



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



LOYAL TO THE FLAG NO MATTER WHAT TEAMS ARE PLAYING

It's a known fact that when the national anthem is played or sung citizens should stand at attention and salute. Loyalty to the flag and love of country was never demonstrated more clearly than when our heroes at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home proudly salute as the national anthem was sung during the Super Bowl.

Freedom to the American Veteran is precious because they have a greater understanding of the price it costs. God Bless our Heroes!

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SDNG HOSTS 32ND ANNUAL DINING-OUT

The South Dakota National Guard hosted its 2016 Dining-Out at the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Pierre, Feb. 4. The annual tradition has brought Guardsmen from across the state together for a formal evening for the last 32 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.

A video highlighting the many accomplishments made by the men and women of the SDNG in 2015 was shown 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 Iberdrola Renewables, Buffalo Ridge II Wind Farm with the 2015 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.

Tech. Sgt. Brandon Johnson, a member of the South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Maintenance Squadron, works as a wind energy technician with Iberdrola and nominated his employer for the award. During Johnson's deployment this past year, Iberdrola hung a flag in his office and a sign that read, "Called to active duty" so all would remember when they saw the empty office. Johnson's team also placed a lighted flag on top of one of their wind turbines, which remained there for the duration of his deployment. To do this, they had to design a special stand and pole with a light that could withstand the high winds at to the top of a wind turbine. They presented him the flag upon his return. Iberdrola also hired a company to create a three-part video series, about Johnson and the company's commitment to him and his service. Johnson's co-workers were encouraged to download an app for their phones and maintain regular communication with him during his deployment. Other support came in the form of care packages, co-workers checking in on the family, and providing assistance when needed.



The SDNG next awarded the 2015 Williamson Militiaman Award to Chief Warrant Officer 5 Lynn Wright.

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.

Wright has been serving both state and nation for over 40 years in uniform, beginning with her 1975 enlistment into the U.S. Army. Following her time on active duty, she went on to serve in the SDNG in various personnel services positions at the company and battalion level. In 1990, she became a part of the Warrant Officer Corps.

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SDNG HOSTS 32ND ANNUAL DINING-OUT (CONTINUED)

While serving as a traditional Soldier, one who serves one weekend a month and two weeks a year, she recognized family programs was not well supported and took it on herself to bolster that program. Wright realized that the educational resources and communication traditionally sent through the service members were not reaching the families so she targeted families directly to provide resources, including educational symposiums where she fostered professionalism training among family readiness volunteers. She continued to invest herself in training and mentoring unit and Family Readiness Group leadership on the importance of family readiness, providing technical guidance on processes, regulations, documentation and helped sustain lead volunteers and Family Readiness Group programs during long-term deployments.

The SDNG estimates that Wright has conducted hundreds of volunteer trainings, impacting several hundred, if not thousands, of service members and volunteers and every unit in the SDNG.

Wright has served the SDNG Family Readiness Program as a traditional Soldier, on short-term orders and most recently, for the past 11 years, as a contract family readiness support assistant.

To conclude the awards portion of the evening, Reisch awarded the 2015 Adjutant General's Family Award to the Vanderwolde family.

The Vanderwolde family has been volunteering with the South Dakota Air National Guard for more than 15 years, on events ranging from children's holiday parties to youth programs to supporting deployed members.

Both girls started as a youth participants which grew into junior counselors and then to counselor. Nichole has been invested in the youth program for over 10 years. Brooklyn has not only been a wonderful asset to the youth camp but she also been serving on the South Dakota Youth Council for the past two years.



114TH FIGHTER WING PARTICIPATES IN SENTRY SAVANNAH

Eleven F-16's and approximately 175 Airmen of the 114th Fighter Wing, South Dakota Air National Guard, participated in Sentry Savannah 16-1 at the Savannah Combat Readiness Training Center, Georgia.

Also taking part in this exercise are Airmen of the 43rd Fighter Squadron and the 2nd Fighter Squadron, both from Tyndall AFB, Florida. Supporting these fighter squadrons are KC-135's from the 190th Air Refueling Wing, Kansas Air National Guard, the 161st ARW, Arizona Air National Guard, and controllers of the 117th Air Control Squadron, Georgia Air National Guard.

In the event that the unit does progress in the future to the F-35 aircraft, these types of deployments give the members of the unit an advanced look into the fifth generation fighters they may someday fly and maintain.

This is the first time the 114th FW has participated in Sentry Savannah. It gives the pilots of the unit an opportunity to integrate in a Large Force Exercise with fifth generation aircraft such as the F-22 Raptor from Tyndall AFB. Missions include defensive counter-air, offensive counter-air, and cruise missile defense. They also benefit from the dissimilar basic fighter maneuvering they do with the F-22's.

The Savannah CRTC is a unique military air training facility and an element of the Georgia Air National Guard. The facility is one of four CRTC's that the Air National Guard operates and it gives unit's like the 114th FW an opportunity to train in a new environment and with members of other active duty and Guard units from across the U.S.

Along with the pilots, aircraft maintainers also benefit from deploying to the CRTC.

Because the members of the unit normally serve one weekend a month, these two-week deployments are invaluable for training. As a team, the members are a captive audience and get the opportunity to experience what it is like to have all types of issues arise and how they will be resolved.

Pilots and aircraft maintainers are not the only members it takes to make a deployment such as this work; there are several members of the Support Group who also deploy with the unit. Personnel from 114th Security Forces Squadron, 114th Force Support Squadron, 114th Logistics Readiness Squadron, 114th Medical Group and areas such as finance, safety and public affairs all work jointly to ensure Sentry Savannah is a success.

Thirty members of the 114th Security Forces Squadron deployed with the unit. They have a two-fold mission in Savannah, real-world flight line security of aircraft, and training that includes weapons qualification, building clearing, and shot, move and communicate training.

The movement of personnel, equipment and aircraft is a delicate process to orchestrate, so members of the 114th Logistics Readiness Squadron also deploy to ensure the success of this process.



SD VETERANS RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR DEDICATION TO ASSIST VETERANS

The South Dakota Department of Tribal Relations recently presented Royce Loesch of Pierre and Gerald Lyttle of Fort Thompson with honors in a ceremony held recently at the Capitol Rotunda in Pierre.

Steve Emery, Secretary of the Department of Tribal Relations, and Larry Zimmerman, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, presented the plaques recognizing the two men for their dedication to helping and working to improve the relations between Native American Veterans and South Dakota Veterans.

Loesch said, "It was such a great honor to receive this kind of recognition and it means so much to me because I know a lot of native veterans who I consider family." "The native veterans in South Dakota are very patriotic and very proud of serving in the armed forces of the United States of America and we are all family."



SDDVA CONTINUES OUTREACH

Last week, SDDVA's Steve Oliva and Shane Olivier met with the 155th Family Readiness Group (FRG).

This was an informal small group discussion regarding deployment and return home items of interest. As always, these outreach events afford us the opportunity to highlight the benefits and services available to veterans and their families.



Upcoming Events

- Feb. 12-14—American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Huron Crossroads
- Mar. 3—SFVAHCS Art Show
- May 10—SDDVA Mini Conference—Rapid City
- May 11—SDDVA Mini Conference Pierre—American Legion Post 8—520 S. Pierre Street
- May 12—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings— City/County Building—520 3rd Street—Suite 300
- Mar. 12—SFVAHCS Variety Show
- Mar. 14-20—National Salute to Hospitalized Veterans
- Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
- April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City—Adoba
- Apr. 20—Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
- Jun. 16-19—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota—Watertown
- Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
- Jul. 23-24—Sioux Falls Air Show
- Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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