



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## VETERANS BURIAL BENEFITS

In June, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that they will provide a commemorative urn or plaque for a deceased veteran. Families should note that if they select the new urn or plaque option, they cannot inter their loved one at a VA National Cemetery and cannot receive a government-furnished headstone, marker, niche cover, or medallion for placement in any cemetery.

The South Dakota Veterans Cemetery follows the eligibility requirements for burial in a National Cemetery, so it is important to know if the VA provides a commemorative urn or plaque for a veteran, they will not be eligible for burial at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery.

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs wants to emphasize again that if the family chooses to receive a plaque or an urn to commemorate their veteran, the decision cannot be undone. There is no path to restore eligibility. Receipt of a commemorative urn or plaque nullifies eligibility for burial in a National Cemetery, the State Veterans Cemetery, or receipt of a government furnished headstone if the veteran is to be buried in a private cemetery.

As always, we urge all veterans to visit their county or tribal veterans service officers (CTVSO's) to learn more about this program and its implications, as well as all burial benefits.

To locate the CTVSO nearest you visit:

<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary  
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

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Commemorative Urn

# SOUTH DAKOTA DEDICATES THREE MORE FALLEN HERO BRIDGES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs recently hosted three Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication ceremonies.

On June 29th, the US 18 bridge three miles west of SD 37 was dedicated to honor U.S. Army Lieutenant Donald R. Harms and Sergeant Fred H. Harms.

On July 3, the US 85 Bridge over the Belle Fourche River was dedicated to honor U.S. Army



Sergeant Lelund M. Kahler.

On July 10, the US 85 Bridge over the South Fork Grand River, just south of Buffalo, was dedicated to U.S. Army Technician Fifth Class Harald Haraldsen.

Upcoming dedications can be found on pages 17-18 of this newsletter and on our web calendar.



# MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT HONOR RIDE

Over 150 riders participated in the fourth annual Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride June 30 in Sioux Falls.

The event provides a great opportunity to honor veterans, don the leather and ride, and raise funds for Midwest Honor Flight.

The ride started at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance, then traveled on for a slow salute past the Sioux Falls VA Hospital, and concluded with a short program at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery.

“We are always honored to have our part-



ners at Midwest Honor Flight share this event with us,” said South Dakota Veterans Cemetery Director Erin Brown. “Their support for the cemetery and our veterans is demonstrated by their continued participation.”

Midwest Honor Flight has three missions scheduled for this fall.

Sep 25—Mission 21

Oct 8—Mission 22

Oct 15—Mission 23



# SD BRIDGE TO BE DEDICATED IN HONOR OF CPL MCDOWELL

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a State Bridge Dedication Ceremony to honor U.S. Army Corporal John C. McDowell.

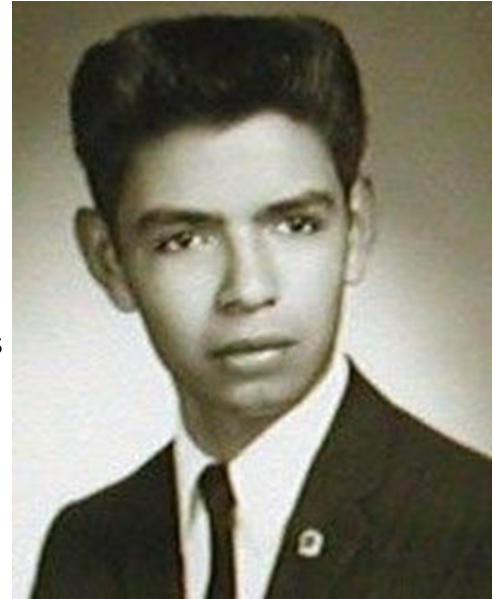
The ceremony will be Wednesday, July 24, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. (CT) at the Travel Plaza in Corsica (HWY 281 and Main Street).

SD44 bridge over Andes Creek, just west of US 281, will be dedicated as the CPL John C. McDowell Bridge.

John began his tour of service on September 30, 1967, during the Vietnam War. A traumatic event ultimately resulted in the loss of his life on January 9, 1968, in Long Kkanh province, South Vietnam.

Naming bridges in honor of our combat veterans who died while serving their country is an initiative of Governor Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Military, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

“Our fallen heroes are no longer with us, but their memories live on in the hearts of their loved ones and our state,” said Greg Whitlock, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. “Naming our South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen gives us the opportunity for remembrance, reflection, and respect. It helps us to honor the men and women



who gave their lives in service to this nation. They cherished liberty and loved freedom enough to lay down their lives to preserve our way of life.”

“We can never underestimate or over appreciate the costs they bore for us,” said Whitlock. “We must never forget that our fallen sacrificed their future and their dreams. Their memories can only live through the accomplishments to present and future generations.”

**SOUTH DAKOTA FALLEN HERO  
BRIDGE DEDICATION**

**State of South Dakota to  
dedicate state bridge honoring  
U.S. Army CPL John C. McDowell**

**Wednesday – July 24 at 11:00 am (CT)  
Travel Plaza– Corsica, SD  
(HWY 281 and Main Street)**

# SD BRIDGE TO BE DEDICATED IN HONOR OF CPL FERDIG

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a State Bridge Dedication Ceremony to honor U.S. Army Corporal Russell N. Ferdig.

The ceremony will be Friday, July 19, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. (CT) at the Elk Point United Parish (2102 E. Main Street).

The 477<sup>th</sup> Avenue bridge over I-29 at Exit 15 will be dedicated to CPL Ferdig.

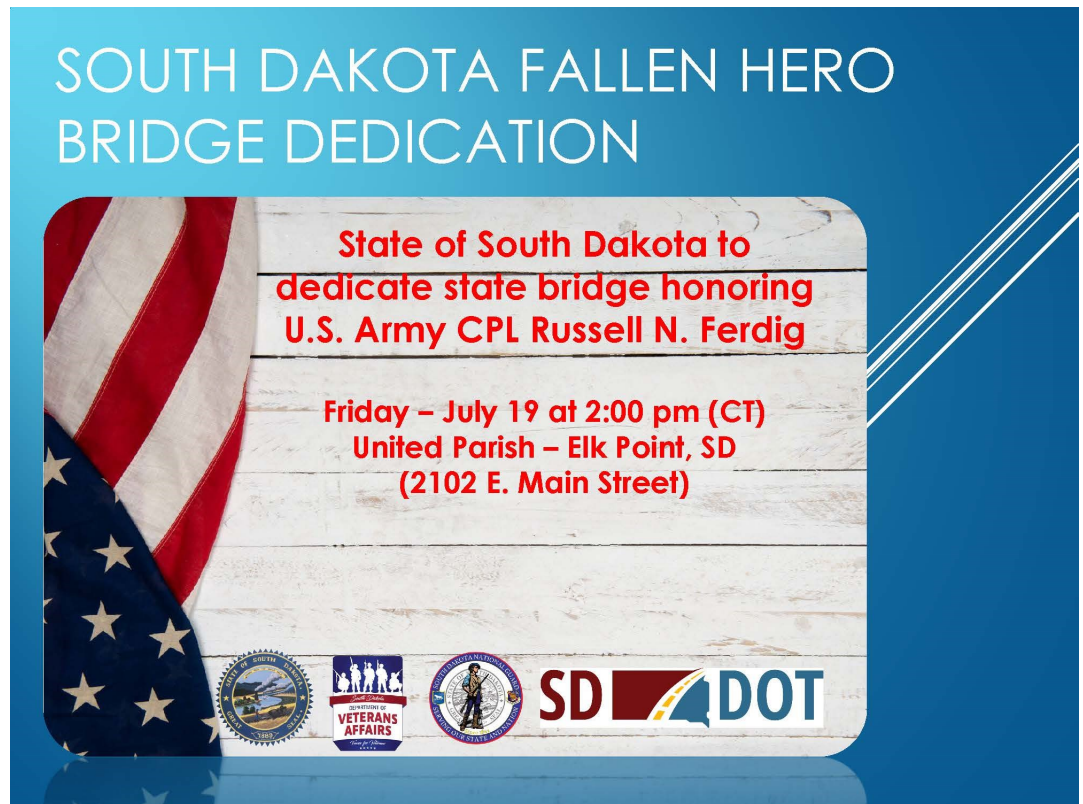
Ferdig experienced a traumatic event which ultimately resulted in loss of life September 8, 1968, in South Vietnam, Hoa Nghia province.

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Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Military, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

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“We can never underestimate or over appreciate the costs they bore for us,” said Whitlock. “We must never forget that our fallen sacrificed their future and their dreams. Their memories can only live through the accomplishments to present and future generations.”



# SDNG PROMOTES NEW COMMAND CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER—ADEL TO CW5

Brian Adel of Summerset was promoted to the rank of chief warrant officer five (CW5) in the South Dakota Army National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters during a ceremony held on June 14, 2024.

Adel was recently assigned as the new SDNG Command Chief Warrant Officer (CCWO), replacing Chief Warrant Officer 5 Wayne Walker who is transitioning into retirement. The CCWO is responsible for advising the adjutant general on topics that impact the Warrant Officer Corps, providing leadership and mentoring to warrant officers, and recruiting soldiers to become warrant officers for various career fields.

“I’d like to thank Maj. Gen. Morrell and Brig. Gen. Dailey for this opportunity,” stated Adel. I am humbled by this selection and will do my best to meet their expectations. My biggest goal as CCWO is to fill our warrant officer vacancies and I am looking forward to gathering new ideas from the warrant officers across the state and working to implement those ideas.”



Col. Corey Norris, director of human resources, was the emcee for the promotion ceremony. Norris stated, “Brian is a man who is deeply connected with his family. He is a humble, servant leader that does not seek the spotlight.”

Adel started his military career in March 1986 with the 137th Engineer Battalion in Wagner. He began his full-time career with the SDNG in 1991 and was pinned as a warrant officer in April 2007. Adel has held several key technical positions during his warrant officer career and is currently assigned as the full-time Active Guard and Reserve (AGR) Manager in the Human Resources Office.

Adel has deployed to Iraq with the 200th Engineer Company in 2003-2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

*9th Annual*

HOT SPRINGS CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



FALL RIVER HOT AIR BALLOON FESTIVAL

**AUG 23-25, 2024**

FREE ADMISSION

Up to 25 Balloons\*  
(At Hot Springs Municipal Airport)

Night Glow (Saturday At Dusk, At Centennial  
Park & South Dakota State Veterans Home)\*

Free Kid Zone (At Centennial Park)\*

Live Music (Friday at Centennial Park)\*

Vendors (Friday & Saturday At Centennial Park)\*

Thank you to our Sponsors:

**McGAS**



MOCCASIN SPRINGS  
NATURAL MINERAL SPA  
HOT SPRINGS, SD



Scan for Full Schedule:



**\*ALL  
events are  
weather  
permitting**

Or visit [fallriverballoonfest.com](http://fallriverballoonfest.com)

# SDDVA STAFF UPDATE



Jethel Curry

Please join us in welcoming two new members to our SDDVA Claims Office staff as veterans service officers.

Jethel Curry is a United States Navy Veteran who served during Desert Storm. She is also a licensed Practical Nurse and mother of six children ages 13-33! Jethel was born in New Jersey but raised in Georgia and Tennessee and she relocated to Sioux Falls six years ago.

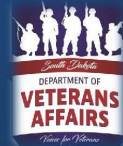
Chad Rydberg served in the South Dakota Air National Guard from 1987 to 2014. He is from Dell Rapids and is a graduate of SDSU with a Bachelor's of Science Degree.



Chad Rydberg

Their email addresses are: [Chad.Rydberg@va.gov](mailto:Chad.Rydberg@va.gov) and [Jethel.Curry@va.gov](mailto:Jethel.Curry@va.gov).

Heading to the South Dakota State Fair?



## VISIT OUR BOOTH - #5A EXPO BUILDING



Staff from the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be at the South Dakota State Fair all week. Look for us in the Expo Building (Booth# 5A). This team will be able to update veterans on state and federal benefits, programs, and services.



# AMERICA'S 250TH SOUTH DAKOTA COMMISSION LAUNCHES WALKING CHALLENGE

The America's 250<sup>th</sup> South Dakota Commission has announced the launch of "Walk 250 Miles by 2026." It's the first of many events in South Dakota meant to celebrate the anniversary of the nation's founding in 2026.

"The ultimate goal is to complete 250 miles of outdoor exercise while visiting historic locations throughout the state," said Dr. Ben Jones, director of the South Dakota State Historical Society. "Participants will have from July 4, 2024, to July 4, 2026, to complete the challenge."

The walking challenge encourages individuals to get outside, exercise, and enjoy the historical significance of their surroundings. Participants track their own miles and submit them through an online form. Participants can earn prizes based on miles completed and locations visited.

"We have numerous trails across the state, and this gives individuals the opportunity to explore our outdoor resources and take in the history as well," said Nick Harrington, South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks communications manager. "We're excited for individuals to learn about our history and make their own memories in the outdoors."

The commission has partnered with the City of Deadwood, Department of Game, Fish & Parks, the Battleship South Dakota Memorial, and the South Dakota State Fair to create miles-based challenges for additional prizes.

Candidates will also be able to work towards smaller milestones such as walking 80 miles in honor of 80 years since the launch of Operation OVERLORD during World War II or walking 150 miles to celebrate Deadwood's anniversary. As the program begins, additional challenges will be announced.

More information can be found on the [SDHS website](#).



# MJFSVH UPDATE



Treg Kilby

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs has had three new staff members join our team at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

Treg Kilby will be working the overnight shifts as a parttime CNA. He was born and raised in Hot Springs. When not at work, Treg enjoys spending time with family and friends as well as traveling.

Taylor Horton will also be working overnight shifts as a parttime CNA. She currently is enrolled in the nursing program at SDSU in Rapid City! When not at work or at school, you will find Taylor enjoy reading, being on the beach and cuddling with her cat.

Steven McCabe has joined our maintenance staff. Steve is from Custer and loves riding his Harley and spoiling his grandchildren.



Taylor Horton

Special thanks to our new dietary services vendor for the great spread they provided for residents, their families, and staff at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home on the Fourth of July!



Steven McCabe



# SANFORD SCHOLARSHIP

Sanford Health is currently accepting applications for four \$5,000 scholarships awarded annually to veterans, Guard/ Reserve members or active-duty military service members who have demonstrated leadership and commitment in their community.

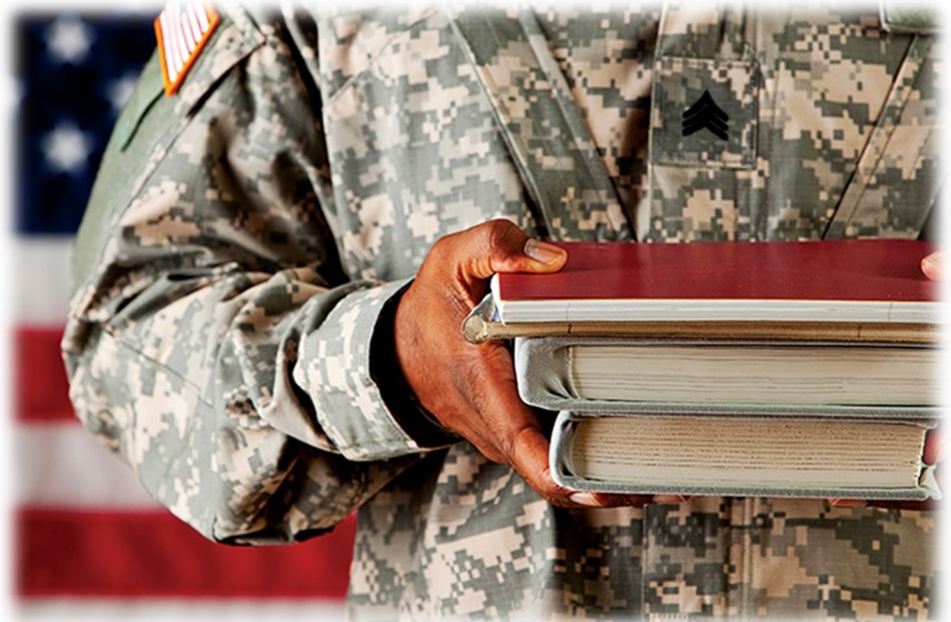
The Sanford Health Military and Veteran Scholarship honors those who have furthered their own progress and enriched the lives of others, especially in service, academics and community involvement.

Applicants must be a veteran, Guard/Reserve or active-duty military service member and a full-time student pursuing a community college/vocational, bachelor's, graduate or professional degree from an accredited U.S.-based institution of higher education. They must also have at least one full year of education remaining.

The scholarship is administered by the Sanford Health Department of Veterans and Military Services and was created in 2018 as part of the health system's efforts to serve veterans and military personnel through patient care, employment opportunities and community outreach.

[Sanford Health currently offers numerous scholarships](#), including the [Sanford Health Equity in Education Scholarship](#). That scholarship is available to first-generation Americans, first-generation college students and nontraditional students of at least 25 years of age.

Scholarship applications are due by September 30, 2024. Veterans and service members can apply online at: [Sanford Health Military and Veteran Scholarship \(smartsheet.com\)](https://smartsheet.com).





**JULY 12TH, 2024 • 5-8 PM**  
**NERDY NUTS BUILDING CENTRAL**  
**STATES FAIRGROUNDS**

**ENTERTAINMENT INCLUDES 147TH ARMY BAND, SOUTH  
DAKOTA NATIONAL GUARD**



**VA BLACK HILLS**  
*Presents*



**Whole  
Health  
Fair**

**JOIN US IN PERSON FROM 10A-2P**

**VETERANS AND  
CAREGIVERS WELCOME**



**COME & LEARN WHAT  
VA BLACK HILLS HAS  
TO OFFER YOU!**

*Dates* **JULY 16TH HOT SPRINGS  
CANTEEN  
JULY 23RD RAPID CITY  
LOBBY**

**QUESTIONS: [VHBHEVENTREGISTRATION@VA.GOV](mailto:VHBHEVENTREGISTRATION@VA.GOV)**



**Live Whole Health. Whole Health**

Start exploring what matters to you

Join fellow Veterans and be empowered to explore what matters most to you, support one another as you set and achieve goals, and learn ways to optimize your health and well-being.

Complete your personal health inventory, create SMART Goals, and engage in self-care activities.

All Veterans Welcome

# Groups Available

**Hot Springs First Monday of Each Month at 1:00 PM**

Black Hills V-Tel Room Bldg.53 Room 102

**Rapid City CBOC, First Tuesday of Each Month 3:00 PM**

Check in at the Mental Health Waiting Area

**Fort Meade, First Thursday of Each Month 3:00 PM**

Check in at Bldg. 145 Room 108 Education Class Room



**DISCOVER  
WHAT MATTERS  
TO YOU.**

**Live Whole Health.**

# TAKING CHARGE OF MY LIFE AND HEALTH



Join fellow Veterans and be empowered to explore what matters most to you, support one another as you set and achieve goals and learn ways to optimize your health and well-being.

Complete your Personal Health Inventory, create SMART Goals and engage in self-care activities.

All Veterans welcome.

## Groups offered:

Beginning July 18, 2024  
Thursdays at 2pm in the Rapid  
City CBOC

Contact Person: Ryan Brown, Peer Support  
Specialist  
605-347-2511 x 17637

**Sign up today:**  
Black Hills VA Medical Center  
Phone: 605-347-2511 x17637



# **22nd Annual Show & Shine**

## **Car & Motorcycle Show**

**Aug. 14, 2024 | 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.**



**Sioux Falls VA  
2501 W 22nd St  
Sioux Falls, SD**

**HAVE QUESTIONS? [vhasuxvoluntary@va.gov](mailto:vhasuxvoluntary@va.gov) | 605-333-6806**



# UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jul 15—6th Annual Tee it up for the Troops Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—Arrowhead Country Club—(3675 Sheridan Lake Road)—Rapid City—7:15 am (MT)
- Jul 17—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 17—(802 S. Main St)—Aberdeen
- Jul 19—CPL Russell N. Ferdig Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—United Parish—(2102 E. Main Street)—Elk Point—2:00 pm (CT)
- Jul 24—CPL John C. McDowell Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Travel Plaza—(HWY 281 and Main Street)—Corsica—11:00 am (CT)
- Jul 27—2nd Annual Korean War/Defense Veterans Appreciation Day—Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center—(2810 22nd Avenue S)—Brookings—12:00 noon
- Jul 27—Homecoming Celebration for American Legion State Auxiliary President Annamae Warnier—Morning-side Event Center—Alcester—3:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 1—2—South Dakota Suicide Prevention Conference—Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls
- Aug 2—PFC John Tuin Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—American Legion Post 184—(222 Main Street)—Estelline—1:30 pm (CT)
- Aug 5—RM2 Eugene L., RM2 Ordien F., and LT LeRoy M. Herr Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—High School Gym—(500 S. 3rd Street) Bristol— 1:30 pm (CT)
- Aug 10—SGT Terry G. Rada Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Multi Purpose Center—(409 Michigan Avenue)—Geddes—12:00 noon (CT)
- Aug 14—Sioux Falls VA Show and Shine—2501 W. 22nd Street—Sioux Falls—5:00 pm—8:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 17—SGT Dennis D. Lawver Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—American Legion Post—(402 S. Broadway Avenue)—Miller—2:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 17—Homecoming Celebration for American Legion State Commander Kevin Morello—Old Auditorium—16159 2nd Street—Piedmont—1:00 pm (MT)
- Aug 18—PFC Gunnar D. Becker Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Sanborn County 4-H Building—(23237 405th Avenue)—Forestburg—2:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 21—SD Veterans Council Meeting—VFW Post 791—(209 S. Cedar)—Yankton
- Aug 21—1LT Daniel J. Kirchgessler Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Security First Bank Court of Champions located in St Thomas More High School—(300 Fairmont Blvd)—Rapid City—2:00 pm (MT)
- Aug 26—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—The Barrel House—(4701 E. 54th St)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—8:00 pm (CT)
- Aug 28—Sep 2—SD State Fair—Huron
- Aug 29—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair—Northwest Energy Freedom Stage—Huron
- Sep 3—5—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls
- Sep 18—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Rapid City
- Sep 25—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 21—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- Oct 8—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 22—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- Oct 12—Midwest Honor Flight “Shake Rattle and Roll” fundraiser—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St)—Sioux Falls

(Continued)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

- Oct 15—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 23—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—(1201 N. West Ave)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (CT)
- Oct 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post—(1229 Western Ave)—Brookings
- Nov 9—Fifth Annual Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair We've Got Your Six—Sturgis Community Center—(1401 Lazelle Street)—Sturgis—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
- Nov 9—Third Annual Day County Veterans Banquet—Webster Armory—5:00 pm (CT)
- Nov 11—1LT Josef Thorne Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Beresford High School Gym—(301 W. Maple Street) — Beresford—1:30 pm (CT)
- Nov 18—Wreaths Across America Fundraiser—The Barrel House—(4701 E. 54th St)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—8:00 pm (CT)
- Nov 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV—(1519 W. 51st St)—Sioux Falls
- Nov 20—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Sioux Falls
- Nov 21—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Watertown
- Nov 22—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Rapid City
- Nov 23—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Pierre
- Dec 3—Governor's Budget Address—1:00 pm
- Dec 14—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)

## 2025 Events

- Jan 14—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm
- Jan 14—Legislative Session starts
- Jan 15—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Pierre
- Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
- Jun 12—15—VFW State Convention—Ramkota—Pierre
- Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
- Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)

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