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SDDVA Secretary Whitlock's September Column – Taking Care of Heroes – An Unending Legacy

We have learned throughout our history that we can depend upon young Americans to step forward -- like many of us did -- when our country called. That spirit of patriotism and service is perhaps our greatest national treasure, and the most special of blessings.

This month we have had two great events to honor and pay tribute to the men and women that served this great country.

On September 9, we gathered in Sioux Falls for the groundbreaking ceremony for the new state veteran's cemetery.

Dirt work on this project will begin this fall. The first phase of the project will include the construction of the main entrance, roads, flag assembly area, maintenance building, scattering garden, committal service shelter, avenue of flags, a memorial wall, 610 pre-placed crypts, 999 in-ground cremains sites, 660 columbarium niches, 50 memorial wall markers; all in a beautifully landscaped setting in accordance with existing standards set by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

Hours of rain and wind didn't deter veterans, speakers, or guests. This ceremony confirmed the commitment and dedication of our veterans. No matter the weather conditions they stand ready for the mission at hand.

On September 20th, state officials, community leaders, veterans and guests gathered in Hot Springs for the 130th anniversary of the State Veterans Home. Residents, staff, buildings and titles of the Home may have changed; but the one thing that never changed during the 130 years is the commitment, dedication, and service that the staff, volunteers and partners have provided our heroes at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

Our Home has, and continues to, offer a quality of life which emphasizes privacy, encourages independence, provides comfort and security and meets social needs. Our Home embraces a person-centered approach to caring for our residents.

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As veterans age and different era veterans become residents, we are prepared to meet the challenges of these changing needs. Our staff continues to expand and introduce new programs designed to best meet the current, ongoing, and upcoming needs of all veterans. Caring for and maximizing the overall health, welfare and quality of life of South Dakota veterans has been, and will always be, our top priority.

We encourage you to follow us on Facebook or check out our calendar of events on our web page - <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/upcomingevents.aspx>. There are so many great events for veterans.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs