



NEWSLETTER

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



NAMING SD BRIDGES: HONORING FALLEN HEROES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) is now accepting nominations for South Dakota’s Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication program.

In South Dakota, a powerful initiative is underway to name bridges in memory of the men and women from South Dakota who gave their lives in service to our country. This gesture offers us an opportunity for remembrance, reflection, and respect, ensuring that the sacrifices made by these brave individuals are never forgotten.

By naming these bridges in honor of fallen service members, the state not only recognizes their courage but also provides a tangible symbol of our collective gratitude. Each bridge represents more than just a structure of concrete and steel—it stands as a lasting tribute to the sacrifices made for our freedom.

This initiative not only gives us a space to honor the fallen but also encourages us to reflect on our responsibility to uphold the values they fought for.

Every time we cross one of these bridges, we can be reminiscent of the legacy of those who serve, reminding future generations of the cost of freedom.

Nominations, with all supporting documentation, are due by April 1 to the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. The simple, online form is available on the [Bridge Dedications page](#) on the SDDVA website. Nominators are encouraged to indicate their preferred state bridge site for their respective hero.

South Dakota has dedicated 53 bridges honoring 59 heroes since 2019. To learn more about the program and to view stories on bridge honorees, visit the Bridge Dedications page on [the SDDVA website](#).

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VETERANS GET MORE TIME TO TRANSITION TO NEW ONLINE LOGIN SYSTEM

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs announced it will provide veterans additional time to transition to a new online login system that lets them more quickly and securely access information about their VA health care and benefits.

In July, the VA announced a [phase out of My HealtheVet and DS Logon sign-in options](#), in favor of two new options, Login.gov and ID.me, which will help the department offer stronger protections for veterans, families and caregivers.

With today's announcement, the VA is extending the final deadline by which veterans and beneficiaries can log in to VA.gov, VA mobile applications and other VA online services using their My HealtheVet username and password from Jan. 31, 2025, to March 4, 2025. The deadline to switch from DS Logon to ID.me or Login.gov remains Sept. 30, 2025.

Most VA beneficiaries are already using Login.gov and ID.me to access My HealtheVet and other VA digital services, but the VA will use this additional time to ensure as many veterans and beneficiaries as possible make the switch before the old My HealtheVet username and password system is retired March 4. In addition, the VA is increasing outreach to veterans who have yet to make the switch and will provide in-person assistance at VA Medical Centers across the nation.

All VA beneficiaries are encouraged to visit [Prepare For VA's Secure Sign-In Changes | Veterans Affairs](#) to learn more.

Prepare for VA's secure sign-in changes

In 2025, you'll need to start using a Login.gov or ID.me account to sign in.

[▶ Learn how to create an account](#)



VA ANNOUNCES RETURN TO IN-PERSON WORK POLICY

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs announced its return to in-person work policy, which states eligible employees must work full-time at their respective duty stations (agency worksites) unless excused due to a disability, qualifying medical condition or other compelling reason.

The announcement follows President Trump's Jan. 20, [presidential memorandum](#) on return to in-person work.

More than 20% of the VA's more than 479,000 employees currently have telework or remote work arrangements. As part of the new policy:

- Political appointees, senior executive service members, SES equivalents, senior level and scientific and professional employees will no longer be eligible for remote work arrangements. By Feb. 24, 2025, their telework agreements will be terminated, except for ad hoc or situational telework.
- Also, by Feb. 24, 2025, remote work and telework arrangements for supervisors with current official duty stations within 50 miles of an agency facility will be terminated, except for ad hoc or situational telework.
- By April 28, 2025, remote work and telework arrangements for non-bargaining unit employees with current official duty stations within 50 miles of an agency facility will be terminated, except for ad hoc or situational telework.
- Remote work and telework arrangements for supervisors and non-bargaining unit employees with current official duty stations outside 50 miles of an agency facility will not be terminated at this time. Further guidance will be forthcoming regarding these arrangements.
- Return to in person work requirements for bargaining unit employees will be announced at a later date.

The VA's policy allows exceptions for arrangements approved for employees as a reasonable accommodation due to a disability or a qualifying medical condition. Exceptions may also be allowed for military spouses with permanent change of station orders.

"This is a commonsense step toward treating all VA employees equally," said Acting VA Secretary Todd Hunter. "Most VA clinical staff don't have the luxury of working remotely, and we believe the performance, collaboration and productivity of the department will improve if all VA employees are held to the same standard."

WE'VE GOT YOUR SIX

The sixth annual Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair - We've Got your Six, will be held Saturday, November 8, 2025, at the Sturgis Community Center (1401 Lazelle Street).

We've Got Your Six" is intended for active military, reserve, and veterans of all ages, men, and women, from all branches of service and their families.

The event provides a wealth of benefit information as well as free lunch to all who attend.

To learn more about this great program visit this [link](#).

SDDVA TO HOST THREE MINI CONFERENCES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting three mini training conferences May 6-8, 2025, in Rapid City, Pierre, and Sioux Falls.

Topics to be addressed are claims sharks assisting veterans in obtaining claims, veterans service officer ethics, what's new at the VA, and a claims office update.

All three conferences will be held from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm at the following locations:

- Tuesday, May 6 from 10:00 am—2:00 pm (MT) - Pennington County Administration Building Veterans Service Office Conference Room—Suite 101 (321 Kansas City Street) - Rapid City.
- Wednesday, May 7 from 10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT) - American Legion Post 8 (520 S. Pierre Street) - Pierre.
- Thursday, May 8 from 10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT) - Heritage Room—South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell Street) - Sioux Falls.

Please note that in Rapid City, parking can be found in the back parking lots located to the west and southwest of the building or along Fourth Street, south of Kansas City Street. Parking spots directly in front of the building are for short term parking only.

SDDVA'S INMAN PRESENTED MILLIE E. OLSON AWARD

We are excited to announce that SDDVA's Activity Director at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, Laura Inman, has been honored with the South Dakota Health Care Association's Millie E. Olson Award. Each day, Laura goes above and beyond to ensure that residents receive the care and attention they deserve. Her creativity shines through in the wide array of activities she organizes, all aimed at keeping the residents active, engaged, and socially connected.

Laura's innovative ideas have taken residents on unforgettable experiences, including side-by-side rides through the Black Hills—journeys that most people don't get to make. She also arranges exciting trips to the casino, hosts lively events and parties, and frequently brings in special musical guests to brighten their days.

One of Laura's most cherished efforts involves recreating games like *The Price is Right* and *Wheel of Fortune*, bringing those games to life in a way that makes residents feel as though they are right there on the show. Additionally, she generously shares her love for animals by bringing in her horses and other animals for the residents to enjoy.

What truly sets Laura apart is her personal touch. She knows each resident by name, remembers their stories, and understands their individual needs. Her care goes beyond the activities she organizes—she brings heart and soul into everything she does. Always with a smile and a laugh, she ensures that every holiday is a special celebration for both residents and staff alike.

Laura! Thank you for all you do to make our Home a place where our veterans feel cared for, valued, and celebrated.



SAVE THE DATE—SD BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

Save the Date! The South Dakota Division of Behavioral Health is excited to announce the dates for the upcoming Behavioral Health Conference, “Your Journey Matters.”

Expanding on previous suicide prevention conferences, this year’s conference will be a comprehensive behavioral health conference, offering information on suicide and substance misuse prevention, treatment, recovery supports and compassion fatigue. The 2025 conference will feature key speakers Dr. Kim Gorgens, Dr. David Jobes, and Jamie Tworowski.

This two-day conference will be held on Monday, August 4th from 1:00 pm-5:00 pm CST and Tuesday, August 5th from 8:00 am-3:00 pm CST at the Sioux Falls Convention Center.

Registration for this conference will open in May. Visit the [South Dakota Behavioral Health](#) website to stay up to date on additional information regarding the conference.

Featuring Key Speakers



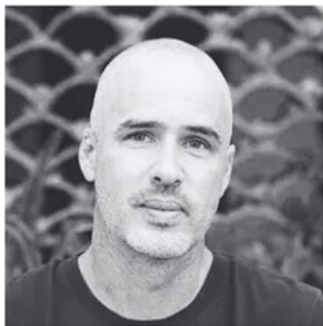
Kim Gorgens, Ph.D., ABPP

Dr. Kim Gorgens is a board-certified rehabilitation psychologist and Professor at the University of Denver. She specializes in brain injury research, criminal justice, and vulnerable populations like athletes, inmates, persons who are unhoused, and individuals exposed to violence. Dr. Gorgens has delivered TED Talks and been interviewed on CNN, NPR, 20/20, and featured in numerous publications.



David A. Jobes, Ph.D., ABPP

Dr. David A. Jobes is board-certified in clinical psychology, a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, a Professor of Psychology, and Director of the Suicide Prevention Laboratory at The Catholic University of America. He has authored seven books, numerous articles on suicidology, has received several prestigious awards for his research, and has consulted for the CDC and Department of Defense.



Jamie Tworowski

Jamie Tworowski is the founder of To Write Love on Her Arms (TWLOHA), a nonprofit focused on mental health and suicide prevention. As a New York Times bestselling author, Tworowski has inspired audiences worldwide through his speaking engagements and as a two-time TEDx speaker. After 15 years with TWLOHA, he now speaks and writes independently, sharing his personal journey with mental health, depression, and the power of words.



Your
Journey
Matters

2025 South Dakota
**Behavioral Health
Conference**



Save the
Date



Monday and
Tuesday,
August 4-5,
2025



Sioux Falls
Convention
Center

Join us for the 2025 Behavioral Health Conference:
Your Journey Matters.

This comprehensive behavioral health conference will offer information related to suicide and substance misuse prevention, treatment, recovery supports, and compassion fatigue. Experience expert speakers, dynamic presentations, and a rich collection of resources to guide you along your personal and/or professional journey.

CEUs are available.

For more information, visit the link below or scan the QR code at the bottom of the page.
<https://sdbehavioralhealth.gov/conference>

Registration will open in May.

RICH SCHILD MEMORIAL POKER RUN



EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING is WELCOME...
CARS, Pickups, MOTORCYCLES, BUSES, ETC., ETC., ETC.

SAT, JUNE 7TH

REGISTRATION BEGINS AT

12:00 AT THE KEG

IN TABOR - \$20 ENTRY

1pm START

ALL PROCEEDS HELP PAY FOR THE
FIREWORKS DISPLAY DURING CZECH DAYS

Like Us On 
RichSchildMEMORIALFIREWORKS

DOOR PRIZES
50/50 Split



ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

152ND CSSB

PANCAKE FEED

FREE WILL DONATION

ALL ARE WELCOME TO COME EAT SOME PANCAKES AND PLAY SOME CORN HOLE!

FEBRUARY 23 10AM - 2PM

**ARMY NATIONAL GUARD ARMORY
300 5TH ST S
BROOKINGS, SD 57006**

WARRIOR WELLNESS WEEK KICKOFF

WITH THE SDSU ARMED FORCES ASSOCIATION

Illustrations include: a soldier in a helmet, a stack of pancakes with syrup and butter, a block of butter with a knife, a fried egg, a tank, and dog tags.

2025 UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb 14-16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
- Feb 17—State Offices Closed—President’s Day
- Mar 29—Stand Up for Women Veterans Retreat—Our Savior’s Lutheran Church ELCA—(West 33rd Street)—Sioux Falls—9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 15—Dine to Donate for Midwest Honor Flight—Texas Roadhouse—(4307 W. Empire Place)—Sioux Falls—3:30 pm—10:00 pm (CT)
- Apr 16—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home—(2500 Minnekahta Avenue)—Hot Springs—9:00 am (MT)
- Apr 25-26—State DAV Convention—AmericInn—Aberdeen
- Apr 27-30—VFW Proficiency Training Conference—Annapolis, MD
- May 6—Mission 24 Midwest Honor Flight Operation Welcome Home—Sioux Falls Arena—(1201 N. West Avenue)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (Doors open at 7:30 pm) (CT)
- May 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pennington County Conference Room—(312 Kansas City St)—Rapid City—10:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
- May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Post 8 American Legion—(520 S. Pierre St)—Pierre—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
- May 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell St—Heritage Room)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
- May 20—Mission 25 Midwest Honor Flight Operation Welcome Home—Sioux Falls Arena—(1201 N. West Avenue)—Sioux Falls—9:30 pm (Doors open at 7:30 pm) (CT)
- May 26—State Offices Closed—Memorial Day
- May 26—SDDVA Memorial Day Program at State Veterans Cemetery—12:00 noon (CT)
- Jun 3—Mission 26 Midwest Honor Flight Operation Welcome Home—Hawthorne Aviation—(5815 Mitchell Street #1207)—Sioux City, IA —9:30 pm (Doors open at 7:30 pm) (CT)
- Jun 7—Rich Schild Memorial Poker Run—The Keg—Tabor—12:00 noon (CT)
- Jun 10—MWHF Day of Sweetness—Chick-Fil-A—(4005 W. 41st Street)—Sioux Falls—6:30 am—10:00 pm (CT)
- Jun 14—MWHF Pars and Pubs—Downtown Sioux Falls—11:00 am—4:00 pm (CT)
- Jun 19—State Offices Closed—Juneteenth Day
- Jun 19-22—VFW State Convention—Ramkota—Pierre
- Jun 19-22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
- Jun 29—MWHF Honor Ride—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—1:00 pm (CT)
- Jul 4—State Offices Closed—Fourth of July
- Jul 14—Black Hills Tee it up for the Troops Tournament—Arrowhead Country Club—Rapid City
- Jul 16—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Mitchell VFW Post—(215 N. Main Street)—Mitchell
- Aug 4-5—Your Journey Matters 2025 Behavioral Health Conference—Sioux Falls Sheraton Convention Center
- Aug 9-13—National VFW Convention—Columbus, OH
- Aug 11—Barrel House Day of Giving for Midwest Honor Flight—(4701 E. 54th Street)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—Midnight (CT)

(continued)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Aug 20—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual
Aug 27-Sep 1—South Dakota State Fair
Aug 28—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair
Sep 1—State Offices Closed—Labor Day
Sep 9-12—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School
Sep 16—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Yankton VFW Post—(209 S. Cedar Street)—Yankton
Sep 21-25—NVS Accredited Representative Skill Training—Annapolis, MD
Sep 21-26—NVS Basic for New Accredited Representatives—Annapolis, MD
Oct 13—State Offices Closed—Native American Day
Oct 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual
Oct 18—4th Annual Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm
Nov 7—MWHF Bingo—Severance Brewing—(701 N. Phillips Avenue)—Sioux Falls—7:00-9:00 pm (CT)
Nov 8—Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—(1401 Lazelle Street—(Sturgis) - 11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
Nov 10—Barrel House Day of Giving for the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery WAA—(4701 E. 54th Street)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am—Midnight (CT)
Nov 11—State Offices Closed—Veterans Day
Nov 19—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters (1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls
Nov 27—State Offices Closed—Thanksgiving
Nov 29—Side by Side MWHF Poker Run—Pilot Mikes Roadhouse—(4901 N. Ellis Road)—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 25—State Offices Closed—Christmas Day



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