brigade Support Battalion during Operation New Dawn in Iraq and Kuwait from June 2011 to April 2012.

Hoekman is a graduate of the United States Sergeants Major Academy, holds a bachelor's degree from South Dakota State University in sociology and criminal justice and is a graduate of the South Dakota Law Enforcement Academy.

In his civilian life, Hoekman serves as a captain at the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office in Sioux Falls and has served in law enforcement for 24 years.

Hoekman and his wife, Marcy, have one son, Zachery.



HEROES SUPPORT HEROES

The Colman-Egan School has a long tradition of honoring South Dakota's veterans. This week they came together to make Valentines for Veterans. Their motto is: "we are so lucky to be living in a country that is free and we can't think of a better way to tell our veterans how much we appreciate their service to our country."

Valentines for Veterans was first organized in 1999. When the public announcement was made that year, teachers at the Colman-Egan School stepped up to the plate and made this an art project along with a history lesson about the cost of freedom. The school takes pride in this program and has continued making Valentines for Veterans each year since 1999.

This year Valentines were sent to veterans at the VA Health Care facilities in Hot Springs and Fort Meade, and Sioux Falls; and delivered to veterans at Edgewood Vista and Riverview Health Services in Flandreau.



VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZED FOR SERVICE TO NATIONAL GUARD, RESERVE

Nineteen volunteers for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve received the President's Volunteer Service Award during an ESGR annual planning and awards meeting held in Pierre, Friday, Feb. 6.

The award recognizes, celebrates and inspires community service leaders and volunteers. This past year the volunteers spent 5,126 hours of their personal time helping service members and employers throughout South Dakota, said South Dakota ESGR Chair Ron Mielke.

"ESGR volunteers give briefings to service members about the rights and responsibilities their employer has and what is required of service members to help develop a positive relationship between the two," said Mielke.

The volunteers also work with the service members to help recognize their supervisors for supporting their military careers with the Patriot Award or they can recognize their employer's entire organization with the Above and Beyond Award.

"These awards reflect the effort made by employers to support National Guard and Reserve members in various ways, such as providing flexible work schedules, time off prior to and after deployment or going above and beyond the legal requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act," said Mielke.

ESGR volunteers are recognized with a bronze (100-249 hours), silver (250-499 hours) or gold (500 or more hours) award, depending on the number of hours served.

Laurie Fluit, of Sioux Falls, who works at Citi Bank has made being an ESGR volunteer a priority in her life. "I have made it my mission," said Fluit, who served 505 hours, earning her the gold award. "I look at our service members and they serve a minimum of one weekend a month, two weeks a year. So I just make it work. I may need to do things before and after work or on the weekends, but this is my way of serving. I feel I am making a difference and that is what volunteering is all about."

Three additional awards were presented in addition to the PVSA.

The Spirit of Volunteerism, awarded to Laurie Fluit, is presented to one state committee member annually by the state chair for the highest level of volunteer service.

The Outstanding SD ESGR Volunteer Award presented to Francie Ruebel-Alberts, of Sturgis, for volunteering 329 hours this past year, earning a Silver PVSA. Her activities included: serving as the SD ESGR awards director; a unit liaison and presenting several Patriot Awards; compiling award packets for state and national level employer awards and staffing tradeshow booths and Soldier Readiness Processing events.

The Outstanding SD ESGR New Volunteer Award presented to Mike Birnbaum, of Rapid City, who is serving in his first year with ESGR. Birnbaum staffed several tradeshow booths and Soldier Readiness Process activities, served as a unit liaison, and filled the critical position of area chair when a volunteer resigned.



Upcoming Events

2015

- Feb 14—Sioux Falls VA Variety Show
- Feb. 21—Lee Greenwood Valentines for Veterans Concert—Sioux Falls Pavilion
- Feb. 24—DOL Job Fair—Sioux Falls Convention Center—1201 N. West Avenue—10:00 am—4:00 pm
- Mar. 13—SFVAHCS Veterans & Employees Creative Arts show
- Mar. 19—DOL Job Fair—Aberdeen Civic Arena—215 S. Washington Street—12:30 pm—5:00 pm
- Mar. 25—DOL Brookings Job Fair—Days Inn—2500 E. 6th Street—Noon—5:30 pm
- Mar. 26—DOL Yankton Job Fair—Technical Education Center—1200 W. 21st Street—2:00 pm—6:00 pm
- Mar. 29—Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Program—Pierre—1:00 pm
- Mar. 31—DOL Watertown Job Fair—County Fair Banquet Hall—14 2nd St SE—1:30 pm—5:30 pm
- Apr. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
- Jul. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us

