



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



RED SHIRT FRIDAY

South Dakota employers, schools and citizens are encouraged to show their support for all service members deployed overseas by participating in R.E.D. (Remember Everyone Deployed) Shirt Friday.

The South Dakota National Guard, Ellsworth Air Force Base and the S.D. Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve invites the public to participate by wearing a red shirt on all Fridays while South Dakota citizens are deployed to remember and honor all members of the military for their service to the state and nation.

An October 14 R.E.D. event is being held to highlight members of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade currently deployed to Kuwait. Throughout the year, the SDNG has been highlighting deployed units and individual members during R.E.D Friday events.

"Wearing red shirts on Fridays sends a strong and unified message to our service members and families that they are not forgotten and we appreciate their sacrifice to our country," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "Wearing a red shirt is a simple gesture, but the meaning behind it is significant."

Gov. Dennis Daugaard has demonstrated his support by signing a proclamation announcing all Fridays that South Dakota citizens are deployed in harm's way to be R.E.D. Shirt Friday in South Dakota.

South Dakota employers, schools and citizens are encouraged to provide additional support by: signing a Statement of Support through the ESGR, sending cards/letters to the unit or someone in the unit, create a banner or video from your organization to send to the unit, check in with the family of a deployed service member, provide a meal for a family of a deployed service member, or support the S.D. Veteran's Home in Hot Springs or a veteran service organization in your community.

Currently, there are more than 360 Ellsworth Air Force Base Airmen and 38 South Dakota Army and Air National Guard members deployed overseas.

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HEROES DON'T WEAR CAPES; THEY WEAR TAGS AND COMBAT BOOTS!

It's a well-known fact that I am a Denver Broncos fan! Not that I am counting, but they have won eight AFC championships and three Super Bowls. Every week as they don the orange and blue, I can't help but think about our own football team within our veteran network.

Our Department, along with the veteran service organizations and the county and tribal veterans service officers, serve as the fullback, the left guard and the right guard. We are there to protect the quarterback – which is our veteran.

We have a playbook full of both offensive and defensive plays, all of which are used to assist veterans in filing claims and securing their benefits.

It is said that the action of a player who enables a teammate to score is said to be a champion. We want our team of advocates to be the champions for our veterans. We want to assist our veterans in receiving their benefits. We want to help them in securing their safeties, field goals and touchdowns.

From those brave patriots who fought for this Nation's independence straight through to the young men and women serving so valiantly in Iraq, Afghanistan and across every continent and ocean today, America's veterans have earned and deserve our respect and appreciation for their sacrifices and the sacrifices of their families.

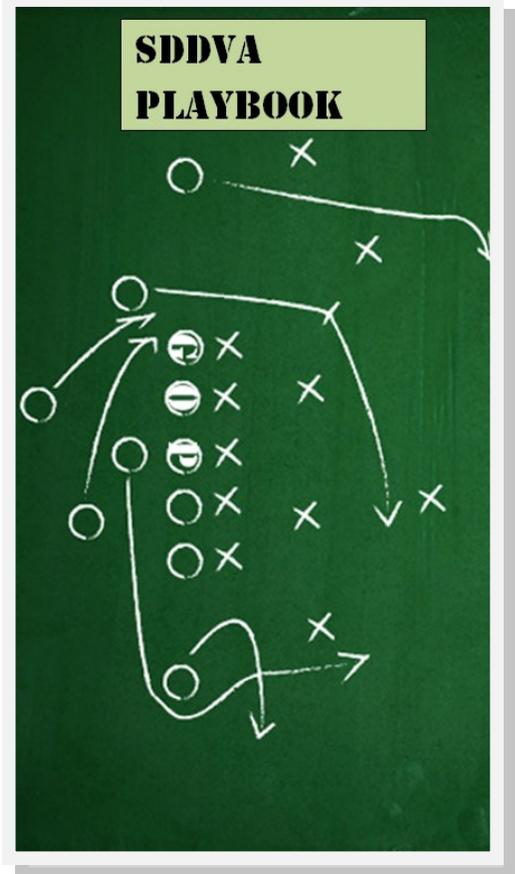
Soldiers have a creed that in part, makes four simple, declaratory statements: I will always place the mission first; I will never accept defeat; I will never quit; I will never leave a fallen comrade. To some, these may be just words, but they mean a lot more—no matter the uniform, no matter the nation, no matter the affiliation. These are, after all, promises that soldiers make to one another.

If you have lived that life, then you know the meaning of commitment to a greater cause. And if you have worked, as I have, with the men and women of our military, you know there is nothing they would not give to protect the people of this country.

That is why our team is always analyzing plays from previous seasons. We revamp plays in the gamebook. We keep track of the downs, the fumbles and the interceptions. Federal benefits are ever changing and we are not always able to run the same play. If the first play is unsuccessful, we go to the playbook to find a play that will work. At the Department, we are successful because of our gamebook and our talent.

It is true that America is strong and free. But we would never have come this far without the heroes we call veterans.

Larry Zimmerman, SDDVA Secretary



USDA LAUNCHES NEW APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM TARGETING VETERANS

United States Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack announced the start of a new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) jobs program that will use the national apprenticeship system to hire new employees as agricultural commodity graders, a key role in USDA's mission to protect American consumers. The new program will also serve as a way to increase jobs for veterans.

The program, piloted by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), is a registered national apprenticeship program that combines on-the-job training with theoretical and practical instruction in the classroom and online. Apprentices who complete the paid training program will meet the qualifications for a position as a USDA Agricultural Commodities Grader.

Although the program is open to anyone interested in a career in agriculture, Secretary Vilsack said he is proud the program offers veterans a path to success and hopes many will take advantage of the opportunity.

"USDA is committed to supporting America's Veterans," said Secretary Vilsack. "Our new apprenticeship program will give them a chance to join a talented pool of USDA professionals and leaders who ensure America's food maintains its quality and safety. If they are passionate about a career in agriculture, we want to help them achieve it."

The new apprenticeship program is a collaboration between USDA, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). DOL approved the curriculum and registered it as an official source for job training and the VA approved the use of veterans benefits, which may include a monthly housing allowance and an additional stipend for books and supplies, for eligible apprentices. Many can also apply for separate benefits through the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program.

AMS's Specialty Crops Program will hire apprentices who will receive 12 months of blended technical training on specialty crops inspection, grading and certification, and developmental training on professional skills, such as interpersonal communications and leadership.

"Veterans, by their very nature, are always looking for opportunities to serve. This innovative apprenticeship program allows more of our nation's veterans to continue their service out of uniform in the important mission of USDA," VA Secretary Robert A. McDonald said.

Apprentices who complete the program will have achieved critical career milestones – a nationally recognized DOL Apprentice Accreditation and skills and competencies for professional success.

At USDA, the new apprenticeship program will also serve as the pilot for a new online interactive learning management system, which AMS will use to standardize training for all Specialty Crops Inspection employees. The learning management system will also deliver online training components and share real-time data with DOL and VA.

USDA employs more than 11,000 veterans and since 2009 has provided more than \$505 million in direct farm loans to help 7,416 veterans start, maintain or grow their farming operations. More information about the new apprenticeship program and other opportunities is available at www.ams.usda.gov/careers.

WATERTOWN READINESS CENTER RENAMED IN HONOR OF GENERAL EDWARDS

The South Dakota Army National Guard officially rechristened the Watertown Readiness Center, Sunday, Oct. 2. The facility's new name is the Brig. Gen. Ernie Edwards Readiness Center, so named for the 81-year-old Watertown man who has been an educator and mentor in the community for years, and who served nearly four decades in the SDARNG.

Edwards served as the 17th assistant adjutant general of the SDARNG and retired with over 37 years of service. He spent more than 39 years as an educator in South Dakota and served the majority of his career as a math teacher, coach, principal and superintendent in Watertown.

"Having this beautiful facility named in ones' honor creates a lasting tribute, and I honestly cannot think of a more deserving individual on which to bestow this honor," said U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG.

Edwards attended the renaming ceremony Sunday alongside family and colleagues who described him as a capable, genuine leader whose positive attitude inspired countless others throughout the years.

"I feel very humble for this great honor," Edwards said. "Being a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard has been a privilege. I have such great memories and have formed so many wonderful friendships during the 37 years I served. All I can say to the soldiers, students and community members I have served with all these years is: continue to march."

Retired U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Donald Goldhorn, former adjutant general of the Guam National Guard, former assistant adjutant general of the SDARNG and educator in Watertown, described Edwards as "the best of the best" when it came to leadership.

Also in attendance was South Dakota Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, who thanked Edwards for his service and noted how rare it is for a building in South Dakota to be named in ones' honor.

"We don't name buildings in the state of South Dakota very often," Michels said. "I think the reason is that it is for the greater good ... that we should be remembered by our deeds and not by our names. "We are a product of people like (Edwards) who came before us. (Edwards) gave everybody a chance, and hopefully 50 years from now when people walk through here, they will be captivated by his example that we are called to serve others."

Edwards first enlisted in the SDARNG in 1957 and served as an artillery officer for most of his career until his retirement in July 1994. He held nearly every key command and staff leadership position including service as a battery, battalion and brigade commander within the 147th Field Artillery. Even after his retirement, Edwards was a prominent figure within the Watertown community and served on many state and local civic organization boards that support military and veterans affairs and invest in the future of today's youth. Edwards was also instrumental in the planning, development and implementation of the Watertown Readiness Center, which opened in the summer of 2013.



VA DIRECTOR TO HOLD COFFEE FOR VETERANS

Darwin Goodspeed, Director of the Sioux Falls Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System, invites veterans to visit with him over coffee at the courthouse in Aberdeen on October 14, 2016, from 1:00-3:00 PM (CT).

Mr. Goodspeed will be available to talk with veterans and their family members about what's going on at the local VA and answer questions about health care benefits.



VA SELECTS USDA AS FEDERAL SHARED SERVICE PROVIDER

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has selected the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) as its federal shared service provider to deliver a modern financial management solution that will replace the existing system and improve financial transparency and processing across the Department.

"The Department followed a rigorous process in selecting USDA," said Interim Assistant Secretary for Management and Interim Chief Financial Officer Edward J. Murray. "Demonstrating a truly integrated decision-making process, subject matter experts across VA participated in intense week-long workshops and provided feedback to ensure we selected the right partner for transformation success." In making this selection, the VA also leveraged best practices and lessons learned from Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the Government Accountability Office (GAO), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and others.

Partnering with USDA allows the VA to utilize an established and proven IT solution to better serve its financial management needs. This partnership demonstrates the VA's commitment to work with other agency partners to reduce duplication and redundancy across the government, while also improving both the quality and agility of administrative services.

"As a top FY17 VA priority, this effort will increase the transparency, accuracy, timeliness and reliability of the VA's financial information," said Deputy Secretary Sloan Gibson. "It's critical that the VA continues to implement solutions that result in improved care and services to our veterans with fiscal accountability to American taxpayers."



Sergeant Colton Levi Derr ★ ★ ★ FOUNDATION

Gallantly Forward
2016 Gala
SATURDAY, October 22

Rushmore Plaza Civic Center
LaCroix Hall | Doors Open at 5pm

Tickets \$35
Buy for veterans if you can't attend!

Social | Dinner | Silent & Live Auction
Guest Speakers | Battle Buddy Award
Live Music

SGT Derr battled with Post Traumatic
Stress Disorder (PTSD) following his
combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

We honor Colton by helping
his fellow veterans.

*The battle does not end
when the war is over.*

The
Sergeant Colton Levi Derr
FOUNDATION
would like to thank Print Mark-et

Get your ticket
to support
OUR HEROES

Just call or go online!

605.545.2505 

 SergeantDerrFoundation.org



SD BATTALION NAMED MOST OUTSTANDING ARMY GUARD UNIT

The South Dakota Army National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion was recognized as the most outstanding Army National Guard battalion in the nation and was presented the Gen. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. Award at the Association of the U.S. Army conference in Washington, D.C., Oct. 3.

The Kerwin Award recognizes the top performing Army National Guard and Army Reserve units in the country for achieving the highest standards in training and readiness.

The Huron-based 153rd demonstrated excellence in operational planning, execution of training and maintaining high readiness standards above all other Army National Guard units for training year 2015.

Gen. Robert B. Abrams, commanding general of U.S. Army Forces Command, presented the award to Lt. Col. Trent Bruce, 153rd battalion commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Gary DeVries.

The award marks the second time this year the 153rd has been recognized for excellence in training and readiness. Last month, during the National Guard Association of the United States annual conference in Baltimore, the unit was awarded the Maj. Gen. Milton A. Reckord Trophy for the third straight year as the most outstanding Army National Guard battalion in the nation. The 153rd is currently preparing for an upcoming deployment to the Middle East, where they will provide command and control of engineer missions in support of U.S. forces in the region.

To be eligible for the award, units must achieve readiness objectives as outlined by U.S. Army Forces Command. Evaluation criteria for the award include the areas of assigned personnel strength, percentage of personnel qualified in their duty position, attendance at monthly drill weekends and annual training, individual weapons qualification and physical fitness test scores, as well as an effective maintenance program.

The 153rd provides mission command and supervision for seven units with about 860 Soldiers in 12 communities throughout South Dakota. The 153rd assists assigned units in meeting training, administrative and logistical requirements to maintain the unit's readiness in support of their state and federal missions.

The Kerwin Award was first established in 1976 after the former U.S. Army vice chief of staff who served as the first commander of U.S. Army Forces Command. The command was responsible for ensuring the readiness and training of all Army units in the United States.

Gen. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. was a strong advocate of the "One Army," or "Total Army" concept that recognized the important role of the National Guard and Army Reserve. The programs he initiated resulted in a significant improvement in the readiness of reserve components.

Units under the 153rd's command include: Headquarters and Headquarters Company of Huron; Forward Support Company of Parkston and Huron; 842nd Engineer Company of Spearfish, Belle Fourche and Sturgis, 211th Engineer Company of Madison and De Smet; 155th Engineer Company of Rapid City and Wagner; 200th Engineer Company of Pierre, Chamberlain and Moberg; and the 927th Engineer Detachment of Huron.



FLIGHT CREWS HONE LIFE-SAVING SKILLS DURING TRAINING EXERCISE

Soldiers with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, conducted a medical evacuation training exercise near Wasta, Oct. 1, to hone their life-saving skills. The training event put HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter flight crews in realistic combat scenarios with simulated casualties to practice emergency medical care and flight operations.

The Rapid City-based unit provides aerial medevac support to military forces while deployed overseas or during state domestic emergencies and natural disasters.

In order to make the training as realistic as possible, the flight crews of medics, crew chiefs and pilots were not notified of the scenario before hand.



They boarded their aircraft not knowing if the mission was a real event or simulated.

The soldiers simulating the injured used makeup and red-dyed corn syrup to simulate wounds. During the scenario, the soldiers screamed as though they were in pain and grasped at the medics pleading for help.

Aside from preparing soldiers for a combat zone, the training also benefits the crews for real-world emergencies here at home.

The hospital medical evacuation helicopters are not capable of conducting hoist operations.

Should the need arise, the crew is ready to help.

Many times crews from the 189th will work side by side with local emergency response personnel during a medical emergency. To make sure things run smoothly, leadership for the unit will periodically coordinate with local authorities to conduct a joint training operation.

Due to the nature of medical emergencies, it is essential for the crews to be extremely well prepared.



NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS CONTINUE ROADWORK AT ORMAN DAM

Soldiers with the 842nd Engineer Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, of Belle Fourche, Spearfish and Sturgis, continue work on a road project at Orman Dam near Belle Fourche, Oct. 1-2.

The new and improved road is expected to benefit local communities by bringing more people to the area allowing for easier access to the dam in the southeast corner and along the reservoir's east side.

Previous access to the area consisted of a network of old trails that weren't easily accessible for the public.

The SDARNG is partnering with the Bureau of Reclamation on the project, which is in year three of a five-year agreement permitting the Guard access to reclamation lands to conduct military training.

The road work began in June during the Golden Coyote training exercise and included work by multiple National Guard units from other states and the Danish Home Guard.

During this phase of the project, the 842nd provided stability to the road by leveling it to prevent erosion from storms. Future plans include the construction of a cul-de-sac at the end of the road for use as a turn around point for larger vehicles and campers.

"We're doing soil reclamation and final shaping to get it all dressed up," said Staff Sgt. Jeff Sorenson, one of the equipment section supervisors at the site.

As an engineer company, the 842nd primarily consists of heavy equipment operators and works with their machinery as often as possible to maintain their skills.

"Our mission is to go out and move dirt," said Sorenson. "Any time we get the chance to come out here and do this, it just hones our skills."

The project also provides the unit with an opportunity to train their newer members.

"This operation is a good opportunity for the younger members to gain experience and confidence in their abilities," said Sgt. Darnell Whitte, a senior equipment operator. "We don't get to go out and do these kinds of operations during the winter, so we use every chance in the summer to get out and actually use the equipment."

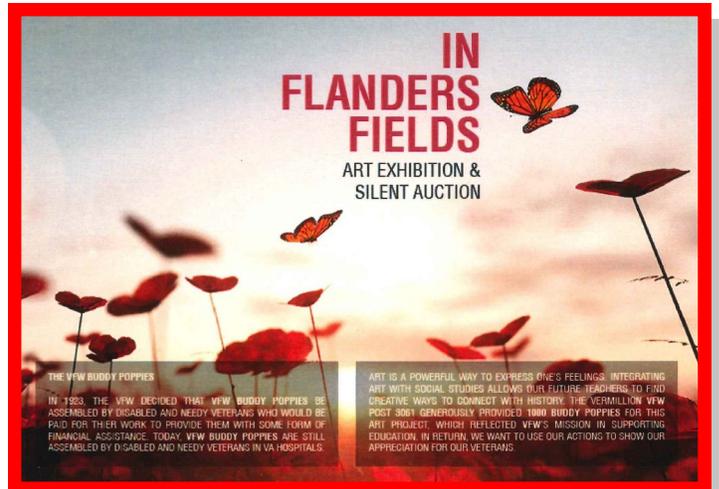


FLANDERS FIELDS ARE EXHIBIT AND SILENT AUCTION

The VFW Post 3061 in Vermillion will be hosting a "In Flanders Fields Art Exhibition and Silent Auction on October 13, 2016, from 9:00 am—1:00 pm (CT) in the MUC Ballroom C at the University of South Dakota.

This exhibition is dedicated to military and veteran themes and is sponsored by VFW Post 3061 in Vermillion. The art work is available for purchase and proceeds will go to the VFW for future missions.

For more information, contact Jing Williams (605-677-6221) or Cory Knedler (605-677-5637).



FALL IS IN THE AIR

Residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home made a few Fall road trips! They visited the Pumpkin Patch and the Founding Fathers Exhibit. A few of them enjoyed the trail ride through the patch.



Looking forward to seeing all of their pumpkins decorated and their neighborhood decorations!



Upcoming Events

- Oct. 8—DAV Fall Conference—DAV—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
 Oct. 18-19—South Dakota Veterans Commission Meeting—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre 1:00 pm (CT)
 Nov. 7-8—SDDVA Refresher Training for CTVSOs—Sioux Falls—1:00 pm (CT)
 Dec. 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home—Hot Springs—10:00 am—3:00 pm (MT)
 Dec. 6—Governor's Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)
 Dec. 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Post 8 American Legion—Pierre—10:00 am—3:00 pm—(CT)
 Dec. 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—Yankton—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
 Dec. 14—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Sioux Falls DAV—12:00 noon (CT)
 Dec. 15—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Watertown American legion—12:00 noon (CT)
 Dec. 17—SD Veterans Council Legislative Round Table—Rapid City VFW—10:00 am (MT)

2017

- Jan. 10 - Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)
 Jan. 11—SDDVA/Veterans Council Legislative Reception—5:00 pm—8:00 pm (CT)
 Jan. 30—VFW Legislative Reception—AmericInn—Fort Pierre
 Feb. 1—American Legion Legislative Reception—Post 8 American Legion Cabin—Pierre—5:30—9:00 pm (CT)
 Feb. 4—Valentines for Veterans Concert—Sioux Falls Washington Pavilion—3:00 pm (CT)
 Feb 10-12—SD American Legion Mid Winter Conference—Oacoma
 Jun 15-18—SD American Legion State Conference—Watertown

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the South Dakota Department of the Military Offices will be closed on Monday, Oct. 10.



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