



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



OPERATION BLACK HILLS CABIN RECOGNIZED

Representative Mike Verchio, District 30, introduced and secured passage of House Commemoration 1005, which honors the fifth anniversary of Operation Black Hills Cabin (OBHC).

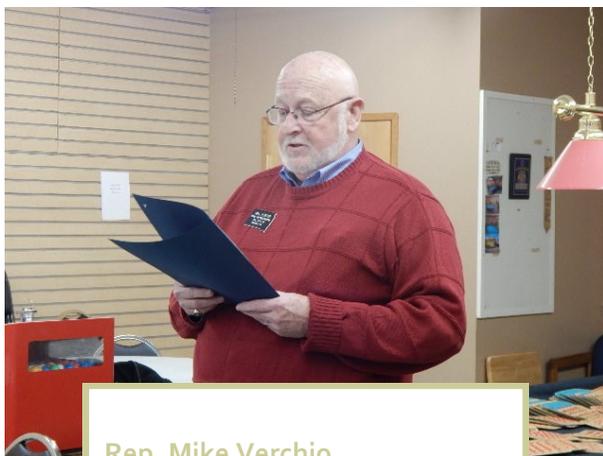
The commemoration recognizes the board of directors, volunteers, and community leaders at OBHC as outstanding caretakers of those who served.

Operation Black Hills Cabin will celebrate its fifth anniversary on March 25, 2016. Their mission has been to provide Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation New Dawn combat-injured veterans and their families with a comfortable, peaceful, and supportive respite to reconnect veterans with themselves and



their families.

OBHC has done an outstanding job of developing partnerships with area businesses who in turn have donated meals, stocked the cupboards, and provided entry coupons at tourist attractions for the families, making their stay at OBHC virtually free.



Rep. Mike Verchio

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FITZMAURICE STATUE IS PLACED AT STATE VETERANS HOME



Last week, Sculptor Darwin Wolff delivered the life-size bronze statue of Michael J. Fitzmaurice.

The statue, "Evening Before Khe Sanh," is sculptor Wolff's interpretation of how Fitzmaurice appeared the evening before he earned the Medal of Honor.

MJF Veterans Home staff assisted as the team positioned the statue on the base in the main entrance lobby.

Wolff began sculpting in 1979 at Northern State University where he cast bronze for the first time and was hooked. The romantic idea of creating something from nothing in a material that would survive for generations, along with the excitement and rush of pouring molten bronze, were too much to resist. "There aren't that many people in the world who can do what I do. Canvas will burn but it takes over twelve hundred degrees to melt bronze. I want to leave things behind that my great-grandkids will see."

We encourage you to watch the YouTube video of Medal of Honor Recipient Michael J. Fitzmaurice. The link to his story is:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uUw1-hfRccc>



Sculptor Wolff and MJF Veterans Home Supt. Brad Richardson

MESSAGE FROM SECRETARY ZIMMERMAN

During the month of December I walked around with an adrenaline rush from all the holiday goodies I was sneaking! And now the month of January has provided me with an outburst of rewarding experiences that I will never forget.

At a Jan. 12 ceremony in the State Capitol and in numerous communities throughout South Dakota, over 450 South Dakota veterans were recognized for their service during the Korean War and were presented the Korean Ambassador Peace Medal. This day and this celebration exemplified the partnership we share with the Republic of Korea, and the brotherhood those who have served will always possess. It was a true honor to share this day with true heroes from the Korean War and true patriots from our great state and the Republic of Korea.

Although the Korean War was sandwiched between World War II and the Vietnam Conflict, these heroes will not be forgotten. Our Department and our partners will continue to find these heroes and thank them for their service.

If you missed the ceremony, our dear friends at South Dakota Public Broadcast have archived the video and are making DVDs of the ceremony available (<http://shop.sdpb.org/index.php?p=product&id=330>).

Jan. 13 was moving day at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home. Our heroes now live in a neighborhood concept nursing facility. Each of the eight individual neighborhoods has its own unique personality and care level.

Our new home is organized in a way intended to maximize normal living environments and routines. The residents are given more privacy and control over their own lives. Staff become family, and therefore have more investment in the residents quality of life. This is not your traditional nursing home and we look forward to showcasing it.

In partnering with the South Dakota Department of Tribal Relations, we closed the month of January with a Tribal Relations celebration. Our staff had the opportunity to brief tribal leaders on the programs and services available to their veterans. And our staff, in turn, got to hear first-hand about the challenges that our nine tribes face on a daily basis. We truly enjoyed being a part of this celebration and applaud the efforts of our tribal leaders for the difference they make in our veteran's lives.

As always, thank you for all that you do for our veterans and their families. Never stop thanking them for their service.



Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

WWII VETERAN BAZIL MURRAY HONORED BY SUTTON RODEO



Our very own Bazil “Bud” Murray, a resident at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home and World War II Veteran, was honored by Sutton Rodeo during the Military Appreciation Day, Saturday, January 30.

Bud was a radio operator/gunner in a B25 which flew in the Burma area of operation during WWII. He is also a member of the South Dakota Aviation Hall of Fame.

SDDVA STAFF ATTEND USS SOUTH DAKOTA DINNER

SDDVA Field Officer Mike Maske and Program Manager Steve Oliva attended the USS South Dakota dinner held at the Disabled Veterans of America in Sioux Falls this week. Approximately 70 people in attendance heard from USS South Dakota’s commanding officer, Commander Ronald Withrow, and four members of the boat’s crew.

While the new submarine is still a few years off from its maiden voyage, a contest is underway to design its emblem. The contest began on Wednesday and will conclude on Mar. 15. A winner will be selected from four classes of entries: elementary school, middle school, high school and open class. Prizes will be given to the top three entries from each class. Entry forms may be found on the *USS South Dakota* [website](http://www.argusleader.com/story/news/2016/02/03/south-dakota-submarine-carry-world-war-ii-legacy/79767872/).

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USS SOUTH DAKOTA

When thinking about South Dakota, naval prowess might not be the first thing to come to mind. Still, our state has a strong and proud naval history – from the men and women who have answered the call to serve to the ships that have borne the name USS South Dakota.

In the twentieth century, two naval battleships were named after our great state: the USS South Dakota (ACR-9) commissioned in 1908 and the USS South Dakota (BB-57) commissioned in 1942.

The BB-57 was one of the most decorated warships of World War II.

Now, our state is being honored a third time. The U.S. Navy has commissioned a new USS South Dakota, the SSN-790. This Virginia-class submarine is already under construction and is expected to be completed in August of 2018. It will be the first submarine to bear the name USS South Dakota.



This namesake will be more than a fleeting, ceremonial connection between the new submarine and our state. A commissioning committee has been brought aboard to support events surrounding the submarine's keel laying, christening and commissioning. Perhaps more importantly, the committee will work to forge a relationship between the state and the submarine for the duration of its service.

The SSN 790 represents more than just a submarine. It offers an opportunity to continue the USS South Dakota's history of protecting our nation.

VABHHCS ANNOUNCES PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD EXTENDED ON EIS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced an extension of the public comment period through March 6, 2016. The public comment period began on October 28, 2015 and was scheduled to close on February 5, 2016. VA BHHCS decided to extend the public comment period for an additional thirty days to allow more time to review and write comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) regarding the re-configuration of the Black Hills Health Care System.

"I've heard from some of our stakeholders that more time is needed to review and study the lengthy DEIS document," said Sandra Horsman, Director, VA Black Hills Health Care System. "Public input is such an important part of the EIS process. We've listened and are now pleased to announce that veterans and the public have even more time to submit their comments."

The DEIS document and additional resources are available for download on the VA BHHCS webpage at: www.blackhills.va.gov/vablackhillsfuture. The document is also available at the following public libraries: Hot Springs, Rapid City Downtown, Sturgis, Chadron, Alliance, Lied Scottsbluff, and Pierre (Rawlins Municipal) public libraries; as well as in Pine Ridge at the Oglala Lakota College Pine Ridge Center library on the high school campus. Written comments can be submitted on the Draft EIS through March 6, 2016, online at www.blackhillseis.com, by email to vablackhillsfuture@va.gov, or by regular mail to Staff Assistant to the Director, VA BHHCS, 113 Comanche Road, Fort Meade, SD 57741.

BROWN HONORED AT BABY SHOWER

SDDVA staff honored State Veterans Service Officer Erin Brown at a baby shower this week.

Upon the arrival of little Baby Brown, Erin will be taking some leave to enjoy her new little gift. The team at the Claims Office stand ready to assist any CTVSOs that had been working with Brown.



ZIMMERMAN AND POLLARD ATTEND VSO LEGISLATIVE RECEPTIONS

This week the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion held legislative receptions in Pierre. These gatherings afford the service organizations the opportunity to visit with legislators about current legislative issues.

"We appreciate the opportunity to attend these gatherings," said SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman. "Visiting one-on-one with veterans is what it's all about."

Upcoming Events

Feb. 6—Valentines for Veterans Concert—Sioux Falls Pavilion
 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
 May 12—SDDVA Mini Conference—Brookings
 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)
 Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

SDDVA Mini Conferences— 10:00 am—
 3:00 pm
 May 10—Rapid City
 May 11—Pierre
 May 12—Brookings



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

