



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



ZIMMERMAN AWARDED THE 2015 WILLIAMSON MILITIAMAN AWARD

During the SDNG Legislative Dining Out banquet, SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman was awarded the 2015 Williamson Militiaman Award

The Williamson Militiaman Award, established in 1987 by Maj. Gen. Ronald F. Williamson, recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-Soldier as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard and the defense of the country.

Zimmerman served both state and nation for over 26 years in uniform, beginning with his 1973 enlistment into the U.S. Army. He served for three years at Headquarters, 3rd Brigade, 4th Infantry Division at Fort Carson, Colorado. Following a break in service, he joined the SDNG in 1989 and served in various roles and leadership positions over the next 23 years.

He deployed to Afghanistan in November of 2007 with an Embedded Training Team and was eventually assigned as the operations officer for Afghan Regional Security Integration Command-North.

In May of 2009, he was named the seventh state command sergeant major for the SDARNG providing advice and guidance to the two different adjutant's general on matters pertaining to enlisted Soldiers and their families.

"Upon assuming his role as secretary of Veteran's Affairs, he hit the ground running," said Reisch, while introducing Zimmerman. "In his vision to be the voice for South Dakota's veterans, he unveiled "Operation RAV" – an aggressive campaign to 'reach all veterans' in South Dakota. This campaign was the first of its kind either locally or nationally.

"I can personally testify to this man's commitment to enhancing the lives of veterans," continued Reisch. "Both as my state command sergeant major and as a fellow cabinet secretary, he has always made taking time for Soldiers and veterans part of his daily routine. It is truly his passion."

Past recipients of the award include: Former Adjutants General Phil Killey and Harold Sykora; former U.S. Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson; former Governors William Janklow and Michael Rounds; and current Governor Dennis Daugaard.

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SDNG HOSTS 31ST ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE DINING OUT

The South Dakota National Guard hosted the 2015 Legislative Dining-Out at the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Pierre, Thursday, Feb. 5. The annual tradition has brought Guardsmen and the state Legislature together for a formal evening for the last 31 years.

The atmosphere, while formal, includes deep-rooted traditions which lighten the mood and provide both members and guests not only plenty of laughs, but a chance to learn some of the organization's history, traditions and an opportunity to recognize individual and unit achievements.

"The Guard is an organization that is rich in history and tradition," said Maj. Corey Norris, SDNG congressional action contact officer. "This event provides the Guard an opportunity to honor the legislators by hosting them at a traditional military event where we highlight our significant accomplishments to the community, state and nation."

A video highlighting the many accomplishments made by the men and women of the SDNG in 2014 was shown to state legislators in addition to comments from Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the SDNG adjutant general. The National Guard also recognized a family, an employer and a public servant with awards recognizing their contributions to the SDNG mission.

The awards portion of the dining-out began by presenting the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office with the 2014 South Dakota Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Pro Patria Award.

The Pro Patria Award is presented annually to one employer in the state who provides the most exceptional support of our national defense through leadership practices and personnel policies that support their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve.

"The sheriff's office has a strong commitment to their employee's military service," said Maj. Lona Christensen, executive director for the SD ESGR committee. "This is evident from their hiring policies all the way through their promotion policies."

Some of those policies include partnering with the Hero2Hired program to recruit military members and veterans to be part of their team, allowing applicants with military service to use service time towards the minimum years of experience requirements, and creating a VA approved on-the-job training program so employees can utilize their GI Bill benefits.

"The men and women of the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office have done a great job in supporting our Soldiers in the Guard and Reserve," said Sheriff Mike Millstead, after accepting the award on behalf of the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office. "We will continue to do that."

Spc. Nathan Obeslo, a member of the 1742nd Transportation Company, the most recent South Dakota National Guard unit to return from deployment, and a corporal in the jail division within the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office, nominated his employer for the award.

Accommodations are made for employees on military leave to have tests proctored by their military commands and interviews conducted via Skype, allowing them to compete for promotions while on military leave.

The sheriff's office implemented a policy which helps service members in the reintegration process allowing them to return to the exact assignment and position they left.



DINING OUT (CONTINUED)

The sheriff personally keeps in contact with deployed service members. He works hard to ensure that employees don't miss out on opportunities because of military obligations and works to have the employee rescheduled for specialized training.

"Employers are inextricably linked to the nation's defense by sharing their most precious assets, their employees," said Christensen to the audience, just before presenting the award. "Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office is deserving of this recognition for their outstanding contributions to our military services. Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office leadership exemplifies the patriotic spirit that is alive and well here in our great State of South Dakota."

To conclude the awards portion of the evening, Reisch awarded the 2014 Adjutant General's Family Award to the Hilmoe and Schmidt Family of Tea and Baltic.

"As the adjutant general, I recognize the vital importance of our families to the success of our National Guard mission," said Reisch. "This award recognizes family members who have supported their service members in a truly exemplary manner while managing family, careers, or even hardship, all the while not seeking recognition for their sacrifices."

This year's recipients were Master Sgt. Sara Hilmoe, the administrative assistant for the South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing commander and Family Group Volunteer, her husband and daughter, Michael and Katelyn Schmidt, and her mother, Melva Hilmoe.

"It's pretty amazing to be selected and recognized at this level for helping others," said Sara Hilmoe, following the event. "I hope that we can live up to significance of this award."

Over the years, Sara has volunteered much of her time serving the families and members of the 114th Fighter Wing, which include volunteering at the National Guard youth camp and spending many hours recruiting for the all-volunteer organization that runs the annual camp.

"Whenever our fighter wing has a special event, you can bet you will see Sara involved in a capacity way beyond what is required of her full-time job," said Reisch.

Sara even recruited her mother, Melva, to help with these activities and join the Family Volunteer Group.

"It wasn't long before Melva also became a frequent participant in any volunteer event on base and even stepped up on short notice to serve as secretary of the Family Volunteer Group when the position was open," said Reisch. "Melva was soon recognized as a top volunteer and was awarded Volunteer of the Year in 2013 for the Air Guard." Mike and Katelyn have been avid supporters of the Volunteer Program and Sara's involvement in it.

"The countless hours they have given up so Sara can help with deployments, events, meetings, and planning, are too numerous to mention," said Reisch.

Following the awards ceremony and bringing the evening to a close, Gov. Daugaard addressed the Soldiers and Airmen in attendance, specifically thanking them for their continuous support on missions both at home and abroad.

"The Soldiers and Airmen of the South Dakota National Guard are truly the most dedicated, capable and reliable men and women that one could ever hope to meet," said Daugaard. "Whether it's a time of war or a time of a disaster here at home, you have proven time and time again that South Dakota can count on you. Thank you for your sacrifices, your patriotism and your hard work."



155TH ENGINEER COMPANY HEADED TO KUWAIT

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 155th Engineer Company has received an alert order for possible mobilization to Kuwait in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, New Dawn and Noble Eagle.

The 155th and its 162 assigned members are scheduled for deployment in the August 2015 timeframe. The unit's headquarters is located in Rapid City with its Detachment 1 in Wagner.

The 155th is a vertical engineer company capable of providing engineer support in the construction of base camps and internment facilities, as well as constructing, repairing and maintaining other vertical infrastructures in support of units within a brigade combat team, division or corps.

The 155th has a wide variety of occupational specialties including carpentry, plumbing, electrical and masonry services.

The unit will report to Fort Bliss, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas. This will be the second mobilization for the 155th, which deployed to Kuwait in support of Operation Noble Eagle in 2002-2003.

VIETNAM VETERANS WELCOME HOME CELEBRATION

In honor of the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam Conflict, the South Dakota Vietnam Veterans of America will be hosting a "Welcome Home Celebration" in Pierre on March 28-29, 2015.

Plans are tentative at this time, but it looks like the event will kick off with a mixer at American Legion Post 8 from 6:00 – 10:00 pm.

Sunday's activities will include a parade from Fort Pierre to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Capitol Lake in Pierre. A wreath laying ceremony will be held, followed by various speakers.

Communities and veterans service organizations will be hosting numerous commemorative events and programs throughout the year and we hope to share dates and logistics with you. These programs and services are a great opportunity to educate the public on the lesser-known aspects of the war, thank and honor Vietnam Veterans from all of the Armed Forces, and recognize the sacrifices made by the U.S. and her allies throughout the war.

In South Dakota the 30th day of March is known as "Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day," and is observed as a state working holiday.

Watch for more details as the 29th draws near.



SFVAHCS CREATIVE ARTS SHOW

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System is seeking entries for the 2015 Veterans & Employees Creative Arts Show that will be held March 13t. This is a great opportunity for both veterans and employees to display their skills in visual arts of all kinds.

To be eligible, veterans must be enrolled at the Sioux Falls VA and receive all or a portion of their care at the medical center or one of the five CBOCs.

There are over 50 categories of visual arts that include photography, leather work, paper art, acrylics, water color or oil paintings, needle art, woodworking, metal art, jewelry, etc. To find out what category your art fits or to learn more about the rules for national competition, please contact Diane Larsen at Ext. 6418 or 6248.

The VA recognizes creative art therapy (visual arts, creative writing, and performing arts) as rehab therapy to help veterans deal with physical and emotional disabilities.

Entries must be delivered to the SFVAHCS Public Affairs Officer or Recreation Therapy no later than March 3, 2015.

Winners will be announced at a reception for the artists at 2:00 PM on March 13.

The public is invited to view the art anytime from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM on March 13.

U.S. SENATE PASSES CLAY HUNT SUICIDE PREVENTION FOR AMERICAN VETERANS ACT

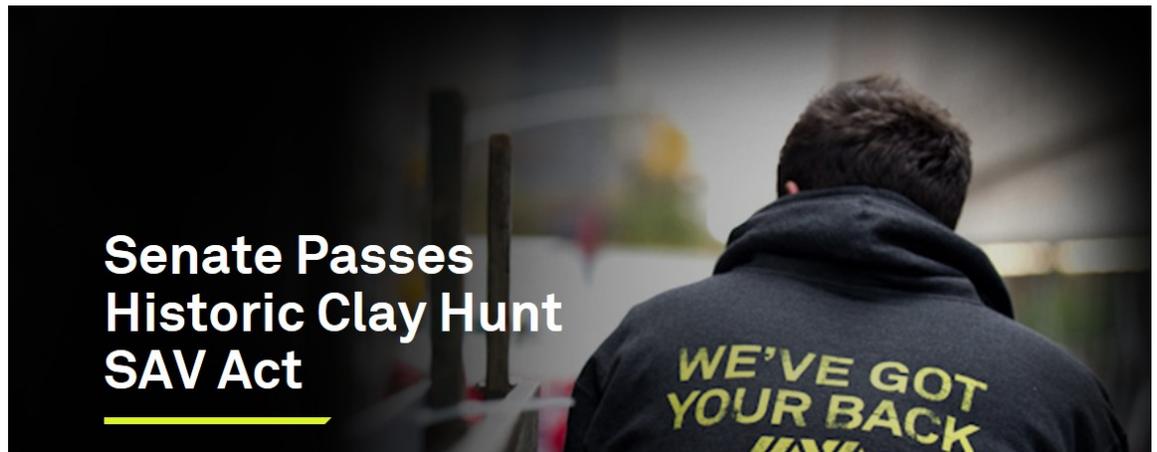
This week the U.S. Senate voted to support the *Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act*. The Senate unanimously approved this legislation, with a vote of 99-0. It will now move to the President's desk to be signed into law.

Statistics show that an average of 22 veterans take their own lives every day in the United States. The Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act calls for outside evaluations of all the current suicide prevention programs at the VA and the Department of Defense to make sure they are functioning as intended. Those found ineffective will come under review for improvement, consolidation or elimination.

It also would require a new website to be built that offers veterans information on how to

access mental health services. Additionally, it creates a medical school loan repayment program to recruit more VA psychiatrists.

The bill was named for Clay Hunt, a Marine veteran who committed suicide in March 2011 at the age of 28. An identical bill passed the House of Representatives 403-0 on Jan. 12, 2015.



**Senate Passes
Historic Clay Hunt
SAV Act**

Upcoming Events

2015

Feb. 6—Women Veterans Wellness Retreat—DAV—Sioux Falls
 Feb. 6-8—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Watertown
 Feb 14—Sioux Falls VA Variety Show
 Feb. 21—Lee Greenwood Valentines for Veterans Concert—Sioux Falls Pavilion
 Mar. 13—SFVAHCS Veterans & Employees Creative Arts show
 Mar. 29—Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Program—Pierre—1:00 pm
 Apr. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
 Jul. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am
 Aug. 5-9—AVIT Traveling Vietnam Wall Comes to Sioux Falls
 Oct. 9—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am

LAST SURVIVING SD WASP IS THE NEWEST GUEST AT THE STATE VETERANS HOME

This week Mildred Rexroat moved into the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home and there should be an interesting coffee breaks and lunch discussions!

Mildred is one of only 200+ surviving WASPs (Women Air Force Service Pilots) of the original 1,074. She is the last in South Dakota, and the Oglala Lakotan is the only female Native American to serve in the WASPs.

In a 2010 Rapid City Journal article, Rexroat was quoted "Being a riveter seemed too dangerous," she said, so she opted for a different path—being a military pilot."

For years, the WASPs were not recognized as veterans. Not until 1977, when President Jimmy Carter signed a bill making them a part of the Air Force, did they receive right to be buried with a flag, buried in a military cemetery and gain access to U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs hospitals.

The next time you're in Hot Springs, stop in and buy Rexy a cup of coffee or a dish of ice cream and thank her for her service!!!! The complete story can be read at :

http://rapidcityjournal.com/news/last-surviving-south-dakota-wasp-sexy-rexy-recalls-world-war/article_a61be93c-ed44-11df-8e3e-001cc4c002e0.html

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