



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



ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE VETERANS BREAKFAST

This week leaders within the South Dakota veterans network met in Pierre for breakfast with legislators.

The breakfast, sponsored by the South Dakota Veterans Council, is a great opportunity for the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs to brief legislators on issues impacting South Dakota's veterans. Secretary Zimmerman



and Operation RAV.

"Special thanks to all the legislators that took time out of their busy schedule to participate in the briefing," said Deputy Secretary Aaron Pollard. "We know their schedules are very busy and appreciate the support they have given us."

"We are fortunate to have the support of our veteran network and our special thanks to the Veterans Council for their sponsorship of this event and for participating in the legislative educational endeavor," said Secretary Zimmerman.

Lt. Governor Michels applauded the efforts of the veteran network and recognized the SDDVA staff for their dedication to South Dakota's veterans.



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reviewed legislation and updated the legislators on 2014 activities. Much of the presentation focused on the progress of the new state veterans home

SD GUARD UNIT NAMED SEMIFINALIST FOR NATIONAL SUPPLY AWARD

The U.S. Army announced the South Dakota Army National Guard's Company B, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, as a semifinalist to compete for the Chief of Staff, Army Supply Excellence Award in March.

The award recognizes Army units who demonstrate excellence in supply operations, property accountability and resource management. The Mitchell-based unit, whose primary purpose is to perform field maintenance for modular brigade combat teams and supporting brigades, will compete Army-wide in the level I, small unit category.

"Competing for the Supply Excellence Award instills esprit de corps within the unit," said SDARNG State Command Sgt. Major Susan Shoe. "It takes a lot of time, effort, and teamwork to have everything in the unit 100 percent accounted for."

As the supply NCO, Staff Sgt. Christopher Johnston explains the amount of work it takes from everyone in the unit to excel in the world of supply.

The 139th advanced from the regional level after submitting an approximate 100-page document reflecting their unit's accomplishments, equipment, and personnel.

"The 139th went above and beyond when it came to the professionalism of their company's packet, which included photographs and information of their supply activities outshining the other units in our eight-state region," said Shoe.

The next step for the national competition is an onsite inspection scheduled for March 17, where evaluator's from the Army will visit the unit and compare their results to one other National Guard unit and two active duty units, to see firsthand who is most deserving of the supply award.

The other units the 139th will compete against are: Minnesota National Guard's Company C, 834th Aviation Support Battalion, of Hastings, Minnesota; Intelligence and Sustainment, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, United States Army Europe, of Wiesbaden, Germany, and Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 65th Medical Brigade, of Yongsan, Korea.

"To make it this far into the award process is a true reflection to the professionalism and dedication that our soldiers have in this unit," said Johnston. "I am excited and honored to be one of the top four units in the Army."

The winner of the SEA will be announced at the Chief of Staff, Army Combined Logistics Excellence Award ceremony at the Pentagon, June 10.

The Supply Excellence Award Program was established in 1984 by the Chief of Staff of the Army to recognize excellence in supply operations at various unit and organizational levels. The program's objectives are to enhance logistics readiness of all Army units, enforce the Command Supply Discipline Program and provide a structure for official recognition of group and individual initiatives.



SDNG CELEBRATES 153 YEARS OF SERVICE

The South Dakota National Guard marks 153 years of service to the state and nation as they celebrate the Jan. 27, 1862 birth date of the organization's formation. With a proud 153-year heritage of serving as the state's militia, the SDNG finds its origins dating back to 1862 as part of the Dakota Territory.

Since that time, SDNG units have served in nearly every major war or conflict since the Civil War, as well as provided assistance to the state in times of domestic emergencies such as floods, fires, tornadoes and winter storms.

The journey of the Dakota militiaman begins during the Civil War with Companies A and B of the Dakota Cavalry. On March 2, 1861, President James Buchanan signed the act establishing the Dakota Territory. By that time, Vermillion, Bon Homme and Elk Point were growing communities. The territory tended to be people who were genuine settlers, mostly immigrants from Germany, Norway and Sweden. Earlier in the 1850s, the U.S. Army had established garrisons at Fort Pierre and Fort Randall on the Missouri River. Their mission was to protect the 5,000 settlers from the threat of attacks. However, when the Civil War started, the Army withdrew three companies from Fort Randall leaving it in an exposed position. This led to the Dec. 7, 1861, proclamation, by the Territorial Governor William Jayne, to raise two companies of volunteer militia. Recruiting centers were then established in Yankton, Vermillion and Bon Homme. The citizens were very patriotic with a lot of local pride, and in just over one month enough men had enlisted to assemble the first company of citizen-soldiers. On Jan. 27, 1862, Capt. Nelson Miner, company commander, formed the unit in Yankton, Company A, Dakota Cavalry. This was the first unit of the Dakota Territory Militia and the birth of the South Dakota National Guard.

Since that historic date in 1862, the SDNG has since seen combat during the Spanish-American War, World War I and II, Operation Just Cause and Operation Desert Storm. The National Guard was also called up during the Mexican Border Conflict, Korean War, Berlin Crisis and peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo. Since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, each of South Dakota's 22 National Guard communities has experienced a unit mobilization in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. More than 7,200 Soldiers and Airmen have deployed in support of these operations. The National Guard is the only military component that holds a dual-mission consisting of both federal and state roles. The federal mission is to maintain trained and equipped units available for prompt mobilization for war or a national emergency. At the state level, the governor reserves the ability, under the Constitution, to call up members of the National Guard in times of domestic emergencies. Throughout the years, natural disasters have called forth the Guard's spirit of teamwork and sacrifice to battle floods, fires, blizzards and tornado destruction. The Rapid City Flood of 1972, the Spencer Tornado in 1998, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, the Missouri River Flood in 2011 and Winter Storm Atlas in 2013 are just a few of the disasters in which the SDNG mobilized its Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen to help their fellow South Dakotans and Americans in times of need. (story continued on next page)



SDNG CELEBRATES 153 YEARS OF SERVICE (CONTINUED)

Today's SDNG remains strong with nearly 4,200 Soldiers and Airmen available to execute its dual-mission on the state and federal level. The Guard is located in 22 communities throughout South Dakota; comprised of 40 Army Guard units and detachments and 17 Air Guard units. These units perform a variety of missions which include everything from command and control, administration, engineering, field artillery, transportation, logistics, communications, maintenance, aviation, public affairs, military police, firefighting and medical.

The National Guard is no longer a strategic reserve to the active component, but an operational force directly integrated into active-duty deployments and missions. The force structure of the SDNG is designed to meet the needs of the future force; giving the Guard an enhanced capability to respond in times of emergencies and natural disasters and to support overseas contingency operations.

The SDNG had a significant impact on the state's economy with more than \$186.1 million dollars in expenditures and wages in 2014. The SDNG is also one of the largest employers in the state with more than 970 full-time employees, along with nearly 3,200 traditional Guard members who train on a part-time basis while pursuing a career or civilian education.

These full-time employees, along with state employees and civilian contractors, work to assist the traditional Guardsman by providing administrative, training and logistical support. This support collectively goes into helping units meet mobilization and readiness requirements.

The South Dakota Army National Guard remains strong with more than 3,200 Soldiers available for state and federal missions. The nerve center for the SDARNG resides at the state headquarters at Camp Rapid in Rapid City; an 84-acre training site first developed in 1924.

The South Dakota Air National Guard is located on the southeast corner of Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls and was federally recognized in 1946. It has more than 1,000 Airmen assigned to its headquarters and the 114th Fighter Wing. The mission of the SDANG is to provide combat capability to the war fight, security for the homeland and to provide combat-ready units in three roles: federal, state and community.

The SDNG is divided into different task forces to provide assistance to our local communities throughout the state in the event of an emergency. Separated by geographical regions, units are assigned to each task force providing personnel and equipment for response to severe weather, fires, natural disasters, search-and-rescue operations, civil disturbances or homeland defense.

The proud heirs of the militia tradition can be found in the men and women of today's SDNG. They stand ready to leave the comforts of home and family to help their friends and neighbors, defend the nation's interests and bring peace and hope to people throughout the world.

Thank you SDNG, past and present, and your families, for your continued, dedicated service!



VABHHCS SEEKS ENTRIES FOR 2015 VETERANS' CREATIVE ARTS COMPETITION

The VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) is seeking entries for their annual creative arts competition. This is an exciting opportunity for veterans to demonstrate their skills in visual arts, creative writing, and performing arts.

Veterans enrolled at VABHHCS or a resident in the MJF State Veterans Home are eligible to compete. The art must have been created after April 1, 2014 with an exception for Military Combat Experience entries. All submissions must be received by February 20, 2015, deadline.

The public is invited to view the entries at two shows on March 13, 2015, in Building 145, Classroom 108 at the Fort Meade VA and on March 18, 2015, in the Domiciliary Auditorium at the Hot Springs VA. Both shows are from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

The competition includes 51 categories in the visual arts division that range from oil painting to leatherwork to paint-by-number kits. In addition, there are 100 categories in the performing arts division including all aspects of music, dance, drama, and creative writing. A panel of local artists will judge entries based on creativity, skill, originality, and overall presentation. Select winners at the local level are invited to compete at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival to be held in Durham, North Carolina October 12-19, 2015.

The purpose of the National Veterans Creative Arts competition is to recognize veterans for their creative and artistic ability and to demonstrate the therapeutic benefits of the arts.

Creative art therapy is recognized by VA medical facilities as one form of rehabilitative treatment to help veterans recover from and cope with physical and emotional disabilities.

For rules and registration information, please contact Mike Ellis, Kyle Doerges, or Mary Culbertson by calling 1-877-339-6837.



VETERANS COMMISSION

The South Dakota Veterans Commission met this week in Pierre in conjunction with the Annual Legislative Breakfast. The commission reviewed the role of the commission and discussed missions they could undertake.

The Commission opted to pursue a nationwide study of veterans preference practices being utilized in all fifty states. They plan to have a compilation of the study results completed by August 1, 2015.

SDSU VETERANS AFFAIRS CALENDAR

Michelle Ruesink, Assistant Director of Student Support Services at South Dakota State University, shares with us the calendar of events for veterans and military personnel to participate in during January and February.



SDSU Veterans Affairs Office

Veterans Affairs Office Events Calendar

Sponsored By:
Veterans Affairs Office
For more information:
(605) 688-5585

Job Service Representative

Thursday, January 15th • 2-4pm
Wednesday, January 28th • 2-4pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
Dwight Kahler is available to meet with all Veterans, service member and dependents interested in employment. Will discuss various job openings and support with application process.

Veteran Service Officer

Tuesday, January 20th • 2-4pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
Mike Holzhauser will be available for questions and support to Veterans who need assistance with VA. Open to all Veterans, service members, dependents and community members.

Welcome Back Open House

Wednesday, January 21st • 12-2pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
Pizza will be served at the Veteran Resource Center to all Veterans, service members, dependents and community members. Pizza donated by the DAV and Sioux Falls Vet Center.

AFA Armed Forces Association

Wednesday, January 21st • 6pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

Tutoring Meeting

Thursday, January 22nd • 4 pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center
Meeting to discuss what tutoring options are available and connecting to Veteran Math Tutors.

Veterans Writing Workshop

Monday January 26th • 4-5pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
To anyone wishing to write about military experiences can participate. Our goal is to encourage the sharing of these stories. Pizza will be served at 5.

Movie Night

Tuesday, Jan. 27st • 7-10pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
Popcorn will be served.
Black Hawk Down

Military Appreciation Basketball Game

Thursday, January 29th • 7pm
Frost Arena

Warrior Wellness Event

Saturday, January 31st • 12-4pm
SDSU Wellness Center
Open to all Veterans, service members, and dependents at SDSU and in the community to utilize the Wellness Center facility free of charge. Pool, climbing wall and basketball courts are available to use.

Superbowl Party

Sunday, February 1st • 4-11pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

AFA Armed Forces Association

Wednesday, February 4th • 6pm
Wednesday, February 18th • 6pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

Job Service Representative

Wednesday, February 11th • 2-4pm
Wednesday, February 25th • 2-4pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
Dwight Kahler is available to meet with all Veterans, service members and dependents interested in employment. Will discuss various job openings and support with application process.

Veterans Writing Workshop

Monday, February 9th • 4-5pm
Monday, February 23rd • 4-5pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
To anyone wishing to write about military experience can participate. Our goal is to encourage the sharing of these stories. Pizza will be served at 5.

Veteran Service Officer

Tuesday, February 17th • 2-4pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
Mike Holzhauser will be available for questions and support to Veterans who need assistance with Veterans Affairs. Open to all Veterans, service members, dependents and community members.

Warrior Wellness Event

Saturday, February 21st • 12-4pm
SDSU Wellness Center
Open to all Veterans, service members, and dependents at SDSU and in the community to utilize the Wellness Center facility free of charge. Pool, climbing wall and basketball courts are available to use.

Movie Night

Thursday February 12th • 7-10pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)
Popcorn will be served.

Game Night

Thursday February 26th • 7-9pm
Location: Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

Veterans Writing Project Weekend Seminar

Saturday, February 28th - 8-5pm
Sunday, March 1st • 8-5pm
Venue TBD
This is a no-cost writing seminar for veterans, active and reserve service members, and military family members which helps participants understand why they might want to write their stories and how to get started. Participants will receive a free copy of Ron Capps' book, Writing War: A guide to Telling Your own Story.

A DREAM TO HONOR AND HEAL

2015 marks the 40th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. The Vietnam Vets / Legacy Vets MC and the Sioux Falls Vet's Council invite you to see The AVTT Traveling Vietnam Wall.

The largest replica of The Wall in Washington, DC is coming to Sioux Falls, SD August 5-9, 2015. This is an opportunity for those who sacrificed so much; the chance to remember their fallen brothers and sisters. It also allows those who weren't there to honor those who were. Over 58,000 fallen soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines are listed on the wall.

More information can be found at: <http://www.honoringandhealing.org/home.html>.



LEMME JOINS THE SDDVA TEAM



Gerald Lemme is the new voice you will hear at the Sioux Falls SDDVA Claims Office. Born in Sioux Falls and raised in Madison, Lemme joined the U.S. Army in 1988. After his service to this country, Lemme became a carpenter, building homes and cabinets.

In 1992 Jerry joined the South Dakota Air National Guard Security Forces Squadron. He was hired as a full time (AGR) Security Officer in 1994 and will retire from the Air National Guard in April 2015 with over 26 years of service.

Jerry and his wife live in Dell Rapids and are busy with their four children. He is active in the Boy Scouts of America, attends St. Mary's church and is a

member of the Dell Rapids American Legion.

Please join us in welcoming Jerry to our veteran network.

VABHHCS TO HOST FOUR CHAPLAINS MEMORIAL SERVICE

The VA Black Hills Health Care System invites the public to attend the Four Chaplains Memorial Service at 1:30 p.m. on Sunday, February 15, at the LifeSpring Wesleyan Church in Sturgis. The service marks the end of a weeklong celebration for National Salute to Veteran Patients week February 8-16, 2015.

"The service is an inspiring tribute to four of our nation's most revered heroes. Their story of strength and courage reflect the high cost many Veterans pay to serve our country. I encourage everyone to be a part of this service to remember, honor, and support Veterans", said Chaplain Gary Goodlin, VABHHCS.

Local veteran organizations will participate in the event by placing wreaths at the altar during the program. Immediately following the service the public is invited to a chili feed to be served at the Sturgis Veterans' Club, 868 Main Street in Sturgis.

The Four Chaplains Memorial Service honors four Army Chaplains - Lt. George L. Fox, Methodist; Lt. Alexander D. Goode, Jewish; Lt. John P. Washington, Roman Catholic; and Lt. Clark V. Poling, Reformed Church of America, - four men of different faiths, on a rapidly sinking ship, who gave their life jackets and lives so that younger soldiers might survive when the USS Dorchester was torpedoed and sunk by a German submarine on February 3, 1943.



CARING FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BORNE THE BATTLE

Last year at this time, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs kicked off an initiative called Operation Reach All Veterans. In looking for new ways to serve those who have served, the Department began an unprecedented effort to reach out to veterans all across the state.

Historically, American veterans haven't always received the kind of support they deserve. During the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress did not have the authority or the money to pay soldiers, so payment was left to the states. Though General Washington and many of the Founders stressed the importance of justly compensating those fighting for liberty, the states just weren't able to afford it. Only 3,000 out of the 200,000 who served in the war actually drew a pension.

By the time the Civil War began, a federal veteran pension system was in place, and by the end of the war – at the urging of Abraham Lincoln – veterans' hospitals were opened.

We've come a long way since then. But even with all of our progress, there's still more to do. As Lincoln put it in his second inaugural address, we must always strive to "care for him who shall have borne the battle."

Today we have a new generation to care for. Since 9/11, each of South Dakota's 22 National Guard communities has experienced a unit mobilization in support of Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, New Dawn and Noble Eagle. To date, the South Dakota National Guard has deployed more than 7,200 Soldiers and Airmen in support of the Global War on Terror. Thankfully, for the first time in more than a decade, none of our National Guard soldiers or airmen are currently deployed overseas.

With a new generation of veterans to serve, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs knows there is much work to be done. That's why they launched Operation RAV last January with the goal of reaching out to every single veteran in South Dakota. This campaign was a first for the Department and a first in the nation. Their objectives were to educate veterans and their families about benefits, programs and services; to listen to concerns and provide key contacts to assist on a local level; and, most importantly, to say "thank you."

The Department anticipates that there are 75,000 veterans living in South Dakota. Over the last year, staff and veterans service officers estimate they have already made contact with about two-thirds of those veterans by making phone calls, staffing a booth at the Capitol and holding 153 open houses in 63 counties. One veterans service officer, Tom Sparrow of Turner County, contacted over 11,000 veterans.

Larry Zimmerman, South Dakota's Secretary of Veterans Affairs, says that this was just Phase I of Operation RAV. Phase II will involve trying to reach those that they couldn't reach by phone.

I know there is no way to fully repay our veterans for all they have sacrificed to protect our freedom. They left the comfort of their homes and the embraces of their loved ones to put their lives on the line for us. Still, I believe Operation RAV is making a difference, and it's one step toward repaying just a small part of the debt we owe to those who have borne the battle.



Upcoming Events

2015

- Feb. 2—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Fort Pierre
- Feb. 3—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8 Legion Cabin—Pierre
- 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
- 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

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