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SDDVA Secretary Whitlock's April Column – South Dakota to Dedicate First State Veterans Cemetery

It's hard to believe that 20 months ago we broke ground for South Dakota's first state veteran's cemetery. The day was cold and wet, but the hearts of those in attendance were warm and full of pride knowing that we were soon going to provide and maintain a dignified final-resting place to honor all eligible veterans and dependents.

The City of Sioux Falls gifted over 60 acres of land for the cemetery. The funding received for Phase 1, from the National Cemetery Administration and the State of South Dakota, allowed for us to construct the main entrance, maintenance building, administration building, scattering garden, committal service shelter, Avenue of Flags, a memorial wall, 610 pre-placed crypts, 999 in-ground cremains sites, and 660 columbarium niches, all in a beautifully landscaped setting in accordance with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs standards.

The cemetery will be expanded as needed and will eventually be capable of providing a final resting place for more than 28,000 veterans and family members.

Our major partners during the construction phase included: the National Cemetery Administration, Stockwell Engineers, Inc., the LA Group, Koch Hazard, Heyer Engineering, Journey Construction, State Engineers Office; as well as numerous subcontractors. We are thankful for all who shared their expertise, commitment, and dedication to this great project.

The staff of the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery is dedicated to providing an honorable place of rest for our veterans; to preserve the dignity, beauty, and serenity of this state-of-the-art facility; and to honor all who sacrificed so much, making possible the freedoms we enjoy today.

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery conveys peace through natural beauty and is a source of pride to veterans, families, and all of South Dakota. The sacrifices our veterans laid upon the altar of freedom will never be forgotten.

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The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will hold the first Memorial Day ceremonial program and a dedication/ribbon cutting ceremony at the State Veterans Cemetery on Monday, May 31, at 2:00 pm (CT). Watch for more detailed information on logistics to be announced in the coming month.

Our greatest duty to the men and women who served this great country is to never, ever forget what they have done for each of us and what they have done for us as a nation.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs