



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



## MILITARY CHILD'S TABLE SETTING DISPLAYED IN SOLDIERS AND SAILORS ROTUNDA

As we honor our veterans and our service members, it is important that we remember to honor those at home as well. In 1986 Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger recognized the importance of military –connected children and their role in military families when he established the “Month of the Military Child,” underscoring the important role military children play in the armed forces community.

In honor of these children, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will have the “Military Child’s Table Setting” on display in the rotunda of the Soldiers and Sailors Building during April.

The Display contains:

- The potted flowering plant—symbolizing that the children of our deployed may flower and flourish where they are planted.
- The hand spade—recognizing that the military children may be transplanted to a new location. They must acclimate themselves to a new school, new friends and perhaps new culture.
- The birthday cake and unlit candles symbolize birthdays and special events that their soldier will miss while they are away.
- The baseball and glove represent the games they have without the cheering from their deployed loved one.
- The ballet slippers signify there are many special occasions that go without the deployed loved one sharing in the joys of that day.
- The family photo depicting a child with their uniformed parents represents the foundation of our country’s strength of families united in their commitment to national service and their sacrifices.



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## ROUNDS COSPONSORS BILL TO INCREASE BENEFITS FOR VETERANS

Senator Mike Rounds, a member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, cosponsored the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2017, bipartisan legislation to increase veterans' disability benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The bill was introduced by U.S. Sens. Johnny Isakson (Ga.) and Jon Tester (Mont.), chairman and ranking member of the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee, respectively, and cosponsored by every member of the committee.

"Our nation's veterans selflessly committed to defend our freedoms," said Rounds. "With costs rising on everything from groceries to healthcare, our vets and their families deserve to have their compensation and benefits adjusted accordingly."

The Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2017 would increase the rates of VA disability compensation, dependency compensation for surviving children and spouses, as well as the clothing allowance for veterans based on rising costs of living. This cost-of-living adjustment, which would be equal to the amount of the adjustment given to Social Security recipients, is determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index on a yearly basis. The cost-of-living adjustment for veterans would go into effect on Dec. 1, 2017.

## RAPID CITY NATIONAL GUARD UNIT TO DEPLOY TO KUWAIT

More than 90 Soldiers from the South Dakota Army National Guard's Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment have received a mobilization order for a yearlong deployment to Kuwait beginning in October.

The mission of the Rapid City-based 1-189th is to provide aerial medical evacuation support with its HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters. The company is comprised of pilots, crew chiefs, medics, aviation operations specialists and other support personnel.

The unit will report to Fort Hood, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas.

This will be the third mobilization for the unit which deployed to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn from 2011-2012 and supported peacekeeping operations in Kosovo from 2008-2009.



## RAPID CITY POLICE DEPT. NAMED FINALIST FOR DOD TOP EMPLOYER AWARD

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense office, has selected the Rapid City Police Department as a finalist for the 2017 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award.

The Freedom Award is the highest recognition given by the DoD to employers for their support of National Guard and Reserve members.

On behalf of the secretary of defense, ESGR organizes the annual award program, which has presented the honor to 235 employers since 1996. Each year, up to 15 awards are presented to employers in the three categories - large (500 or more employees), small (fewer than 500 employees), and public sector.

The group represents large and small employers from almost every industry, as well as from state and local governments.

"Rapid City Police Department's selection as a finalist puts them in the top one percent of more than 3,000 nominations," said Ron Mielke, SD ESGR state chair. "Their selection sets them aside as one of the elite employers who demonstrates their absolute dedication and support to their employees who serve in the National Guard and Reserve. We wish them the best as they continue through the selection process for this very prestigious award."

Almost half of the U.S. military is made up of National Guard and Reserve members, many of whom also hold jobs with civilian employers. The Freedom Award recognizes those employers that provide the most outstanding support for these Citizen Warriors. This year's recipients will be honored at the Pentagon in an official ceremony in August.

ESGR received 3,064 nominations for employers in all 50 states, Guam-CNMI, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia. This year's Freedom Award recipients will be announced in late June. A complete list of the 30 finalists can be found at <http://www.freedomaward.mil/media/press-releases/itemid/768/list-of-2017-freedom-award-finalists>.

## GROUND BREAKING FOR NEW VA CLINIC IN DAKOTA DUNES

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System invites area veterans and their families, veterans' advocates and community residents to a ground breaking for the new VA Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Dakota Dunes, SD on April 12, 2017. The brief, stand-up ceremony will take place at 1:00 PM (CT) at the site of the new clinic at 365 W. Anchor Drive.

Construction is expected to take approximately one year. When completed, this clinic will replace the existing VA outpatient clinic at 1551 Indian Hills Drive in Sioux City Iowa. The new location will provide an additional 17,000 square feet to accommodate the patient aligned care team growth and add space for mental health providers and specialty care services.

The clinic will continue to provide health care services to Veterans in rural Iowa and South Dakota.

## SDNG SURINAME MILITARY PARTICIPATE IN WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP EXCHANGE

Members of the South Dakota National Guard and Suriname Defense Force participated in a Women in Leadership exchange, March 3-5. Four women from the Suriname military met with Soldiers and Airmen throughout eastern South Dakota to understand the support services and programs provided to SDNG members and the types of opportunities for females to serve.

The exchange was conducted as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program, which seeks to strengthen ties between partnering country's representatives, both culturally and professionally, through engagement on military topics and capabilities. The Suriname delegation was hosted by members of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and 139th Brigade Support Battalion and they visited several Army and Air Guard units.

The exchange began with a tour of the Air National Guard base at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls, where the Surinamers received a 114th Fighter Wing overview brief from Col. Nathan Alholinna, 114th FW commander. One of the first 114th female F-16 pilots, Capt. Shannon Davis, also talked about her experience in training and being a member of the SDANG.

The Suriname delegation also visited the Army Guard's Unit Training and Equipment Site to gain a better understanding of the maintenance level provided to units and their equipment.

They were also provided briefs on the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, Family Readiness, Recruiting and Retention, Sexual Assault Response and Equal Employment Opportunity programs and what each program provides to Soldiers and Airmen.

The Suriname women later visited the 196th MEB, 139th BSB and 235th Military Police Company and received an overview of each unit's structure and was able to see some the equipment they use to train Soldiers.

The delegation next traveled to Watertown where they met with Soldiers from the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion and Company A, 139th BSB. The 1-147th had a number of their female Soldiers attend the visit where they spoke about the transition of female Soldiers into the battalion and recently into one of their batteries.

For the past 10 years, the SDNG and SDF have successfully partnered together to establish a security cooperation relationship in coordination with USSOUTHCOM under the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program. The partnership has flourished during the past decade becoming a model for mutual security cooperation.

Since 2006, Soldiers from both countries have conducted over 100 subject matter exchanges through the program, which have benefitted men and women from both organizations to gain knowledge and experience in both military operations and civilian culture.



## VA AWARDS GRANTS TO DEVELOP TECHNOLOGY TO HELP VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS MODIFY HOMES

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the awarding of \$599,802 in Specially Adapted Housing Assistive Technology (SAHAT) Grants to eligible individuals, researchers, and organizations to develop new technology that may enhance veterans' and service members' ability to live in a specially adapted home.

The program was authorized by Congress to design assistive technology to expand home modification options for veterans who apply for VA's Specially Adapted Housing (SAH) benefit. Grants of up to \$200,000 are issued to selected grantees.

"We are honored to award funding for the 2017 grant cycle. We are very excited to see how the finished assistive technology projects will enhance the residential lives of our veterans with severe disabilities," said Curtis L. Coy, Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity. "These new technologies provide innovative solutions to help program participants live more independently within their homes."

The VA issued the SAHAT Grant program Notice of Funding Availability in January via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and the Federal Register. To foster competition and best serve the needs of veterans and service members, the VA did not limit the type of entity or individual eligible to apply. There was no restriction on the number of grants that could be awarded within the \$1 million funding limit.

The VA administers the SAH benefit to help veterans and service members with service-connected disabilities purchase or modify a home. Typical adaptations include ramps, wider halls and doors, or wheelchair accessible bathrooms. New technology from the SAHAT Grants will be added to the list of home modification options as they become available.

SAHAT Grants have been awarded to the following: (My'deas, LLC Assistive Technology that Facilitates Independent Living for Veterans with Disabilities \$200,000 Woburn, MA,) (Prehensile Technologies RoboTable: A Robotic Overbed Table for Independently Accessing Mobile Devices from Bed \$199,802 West Lafayette, IN), and the (University of Pittsburgh IoT-Enabled Home Safety Assistance for People with Cognitive Impairments \$200,000 Pittsburgh, PA).

## SDPB RADIO INTERVIEWS USD STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN VETERAN HISTORY PROJECT

South Dakota Public Broadcast radio recently interviewed the USD students who researched Clay County Fallen heroes. You can listen to the ten minute interview at the link below.

<http://listen.sdpb.org/post/moment-legislative-session-recap-governor-dennis-daugaard>

Scroll down the page till you see the story-line for Associate Professor Jing Williams — click on the listen button below the paragraph.

Special thanks to Clay County VSO Cynthia Aden for the role she played in assisting these students with their research.

# Upcoming Events

- Apr 12—SFVAHC Groundbreaking Ceremony for new VA Clinic in Dakota Dunes (365 W. Anchor Drive) - 1:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 13—SFVAHCS Veterans Town Hall—Dakota Playhouse—DSU Campus—Madison—5:00 pm (CT) with Benefits Fair at 4:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 13—Purple Up for Military Kids Day
- Apr 14—All State Offices will be closed
- Apr 19—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
- Apr 22—USD Student Veterans Club 5K Run—10:00 am (CT)
- Apr 28-30—DAV Annual Convention—AmericInn—Fort Pierre
- May 5-6 Veterans Day and Howard Wood Relays
- May 6—Military Order of the Purple Heart Convention—Rapid City Howard Johnson—10:00 am (MT)
- May 12—Improving Combat Veterans Care—Sioux Falls University Center
- Jun 10—SD Marine Corps League Annual Meeting—Pierre Post 8 (520 W. Pierre Street) - 10:00 am (CT)
- Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown—Ramkota
- Jun 22-25—State VFW Convention—Pierre—Ramkota
- Aug 14-17—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre—Ramkota



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