



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



MOPH TO RE-DEDICATE MEMORIAL

Veterans and leaders of the South Dakota Military Order of the Purple Heart will gather in Pierre Sunday, August 7, to re-dedicate their memorial. The memorial was recently moved to Capitol Lake in Pierre. Their ceremony will take place in the Visitors Center at 1:00 pm.

In addition, Gov. Dennis Daugaard has proclaimed Sunday, Aug. 7, 2016, as "Purple Heart Recognition Day," calling on all South Dakotans to honor those men and women who are recipients of the Purple Heart Medal.

"While we are grateful to all of those who have served our nation, the 7th of August is a day designated to remember and recognize the sacrifices endured by those members of the Armed Forces of the United States who have been awarded the Purple Heart Medal," said Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "It is fitting to set aside a day to recognize those who have been awarded the highest honor for their service."

The Governor encourages all South Dakotans to set aside time on Aug. 7 to honor our soldiers who have been honored with the Purple Heart. "The men and women serving in our Armed Forces are tough, determined, courageous and capable of unbelievable acts of courage and sacrifice," said Gov. Daugaard.

"Our military remains as strong as it has ever been. America's veterans have been defined by the virtues of selfless service, sacrifice and devotion to duty," said Zimmerman. "These men and women, who serve and have served, are the flesh and blood of American exceptionalism."

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MILLION VETERAN PROGRAM IS NOW LARGEST GENOMIC DATA BASE IN THE WORLD

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs' Million Veteran Program (MVP) has reached an important milestone when an Army Veteran from Montgomery, Alabama, became the 500,000th to voluntarily enroll in the research database program – making MVP the largest genomic database in the world.

Launched in 2011, and part of the White House Precision Medicine Initiative, participants donate blood from which DNA is extracted. A baseline and periodic follow-up surveys track veterans' military experiences, health and lifestyles. Researchers believe the information contained in the database could hold the key to preventing and treating diseases.

"Our veterans continue to demonstrate their selfless sacrifice, and the nation has yet another reason to owe them a debt of gratitude," said VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald. "Many of our veterans have saved lives on the battlefield and because of their participation in MVP, their participation has the potential to save countless lives – now and for generations to come."

As part of the program, participating veterans grant researchers secure access to their electronic health records and agree to be contacted about participating in future research. Samples and data used are coded to protect participants' identification and privacy.

Research using MVP data is already underway, studying a range of medical issues like mental illness and heart and kidney diseases. The program also has rich data on various health conditions that are common in veterans. Approximately 62 percent of MVP enrollees report a current or past diagnosis of high blood pressure and about a third report tinnitus. Also, nearly a third or 32 percent of veterans present with a history or current diagnosis of cancer.

"We believe MVP will accelerate our understanding of disease detection, progression, prevention and treatment by combining this rich clinical, environmental and genomic data," said Dr. David J. Shulkin, VA Under Secretary for Health. "The VA has a deep history of innovation and research. MVP will allow the nation's top researchers to perform the most cutting-edge science to treat some of the nation's most troubling diseases."



SIoux FALLS VETERANS STAND DOWN

The Sioux Falls Veterans Stand Down will be held Friday, September 23, 2016 at the VFW (3601 South Minnesota Avenue) in Sioux Falls. Doors open at 9:00 am (CT) and close at 2:00 pm (CT).

Stand Down is a military term, which refers to fresh troops taking care of exhausted combat troops by moving them from the battlefield to a safe and secure environment. The depleted combat soldiers are given medical attention, food, fresh clothing and an opportunity to get cleaned up, rest and recuperate. Similarly, on September 23, the Sioux Falls community will come together to host Stand Down 2016, an intensive service fair for Homeless Veterans and their families, offering a daylong respite from the streets and a real opportunity to get their lives back on track.

When the community reaches out to Homeless Veterans, veterans in need, and their families, it strengthens ties between the homeless and those who really care. Active Duty, Military Reservists, Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Service Organizations, and members of the local community do just this as they call veterans in from the urban battlefield to give them a hand up, and not a hand out, during Stand Down 2016.

Partners at the Stand Down will be providing legal assistance, bicycle repair, meals, clothing, medical treatment, financial/economic information, community housing referral, employment and training assistance, readjustment counseling, drug and alcohol treatment information, as well as information on veterans benefits.

Partners include: Disabled American Veterans, Goodwill Industries, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Salvation Army, Sioux Falls VA Health Care System, Sioux Falls Vet Center, MEPS, Sioux Falls Veterans Council, US Department of Labor, VA Dakotas Regional Office, Veterans of Foreign War, Vietnam Veterans of America, Volunteers of America-Dakotas and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs.



MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

Building on Lincoln's Promise Today and in the Future —

Over 150 years ago, during his second inaugural address in 1865, President Abraham Lincoln articulated what would become the nation's obligation to veterans: "to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

Today, there are more than 21 million veterans – two-thirds of the 31 million total U.S. population in 1860. Caring for their particular needs, and their dependents' needs, requires more innovation and collaboration between local, state and federal governments than even a visionary like Lincoln could have foreseen.

Our team at the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs partners with political leaders, businesses, associations, organizations, and government agencies at all levels. These partnerships are vital as we work through the ever-changing federal programs and benefits for our veterans.

As our state's veteran population and their needs continue to change and evolve, so will our team of advocates and our delivery of service.

In fact, just this past month, we launched a new program, "South Dakota Joining Forces Initiative." The goal of this initiative is to enhance and synchronize community-based networks of support to all current and former service members and their families. We want to ensure that they receive the support they have earned. Dr. Bill Meirose has been hired to move our mission forward and he has already begun his travels across South Dakota.

One of the greatest benefits that our department receives is from our partners who volunteer for us. Volunteers are an important part of the daily routine in the lives of residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. In 2015 we had 121 volunteers who donated 5,952 volunteer hours to assist our veterans and our staff.

From individual bedside visits, to group activities and sponsored outings, to raising money and purchasing gifts for residents, to paying for or providing entertainment at the home, volunteers and volunteer groups are an integral part of the daily living for our heroes. I can't imagine serving our resident heroes without the generous contributions of time and money from our corps of volunteers.

In many cases, due to the absence of family members, our volunteers constitute the primary source of social interaction for our heroes. Thanks volunteers. Your time and talents are priceless.

Always remember, a sincere *thank you* – means more to most veterans than any other reward.



Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

Upcoming Events

- Aug 4—VABHHCS Hero and Patriot Night—Main Street Square—Rapid City—6:00—9:00 pm (MT)
 Aug. 7—Purple Heart Memorial Dedication - Capitol Lake—Pierre—1:00 pm (CT)
 Aug. 7—American Legion Freedom Ride—State Veterans Home—Hot Springs 8:30 am (MT)
 Aug. 22-25—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre Ramkota
 Sep. 1—Veterans Day at the State Fair—Huron - Program at 10:30 at the Freedom Stage
 Sep. 2—Wounded Warrior Amputee Softball Game— Sioux Falls Stadium (1001 North West Avenue) - 6:00 pm (CT)
 Sep. 3—DAV Brookings Chapter 22 and 727 Transportation Unit Poker Run—Brookings National Guard Armory—10:00 am (CT)
 Sep. 9—Veterans Stand Down—Wagner Armory
 Sep. 14—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
 Sep. 16—National POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony—Sioux Falls Veterans Memorial Park—6:30 pm (CT)
 Sep. 23—Veterans Stand Down—VFW—Sioux Falls (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue) - 9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
 Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 Oct. 8—DAV Fall Conference—DAV—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
- 2017**
- Feb 10-12—SD American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma
 Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown



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