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SDDVA Secretary Whitlock's August Column – There is no Time Like Fair Time!

Whether you're 5, 15, 30, or 50 years of age, or older, the State Fair always promises a great time for all that attend.

Face it, the State Fair is unlike anything that has ever existed. Where else can you inhale a huge plate of fried food while walking toward the carnival rides? Where else can you have a corn dog for your main entree and funnel cake for desert? Where else can you get anything fried on a stick? Where else can you watch grandstand performances and get up on stage for a little Karaoke? Where else can you visit a car show, tractor show, goat tying, arm wrestling, and play arcade games all within a few blocks of each other? Where else can you be right next to celebrities and political candidates and take selfies with them? Where else can you shop, learn, and connect with old friends while tracking five miles on your walk app? The list goes on and so does the fun!

The Fair also provides great opportunities for veterans. We may not be serving up fried pickles, cotton candy, kettle corn, or turkey legs, but we'll have a building full of experts that can answer veterans questions on disability, compensation, healthcare, long term care, home loans, rehabilitation and education, employment and training programs, pension, and death benefits. The Veterans Building, located on Flag Avenue, will be filled with veterans who served, and continue to serve, as they dedicate their lives to enhancing the lives of our veterans. We're just a stones throw away from the midway and our team will be available from 10:00 am – 4:30 pm each day of the Fair.

On Wednesday and Thursday evenings during the Red Wilk Construction Tuff Hedeman Bull Bash, Red and his team will be honoring some very special heroes. Being a Vietnam Veteran himself, he knows the importance of honoring veterans for the sacrifices they have made for their country. Over the years, Red has honored 100 plus veterans from all over South Dakota.

The State Fair is dedicating Thursday, August 29, as a "salute to veterans." The day affords all veterans free gate admission and a day of recognition. Governor Noem and I will be sharing our messages with veterans on the Freedom Stage at 10:30 am and will also be available to visit with our great heroes after the program.

A trip to the state fair is a tradition families have passed on from generation to generation.

Hope to see you there! I'll be in the food court!

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs