



South Dakota Department of the Military
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



LET US NEVER FORGET OUR HEROES

Memorial Day stands as a solemn American tradition that honors the sacrifices of past generations. Memorial Day is a day we dedicate to those who fell in defense of the ideals, beliefs, and values we hold sacred.

As a nation we need to remember these heroes and their sacrifice. We must remember what they did, why they did it, and appreciate what it means to us personally and as a nation.

America has been blessed as no other country in the history of the world. The sacrifices of our armed forces have given us the security and freedom in which to grow and flourish as a nation.

Remembering those sacrifices and what they have meant to our nation is the duty of the living.

That is why the ritual decorating of graves after the Civil War became so widespread so quickly. And with each successive generation came more wars. Hundreds of thousands more young American lives were lost on the battlefields and the concept of Memorial Day became a tradition renewed by each generation's sacrifice.

On this Memorial Day, let us all pledge to renew our dedication to the true meaning of Memorial Day. Let us all enjoy the lives we lead because of the generations of young Americans who gave their lives so that all of us could live in freedom and prosperity. Let us continue to educate our children about the price paid for their freedom.

Our greatest duty to the men and women who have died in service to our country is to never, ever forget what they have done for each of us – and what they have done for us as a nation. They led colorful, vivid, and passionate lives and we owe it to them and their families to honor and pay tribute to their sacrifice.

Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

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FARABEE TO RETIRE FROM VSO POSITION

Roy Farabee has given notice to the Charles Mix and Gregory County Commissions that he will retire from his post as County Veterans Service Officer effective May 31, 2016.

Roy has served as the Charles Mix County VSO since December of 2008 and the Gregory County VSO since December of 2004.

If these two positions didn't keep him busy enough, Roy also served as the secretary-treasurer for the South Dakota Veterans Service Officers Association.

Charles Mix County had a retirement party for Roy last week and SDDVA's Kevin Bowen and Audry Ricketts attended, as well as Douglas County VSO Fred Kuil.

SDDVA wishes Roy the best in his retirement and all his future endeavors.



Fred Kuil, Roy Farabee and Kevin Bowen



SRST HONORS CODE TALKERS

This week the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Department of Veterans Affairs held a special recognition ceremony to honor their Code Talkers. Recognition plaques were presented to the Code Talkers or members of their family.

SDDVA's Will Huffman attended the program and commended Manaja Hill for this beautiful ceremony.



BOHN APPOINTED AS DIRECTOR OF THE DAKOTA'S VA REGIONAL OFFICE

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has announced the appointment of Shawn Bohn as the new director of the Dakotas VA Regional Office.

Mr. Bohn, who was appointed on March 20, 2016, will oversee the administration of federal benefits to over 154,000 veterans, service members, their families, and survivors living in South Dakota, North Dakota, and 15 counties in northwestern Minnesota.

The office provides nearly \$36 million in monthly federal benefits, through a variety of compensation, education, and vocational rehabilitation and employment programs.

Prior to his appointment, Mr. Bohn was the Veterans Service Center Manager, of the VA Regional Office in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.



MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART DEPARTMENT OF THE DAKOTAS CONVENTION

The Military Order of the Purple Heart Department of the Dakotas held their annual convention in Sioux Falls Saturday, May 21.

Presentations were made by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Vietnam Veterans of America, and the American Indian Veterans Association.

SDDVA's Heather Bullerman, Program Manager II, provided an SDDVA update. Larry Zikmund (District 14), provided a legislative update. Staff from South Dakota's three congressional offices were also in attendance and provided updates. The Veterans Town Hall speakers were Gene Murphy, Sara Ackert, Shawn Bohn, and Doug McCuddin. Much of the town hall meeting consisted of discussion on congressional budget, Choice Act, tribal relationships, claims appeals, VBA, VA travel, and DBOs.



VA LIFE INSURANCE PROGRAM

The VA Life Insurance program is pleased to announce an update to their Unclaimed Insurance Funds web page. The web page can be found on the Insurance website at <https://insurance.va.gov/UnclaimedFunds>. This update is part of a wider initiative to enhance the VA's ability to connect with veterans and their families.

The unclaimed funds have accumulated from the policies established under the following life insurance programs:

- United States Government Life Insurance (USGLI, 1919-1951)
- National Service Life Insurance (NSLI, 1940-1951)
- Veterans Special Life Insurance (VSLI, 1951-1956)
- Veterans' Reopened Insurance (VRI, 1965-1966), and
- Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance (S-DVI, 1951-Present),

The unclaimed funds **do not** cover life insurance policies issued under Service members Group Life Insurance (SGLI) nor Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI).

Since 1917, life insurance programs have generated a number of cases in which monies have gone unclaimed for a wide variety of reasons. The major reason these funds remain unclaimed is because they are unable to locate the original beneficiary or an entitled family member.

The new web page is intended to make searching for these funds easier for veterans and their families. A veteran or family member can now search for unclaimed funds by entering the veteran's last and first name to determine if monies may be owed.

If a user finds a match under a veterans name, the web page will prompt the user to complete VA Form 29-541 Certificate Showing Residence and Heirs of Deceased Veteran or Beneficiary and fax or mail it to the VA Insurance Center, along with Proof of Identity and proof of Entitlement. If the user is acting as a guardian, executor, administrator, or in some other representative capacity, the user must enclose appropriate documentation demonstrating their entitlement to make a claim.

Once VA Life Insurance receives the user's information, VA representatives will begin the process of verification to establish that the correct payee has been identified. This process can include the user supplying personally identifiable information, completing a form or in some cases providing a photocopy of a death certificate. Each case is unique and different requirements may apply before release of funds.

This web page is designed to give veterans and their families a place to check and see if there is money due them and also allow the Insurance Center to locate individuals who are entitled to money. Making final financial settlement with veterans and their families is a win-win for all of us.

Remember, two easy steps —

Step 1 access the web page at <https://insurance.va.gov/UnclaimedFunds>. if you get a match, take **Step 2** and supply the required information.

VA representatives will take you through the necessary steps to claim the money.



SD GUARD, SURINAME MILITARY COLLABORATE TO PROTECT ENVIRONMENT, SOLDIERS

Members of the South Dakota National Guard and Suriname military collaborated on how to protect service members and the environment from toxic chemicals during a subject matter expert exchange at Camp Rapid, May 13-15.

The goal of the exchange, conducted as a part of the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program, was to share information on best practices for handling hazardous materials, or hazmat, and spill response procedures.

Four members of the Suriname Defense Force met with more than a dozen SDNG Soldiers from several units and facilities to discuss storage and processes for storing, containing and disposing of hazmat.

Whether it's operating vehicles or equipment in a field environment or maintenance operations in a facility, military personnel must plan and prepare for the hazards chemicals pose to the environment and people.



The hazmat exchange is just one of about a dozen events that take place annually between the SDNG and its partner nation from South America. Since 2006, numerous exchanges have taken place to share experiences, training techniques and operational processes on a variety of military topics.

The Suriname members first met with staff from Joint Force Headquarters' Directorate of Logistics and discussed compliance with policies and procedures and how to mitigate potential hazards. From there, McGuire said the Suriname members were able to see the practical application of these processes at several maintenance facilities.

The Suriname members also had a chance to visit with several other units to discuss their process for containment and spill response.

From the brigade level, meeting with the 109th Regional Support Group, to meeting with smaller units such as Training Center and the 451st Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team), provided unique perspectives and feedback.

The Surinamees also had an opportunity to meet with officials from the Rapid City Fire Department for a civilian agency's approach to hazmat.

SD GUARD WINS GOLD IN ARMY COMMUNITIES OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

The South Dakota Army National Guard was presented with a first place gold finish in the 2016 Army Communities of Excellence Awards during a ceremony at the Pentagon, May 24.

The ACOE Awards recognize top performance within U.S. Army, National Guard and Reserve installations/communities and their approach to systems management.

The SDARNG placed 2nd overall, just behind Wisconsin who is the overall winner among 36 applicants in the Army National Guard category.

"This award is proof positive that the South Dakota Army National Guard is a world class organization," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "Every one of our soldiers should take great pride in the part they played in helping to achieve this milestone."

The ACOE Awards follow a 12-month evaluation and scored using the Malcolm Baldrige criteria for performance excellence.

"The first place gold finish represents our commitment to ourselves and our fellow South Dakotans to be the most professional, competent and reliable National Guard organization in the U.S.," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Orson Ward, SDNG director of human resources and lead coordinator for the award's submission packet.

Participants in ACOE are not judged against each other, but scored on how well they can demonstrate the maturity of key organizational processes and their ability to show results in key areas such as leadership, strategic planning, customer focus, work force management and operational effectiveness.

The assessment considers how senior leaders lead, how the SDARNG focuses on the future needs of its customers, how it creates knowledge to improve performance and learning, how it develops and guides its workforce to improve operational effectiveness and deliver the most value to its customers.

By using criteria established for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award as a framework for performance assessment, the ACOE program helps participating Army installations/communities focus on providing excellence in facilities and services in support of Soldiers, their families and civilians.

Baldrige-based performance assessments provide opportunities to identify best practices in installation management and reveal potential opportunities to apply appropriate performance improvement tools.

As a result of their gold finish, the ACOE Awards also presented the SDARNG with \$50,000 to be used to further enhance the organization.

"This money was provided to our organization because we demonstrate a high level of return on investment," said Ward. "These funds will be used to support process improvement, specifically supporting workforce professional development."



Upcoming Events

- May 28—Project 22 Showings—Mac Theater on Main Street—Mobridge (Showings at 4:00 pm and 7:30 pm)
 Jun. 9-12—VFW State Convention—The Lodge at Deadwood
 Jun. 14—Vietnam War Veterans Recognition—Custer Jr/Sr. High School (1645 Wildcat Lane) - 9:30 am (MT)
 Jun. 14—Vietnam War Veterans Recognition—Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home (2500 Minnekahta Avenue) - Hot Springs - 1:30 pm (MT)
 Jun. 16-19—American Legion State Convention—Ramkota—Watertown
 Jun. 29—Black Hills Veterans Job Fair—Central States Fair Grounds (915 Centre Street) - 11:00 am (MT)
 Jul. 1—Buffalo Chip Annual Flag Raising Ceremony—West Gate Entrance off Ft. Meade Way—6:00 pm (MT)
 Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 Jul. 23-24—Sioux Falls Air Show
 Aug. 22-25—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Pierre Ramkota
 Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)



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