



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



114TH FIGHTER WING WELCOMED HOME

Saturday, the 114th Fighter Wing held a Welcome Home Ceremony to honor more than 180 Airmen who recently completed deployments to strategic locations across U.S. Central, Southern, and Pacific Commands in support of contingency operations from July 2024 to April 2025.

The event featured remarks from local, state, and national leaders including SD Lieutenant Governor Tony Venhuizen, US Representative Dusty Johnson, Sioux Falls Mayor Paul TenHaken, Major General Mark Morrell, and Colonel Brandon Eskam.

The 114th Fighter Wing is extremely proud of its airmen who stepped up to deploy across the globe, successfully complete their missions, and return home to us safely.

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SDDVA OUTREACH

On June 6, 2025, the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs participated in a Stand Down event at the Pow Wow Grounds on the Pine Ridge Reservation. This important outreach effort was designed to support homeless and at-risk veterans by connecting them with essential services and resources.

SDDVA Field Service Officer Will Huffmon and Veterans Service Officer Julie Cervinka, along with Fall River County Veterans Service Officer Dan Cullen, hosted an information table at the event. They provided veterans with valuable information about benefits and services available through state and federal programs.

The event drew nearly 100 veterans and was supported by 20-25 volunteers and vendors. Attendees received much-needed items such as clothing and hygiene supplies, along with healthcare screenings and access to social service agencies. A hot lunch was also provided for all in attendance, offering not only nourishment but a chance for fellowship and community connection.

The Pine Ridge Stand Down is one of many efforts by SDDVA to ensure that South Dakota's veterans—no matter where they are—have access to the care and support they deserve.

On Saturday, June 7, South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Manager Brett Dickerson represented the Department at Avera's Veterans and Spouses Conference in Sioux Falls. Brett hosted an outreach table, providing attendees with valuable information on state and federal veterans benefits.

The event featured presentations by representatives from the VA Public Contact team and a VA Healthcare social worker, who offered insights into VA programs and answered questions from veterans and their families. The conference provided an excellent opportunity for veterans and their spouses to connect with experts, ask questions, and learn more about the benefits and services available to them.

SDDVA is proud to partner with Avera and the VA to ensure veterans across South Dakota are supported and informed.



GROWING TOGETHER

At the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, the spirit of community and purpose blooms not only through care and camaraderie but also in the vibrant gardens tended by our residents. Recently, two dedicated veterans, James Ferguson and Ron Bergen, rolled up their sleeves and dove right into the dirt, planting flowers and vegetables that bring color, life, and nourishment to our home.

Gardening is more than just a hobby here—it's a source of joy, healing, and connection. For James and Ron, tending the garden is a way to cultivate patience, pride, and a sense of accomplishment. The act of nurturing plants mirrors the care they have given to their country, and it fosters a peaceful routine that enhances mental and physical well-being.

We extend a big thank you to James and Ron for their hard work and enthusiasm. Their efforts remind us all of the powerful bond between nature and healing, and how small acts like planting a seed can grow into something truly special.

Gardening is a living testament to resilience, growth, and the enduring spirit of our veterans.



Residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home were treated to a day full of western charm, good food, and great entertainment. From the moment the tractors rolled in, setting the scene with an impressive display of vintage and modern machinery, it was clear this was going to be a special day.



Adding to the western flair, the Ramblin' Rangers filled the air with toe-tapping tunes and cowboy classics. Their live music, paired with authentic cowboy poetry, brought smiles, nostalgia, and even a few sing-alongs from the crowd.



It was a day of simple joys and shared memories—a celebration of tradition, music, and community. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who helped make the day such a success. Events like these remind us

how important it is to
create meaningful
moments for those
who've served our
country.



DAY COUNTY VETERANS BANQUET

Day County Veterans Service Officer Jeff Nelson is once again teaming up with community leaders and local businesses to coordinate the annual Veterans Banquet—an evening of fellowship, gratitude, and community spirit.


This year's banquet will take place on Saturday, November 9, at the Webster Armory. The event is free to all veterans and their spouses, thanks to the generosity and support of area sponsors and volunteers.

The banquet serves as more than just a meal; it's a heartfelt gathering to remind those who served that "we all wore the uniform, and we are all part of a greater team." By bringing veterans together in one space, the event fosters camaraderie and unity among those who have shared similar experiences and commitments to service.

Nelson said the evening is designed to honor and uplift the local veteran community while strengthening the ties that bind them together. "This is about building connection and showing appreciation. Whether you served in Vietnam, Iraq, or stateside, you are part of something bigger—and you're not alone."

This annual tradition has become a meaningful way for Day County to express its gratitude and reinforce the strong network of support among veterans, families, and the broader community.

Veterans and spouses are encouraged to attend, reconnect, and enjoy an evening of celebration and shared pride in service.



**DAY COUNTY
VETERANS**

3RD ANNUAL
**DAY COUNTY
VETERANS BANQUET**
Saturday, November 9, 2024
Webster Armory
Social Hour: 5 pm
Banquet/Event Start: 5:30 pm
Please call, text, or email our office NO LATER
Friday, November 1
with your RSVP

Your Day County Veteran Service Office invites ALL Day County Veterans – meaning anyone who wore the uniform, whether you were in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, or National Guard / Reserves (regardless if you deployed or not) – along with their spouses or significant others to attend our 3rd Annual Day County Veterans Banquet. Spouses of deceased Veterans are also invited.

Our annual event brings our Day County Veterans together along with their spouses / significant others where we emphasize that we all wore the uniform and we are part of one team...the "Day County Family of Veterans." We celebrate and honor your service to our nation and host an event that fosters community Veteran comradery.

We are raising funds via community donations, as we want the evening to be free of charge for all those attending. And just as in years past, no taxpayer funds are used to host this event. If you know anyone or an organization that would like to donate, sponsor a table, or sponsor a Veteran to help them attend, please contact our office.

Serving our Day County Family of Veterans,
Jeff Nelson
Day Co. Veterans Service Officer
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"RIDING TO KEEP THEM FLYING"



HONOR RIDE

MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT



Sunday, June 29, 2025 | 2:30 PM

Registration begins at 1:00 PM at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (they will be open for lunch at 12:00 PM). Honor a Veteran you know and ride to raise funds for Midwest Honor Flight. Ride includes a slow salute past the Sioux Falls VA Hospital before a ceremony at the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. A meal is included after the ride.

MORE INFORMATION:




MIDWESTHONORFLIGHT.ORG/RIDE

All proceeds from this event go directly towards future Honor Flights and more importantly, our local Veterans.

WHAT'S BREWING?

Presented by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

Join us for coffee, camaraderie, and conversation!

-  **Connect with fellow Veterans**
-  **Ask questions about benefits and services**
-  **Learn about local support and resources**
-  **Share your story and voice your concerns**

 **Wednesday, July 9, 2025**

 **10:00 A.M.**

 **El Riad Shrine, 510 S Phillips Ave,
Sioux Falls, SD 57104**

Complimentary coffee and refreshments provided
Open to all Veterans and family members

**Voices for Veterans —
Because Your Story Matters**

For more info, contact;
Dave Denson-(605) 940-9622
dave.denson@state.sd.us



MADISON TO DEDICATE VETERANS HONOR PARK

After more than five years of vision, hard work, and dedication, a dream shared by local veterans will come to life in Madison this weekend. On Saturday, June 14, at 1:00 p.m., the community will gather on South Washington Avenue for the official dedication of the Veterans Honor Park.

The park is the result of a collaborative effort between members of the Ronald Westby VFW Post and the McKibbin-Mosher American Legion Post. Since the inception of the project, the joint committee has worked tirelessly—planning, fundraising, and overseeing the construction of a space that pays tribute to all who have served in the United States Armed Forces.

Designed as a place of reflection and gratitude, the Veterans Honor Park stands as a permanent reminder of the bravery, sacrifice, and service of America's veterans.

The dedication ceremony will be led by District 8 Senator Casey

Crabtree, who will serve as master of ceremonies. Distinguished speakers will include South Dakota Attorney General Marty Jackley, U.S. Congressman Dusty Johnson, U.S. Senator Mike Rounds, and U.S. Senator John Thune.

This long-awaited event is a milestone for the Madison community and a meaningful tribute to its veterans. All are welcome to attend this special ceremony and show their appreciation for those who have worn our nation's uniform.



VETERANS HONOR PARK DEDICATION

June 14, 2025 | 1:00 p.m.
744 S Washington Avenue | Madison, SD

Confirmed Speakers and Honored Guests

Mike Rounds, U.S. Senator for South Dakota
Dusty Johnson, U.S. Representative for South Dakota
Michael Fitzmaurice, Medal of Honor Recipient

Invited Guests

U.S. Senate Majority Leader John Thune
South Dakota Governor Larry Rhoden

**Please park at Ace Hardware, Lewis Drug,
Montgomery's and Washington Plaza.**



UPCOMING EVENTS

Jun 13—SDDVA What's Brewing—BHSU Joy Center (1351 S. Joe Street)—Spearfish—1:00 pm (MT)
Jun 14—8th Annual MWHF Pars and Pubs—Downtown Sioux Falls—11:00 am—4:00 pm (CT)
Jun 17—SDDVA What's Brewing—Community Center (701-709 Main Street)—Timber Lake—1:00 pm (MT)
Jun 19—State Offices Closed—Juneteenth Day
Jun 19-22—VFW State Convention—Ramkota—Pierre
Jun 19-22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
Jun 26—SDDVA What's Brewing—FEM Electric (800 5th Avenue)—Ipswich—1:00 pm (CT)
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 9—SDDVA What's Brewing—El Riad Shrine (510 S. Phillips Avenue)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 11—SDDVA What's Brewing—Harding County Courthouse (408 Ransland Street)—Buffalo—10:00 am (MT)
Jul 13—SDNG SAPR 5K—Memorial Park—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Jul 14—Black Hills Tee it up for the Troops Tournament—Arrowhead Country Club—Rapid City
Jul 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Mitchell VFW Post—(215 N. Main Street)—Mitchell—1:00 pm (CT)
Jul 19—Veterans Information Day—BG Ernie Edwards Readiness Center—(1951 N. HWY 20)—Watertown—
10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
Jul 24—Rosebud Sioux Tribe Veterans Stand Down—Sinte Gleska Multipurpose Building—Antelope—
10:00am (CT)
Jul 26—3rd Annual Korean War Veterans Appreciation Day—Brookings Outdoor Adventure Center—(2810 22nd
Avenue S)—Brookings—9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
Jul 28—SDDVA What's Brewing—The Ward's Store—(127 Calumet Avenue SE)—De Smet—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 29—SDDVA What's Brewing—VFW Post 791—(209 Cedar Street)—Yankton—10:00 am (CT)
Jul 30—SDDVA What's Brewing—Jerauld County Court House Day Room—(205 Wallace Avenue S)—Wessington
Springs—10:00 am (CT)
Aug 4-5—Your Journey Matters 2025 Behavioral Health Conference—Sioux Falls Sheraton Convention Center
Aug 7—Purple Heart Day
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
Aug 13—DAV Golf Tournament—Prairie Green Golf Course—Sioux Falls
Aug 20—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual—1:00 pm (CT)
Aug 21—Cheyenne River Veterans Stand Down—Eagle Butte Vet Center Building—Eagle Butte—10:00 am (MT)
Aug 27-Sep 1—South Dakota State Fair
Aug 28—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair

(continued)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sep 1—State Offices Closed—Labor Day
Sep 9-12—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School
Sep 16—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Yankton VFW Post—(209 S. Cedar Street)—Yankton—1:00 pm (CT)
Sep 19—POW/MIA Day
Sep 21-25—NVS Accredited Representative Skill Training—Annapolis, MD
Sep 21-26—NVS Basic for New Accredited Representatives—Annapolis, MD
Sep 25—Rapid City Veterans Stand Down—DoubleTree by Hilton Rapid City Downtown Convention Center—
(505 N. 5th Street)—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)
Oct 13—State Offices Closed—Native American Day
Oct 15—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual—1:00 pm (CT)
Oct 18—Derr Gala—Monument Lacroix Fall—Rapid City—5:00 pm (MT)
Oct 18—4th Annual Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell
Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm (CT)
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—SD Veterans Council Meeting—DAV Headquarters (1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)
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 2—Governor's Budget Address—SD State Capitol—1:00 pm (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

2026

Jan 13—South Dakota Legislative Session Opens
Jan 13—Governor's State of the State Address—SD State Capitol—1:00 pm (CT)
Jan 14—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—2:00
pm (CT)
Jan 14—South Dakota Veterans Council Legislative Reception—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—
Pierre—5:30 pm—7:30 pm (CT)
July 18-19—Sioux Falls Air Show
Sep 15-18—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School

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