



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## COREY CHRISTIANSON RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS HERBERT S. SCHELL AWARD

Congratulations to Corey Christianson of Pierre, this year's recipient of the Herbert S. Schell Award for the best article in *South Dakota History*, the award-winning quarterly journal of the South Dakota State Historical Society.

Corey, who serves as a registrar with the State Historical Society and works part-time at the South Dakota National Guard Museum, earned the honor for her article, "*A South Dakotan of the Great War: The Life of Alfred G. Dahlin.*" The Schell Award, named for historian and long-time University of South Dakota professor Herbert S. Schell, recognizes outstanding contributions to the understanding of South Dakota's rich history.

Corey will be recognized during the awards luncheon on Friday, May 9, 2025, as part of the South Dakota State Historical Society's annual history conference in Deadwood. This year's conference, running May 7–9, explores the theme "*Historical Mysteries: In Search of the Buried Past.*"

The State Historical Society will also honor several other individuals and organizations for their contributions to preserving and promoting South Dakota's heritage.



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# TIGER JOINS SDDVA TEAM

The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home welcomed their new superintendent, Danny Tiger, on Monday April 28, 2025. Danny has served in many capacities within long-term care. He served as a CNA in his younger years through his most recent position was as an administrator at a long-term care facility in Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Danny also served in the Army and Oklahoma Army National Guard in administrative positions and then Field Artillery.

His first week at the State Veterans Home was spent meeting the team that tirelessly cares for our residents, and meeting the residents within the Home. This was accomplished during formal staff meetings and a resident meet and greet as well as walking the halls of the facility and engaging with anyone he could.

The Department is excited that Danny has joined the team, and we look forward to continuing our tradition of caring for veterans and their loved ones.



# MILITARY APPRECIATION MONTH

Governor Larry Rhoden, in coordination with the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA), has officially proclaimed May as **"Military Appreciation Month"**—a time dedicated to honoring, remembering, and expressing gratitude to those who have served and continue to serve in the United States Armed Forces, as well as their families.

"Freedom isn't free—it comes at a cost, paid daily by the brave men and women in uniform and their loved ones," said Governor Rhoden. "May gives all South Dakotans the opportunity to reflect on their sacrifices and show our heartfelt appreciation."

National Military Appreciation Month includes a series of commemorative observances:

- Loyalty Day – May 1
- Victory in Europe Day – May 8
- Military Spouse Appreciation Day – May 9
- Armed Forces Day – May 17
- Memorial Day – May 26

Additionally, May is recognized as Gold Star Awareness Month, allowing us to pay tribute to the families of our fallen heroes whose sacrifices remain etched in the fabric of our nation.

"This is more than a calendar of events—it's a call to action," said SDDVA Secretary Jeremiah Schneider. "Whether it's reaching out to a veteran, supporting a military spouse, or honoring a Gold Star family, every South Dakotan can play a role in expressing gratitude."

"We are a stronger, more unified state and nation when we recognize the sacrifices of our military community," Schneider added. "Let May serve as a reminder to never take their service—or our freedoms—for granted."

The SDDVA encourages citizens, communities, and organizations to take part in local ceremonies, display the American flag proudly, and find meaningful ways to thank those who have worn the uniform.





# VETERANS, SEE WHAT'S BREWING!

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA), in partnership with our county veterans service officers, will be hosting “Coffee and Conversation” events throughout the state. These gatherings are part of the Department’s “What’s Brewing” program—an outreach effort to connect directly with veterans, hear their stories, and provide updates on services and benefits available to them.

“The ‘What’s Brewing’ series serves as an important platform for meaningful conversations with our veterans,” said SDDVA Secretary Jeremiah Schneider. “These gatherings not only allow us to better understand the concerns and challenges veterans are facing, but also provide a forum to share updates on benefits, services, and resources available to them. It’s our duty as advocates to stay connected to their experiences and honor the sacrifices they’ve made in service to our country.”

Secretary Schneider, members of the SDDVA team, and the CVSOs will be available to answer questions and provide information on a wide range of veterans’ benefits and services, including compensation, education, pensions, healthcare, burial benefits, the State Veterans Cemetery, and the State Veterans Home.

All veterans are encouraged to attend. For those unable to make it, the SDDVA remains just a call or click away. Reach the Department at 605.333.6869 or locate their county or tribal Veterans Service Officer at: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteransserviceofficers/locatevso.aspx>

Upcoming events are as follows:

May 2	Sturgis Library (1st Floor)	Sturgis	10:00 am (MT)
May 5	American Legion Post 8	Pierre	1:00 pm (CT)
May 14	American Legion Post 4	Mobridge	1:00 pm (CT)
May 16	American Legion Post 311	Piedmont	10:00 am (MT)
May 21	Kool Beans Coffee	Brookings	11:00 am (CT)
May 22	Community Club	Chamberlain	1:00 pm (CT)
June 13	BHSU Joy Center	Spearfish	1:00 pm (MT)
June 26	FEM Electric	Ipswich	1:00 pm (CT)
July 11	Harding County Courthouse	Buffalo	10:00 am (MT)



# Sales or Property Tax Refund for Senior Citizens & Citizens with Disabilities

**Deadline to  
Apply:  
July 1st**



**Apply here:**

<https://sddor.seamlessdocs.com/f/2050>

For questions about eligibility requirements and income limitations, or to get a paper copy of the application, please call: 1 (800) 829-9188 (Ext. 1) or visit our website at:

<https://dor.sd.gov/individuals/taxes/property-tax/relief-programs/>





# SDNG PROMOTES HANSEN TO BRIGADIER GENERAL

Wyatt Hansen was promoted to the rank of brigadier general in the South Dakota Army National Guard at a ceremony held on Camp Rapid on April 18, 2025.

"I am truly humbled and honored to stand before you today as this is not a milestone that I've reached alone. It is the result of peer guidance, enduring support, and collective efforts of outstanding SD Soldiers and Airmen," said Hansen.

Brig. Gen. Hansen began his military service when he enlisted into the U.S. Army in 1987 as a 13M, rocket artilleryman, with the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division at Ft. Stewart, Georgia where he completed his first term and then began his service in the SDNG.

Hansen served 9 years as an enlisted Soldier in the 109th En. Bn. and completed Officer Candidate School where he commissioned as a 2nd Lt. in 1996.

"I challenge all my leaders that at every stage of your career do not try to be a leader but be worthy of leadership. I offer that challenge to you again today, General Hansen; be worthy of leadership," said SDNG Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Mark Morrell during the ceremony.

Hansen has served full-time in the SDARNG for over 25 years as the CFMO Plans & Programs Officer, G4 Logistics Management Officer, G3 Force Protection Officer, G5 State Partnership Program Officer, Administrative Officer for the 196th Regiment (RTI), Deputy State Personnel Officer, G1 Director of Personnel, J3/5/7 Director of Joint Operations and was recently assigned as the Director of Joint Staff.

"I am truly fortunate to be of the National Guard family culture that values people and the personal growth in their careers. Our service members are simply not personnel filling slots; they are South Dakotans connected to each other in our communities and to Maj. Gen. Morrell, thank you for your trust and clear expectations as the director joint staff," said Hansen.



# **MICHAEL J. FITZMAURICE STATE VETERANS HOME EARNS FIVE-STAR CMS RATING**

The Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home (State Veterans Home) has earned a prestigious five-star overall rating from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), recognizing the facility's outstanding commitment to quality care for South Dakota's veterans.

The five-star designation is the highest rating awarded by CMS and reflects excellence in staffing, health inspections, and quality measures. The State Veterans Home received a perfect five-star rating in the staffing category and strong marks in both quality measures and overall performance.

"This rating is a direct reflection of the compassionate, professional care our team delivers each and every day," said South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Jeremiah Schneider. "We are proud of our staff at the State Veterans Home for creating a safe, respectful, and healing environment that honors the service of our veterans."

"This achievement reinforces what we've known all along — that the State Veterans Home is a model of excellence in veteran care," Schneider added. "We will continue working every day to maintain and exceed these standards in honor of those who served."

The CMS rating system is designed to help consumers compare nursing homes based on health inspections, staffing levels, and quality of care. The five-star recognition places the State Veterans Home among the top-performing facilities in South Dakota.

For more information about the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, visit <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>.



# ELKS LODGE 1751 SERVES UP STEAKS AND SMILES FOR OUR VETERANS

Elks Lodge #1751 of Hot Springs once again showed their unwavering support for our heroes by hosting a sizzling steak dinner at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home. With grills fired up and spirits high, Elks members treated the veterans to a hearty meal featuring perfectly cooked steaks and delicious sides.

A big **thank you** goes out to this dedicated group for their continued generosity and service. Their commitment to the State Veterans Home never goes unnoticed, and this event was no exception.

Residents were truly “grillin’ and chillin’” as they enjoyed a *grillacoaster* of flavors, laughter, and great company. Beyond the food, the camaraderie shared between veterans and Elks members made the evening especially memorable.

These steak dinners have become a much-anticipated tradition—and it's easy to see why. Good food, good friends, and heartfelt appreciation go a long way.





# WARM HEARTS AND WARMER QUILTS



The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home recently received a heartfelt gift that will bring warmth and comfort to many of our residents. Danny Tiger, the new Superintendent of the Veterans Home, gratefully accepted a generous donation of handmade quilts on behalf of the veterans.

The beautiful quilts were presented by Barbara Fuller and her son, representing the Custer VFW Post 3442. Each quilt is a unique, handcrafted expression of care and appreciation for those who have served our country.

We extend our sincere thanks to Barbara, her son, and the entire Custer VFW Post for their thoughtful support and ongoing commitment to the well-being of our veterans. Their act of kindness is a reminder that even the smallest gestures can have a powerful impact.

## SDDVA OUTREACH

McPherson County Veterans Service Officer Sam Barrett, recently hosted a warm and welcoming coffee and cookies event for local veterans in both Eureka and Leola. The gatherings provided an opportunity for veterans to connect, share stories, and receive helpful updates on services and benefits.

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) Field Service Officer Kevin Bowen was present, representing the department and offering information and support. His presence underscored the department's ongoing commitment to serving those who served.

The events were well-attended and appreciated by local veterans, highlighting the importance of community and continued outreach.



## HOT SPRINGS BUDDY NIGHT

A heartfelt thank you goes out to Smokehouse Sports Bar and Grill for their incredible partnership with Casting Vets and the Hot Springs Veterans Suicide Prevention Coalition in making this month's Buddy Night a flavorful and unforgettable success!

Held on April 25 at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veteran's Home, Buddy Night continues to be a meaningful tradition — a casual, welcoming evening where veterans, their families, and community members can gather, connect, and enjoy great food and even better company.

Thanks to the Smokehouse crew, attendees were treated to some seriously delicious grub, bringing comfort and joy to a night centered on connection and camaraderie. Events like these not only nourish the body but also feed the soul, reminding our veterans they are seen, appreciated, and never alone.

A huge shoutout to everyone who makes Buddy Night possible — your dedication strengthens the bonds and supports those who have given so much.







**FEATURING**  
**CRIS CARTER, JOHN RANDLE, & JAKE REED**

**JUNE 20, 2025**

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND CORPORATE SPONSORS  
MUST BE 21+ TO PARTICIPATE**

**COST**

**PUBLIC TEAMS**

\$800(16 SPOTS)

**CORPORATE TEAMS**

A CHANCE TO PLAY 9 ROUNDS  
WITH A VIKINGS LEGEND

\$2,000 (16 SPOTS)

**TIME**

**CHECK-IN**

BEGINS AT 9:00 AM

**SHOTGUN START**

10:00 AM

Food and beverages will be available for purchase on the Dakota Winds Golf Course throughout the tournament. Complimentary water provided by Dakota Winds.

Register Online by  
**Saturday, May 31, 2025**

Payments must be received within 7 days of registering team

Please mail checks to  
**Dakota Magic Casino**  
16849 102nd St SE,  
Hankinson, ND 58041

Hole Contest Prizes!

Awards!

Food following the golf event.  
After the tournament we will move to the Events Center for awards.

**HOLE IN ONE  
OPPORTUNITY**  
**GOLF CART GIVEAWAY!**

Designed by renowned golf architect Joel Goldstrand over our gorgeous 165 acres, Dakota Winds Golf Course features a rolling landscape dotted with ponds, creeks, and wide fairways to test even the most experienced players.



**HONORING THOSE WHO SERVED**

This year's tournament proudly supports the Sisseton Wahpeton Sioux Veterans Cemetery and Tribal Veterans Service Office—organizations to serving all veterans with honor, care, and cultural respect.

Your support helps fund:

- Transportation for veterans to VA appointments
- Support the ongoing maintenance and care of the Tribal Veterans Cemetery and its burial services.
- Assistance with VA benefits, housing, and healthcare
- Mental health and cultural support programs

Together, we carry our Warriors with dignity—past, present, and future.





*A Day to Remember and Honor  
SDDVA Memorial Day Program  
South Dakota Veterans Cemetery  
Monday—May 26, 2025*

*12:00 Noon*



*25965 477th Avenue  
Sioux Falls*

# 2025 UPCOMING EVENTS

May 1—Loyalty Day

May 2—SDDVA What's Brewing—Sturgis Library (First Floor—1040 Harley Davidson Way #101)—Sturgis—10:00 am (MT)

May 5—SDDVA What's Brewing—American Legion Post 8 (520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—1:00 pm (CT)

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—Victory in Europe Day

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 9—Military Spouse Appreciation Day

May 14—SDDVA What's Brewing—American Legion Post 4 (120 S. Main Street)—Mobridge—1:00 pm (CT)

May 16—SDDVA What's Brewing—American Legion Post 311 (101 Pine Street)—Piedmont—10:00 am (MT)

May 17—Armed Forces Day

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 21—SDDVA What's Brewing—Kool Beans Coffee (225 Main Avenue)—Brookings—11:00 am (CT)

May 22—Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Veterans Stand Down—Grand River Casino—Mobridge—10:00am (CT)

May 22—SDDVA What's Brewing—Community Club (112 N. Main Street)—Chamberlain—1:00 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 6—Pine Ridge Veterans Stand Down—Pine Ridge Pow Wow Grounds—10:00am (MT)

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 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 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 11—SDDVA What's Brewing—Harding County Courthouse (408 Ransland Street)—Buffalo—10:00 pm (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)

(continued)

# 2025 UPCOMING EVENTS

- 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)
- 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—11:00 am—Midnight (CT)
- 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—10:00am (MT)
- 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—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—10:00am (MT)
- Oct 13—State Offices Closed—Native American Day
- Oct 15—SD Veterans Council Meeting—Virtual—1:00 pm (CT)
- 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—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

(continued)



# UPCOMING EVENTS

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)

Sep 15-18—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School

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South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>  
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