In South Dakota, we take care of our heroes, because they fought for us and the freedoms we enjoy. We believe every veteran should live a happy, healthy life because they risked their lives to protect and serve the United States of America.

Veterans volunteer for service, knowing that they are putting their lives on hold, accepting a potentially dangerous challenge, and even risking accident, injury, illness, or death in the process. Their sacrifices ensure our freedoms.

It was no surprise that when Courtney Steffen, Brookings County veterans service officer, reached out and asked for volunteers to assist a fellow veteran who had been impacted by severe storm damage, she got a team of veterans willing and ready to assist one of their own.

This past Monday, members from the Brookings DAV, VFW, and American Legion, the White American Legion, along with staff from the Governor’s Office and the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs gathered in rural Volga to assist one of our heroes with his storm clean up. Covering each other’s six contributes to a camaraderie that can never be questioned and is never ending.

A special shout out to Courtney Steffen for organizing this team of volunteers and for taking care of her veterans.
SAIVONG JOINS CTVSO NETWORK

Butte County has selected Jasen Saivong as their new county veterans service officer; replacing Bob Wagner who has served since 2008.

Jason’s office hours will be 8:00 am—5:00 pm Mondays and Tuesdays. His contact information is jsaivong@buttesd.org and 605-723-8387.

Jason served in both the United States Army and the Marine Corps.

Please join us in welcoming Jason to the veteran service officer network.

KEYS TO PROGRESS

Since 2013, Progressive has been honoring veterans with vehicle donations through the Keys to Progress veteran vehicle giveaway program. The one-day vehicle giveaway happens every November to offer a little relief and improve the lives of veterans and military personnel facing challenging times.

On November 10, Progressive will give away vehicles at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance in Sioux Falls.

To receive an application, please contact the Alliance at 605-271-1582 or email Rachel at: info@southdakotaalliance.org.
FALOR RETIRES

Ron Falor recently retired from his post as county veterans service officer. Ron has served as the Aurora and Brule County VSO since 2011.

Ron will always be remembered for his great outreach programs. He was recognized by both the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars for his service to veterans and their families.

Join us in wishing Ron the best in this new chapter in life.

MJFSVH UPDATE

Crews at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home have been busy working to relocate the Unknown Soldier Monument closer to the new building.

The monument is now located at the flag pole plaza near the pavilion; allowing residents and visitors a better opportunity to view and pay tribute to this monument and our heroes.
One hundred sixty-one U.S. Army National Guard officer candidates from 19 states, one U.S. territory, and the U.S. Army Reserve attended their graduation ceremony from Officer Candidate School at Mount Rushmore near Keystone, July 29.

The ceremony represents the end of Officer Candidate School, the first step in officer training and development, and the beginning of their careers as commissioned officers.

“I would tell you being a leader is a journey, not a destination,” said Brig. Gen. Steven Kremer, Iowa National Guard assistant adjutant general and the ceremony’s guest speaker. Leading effectively is based on your experiences, both the positive as well as the negative.”

The OCS program in South Dakota is one of two programs throughout the U.S. that offers all three phases of OCS in one location, allowing National Guard soldiers to pursue the accelerated eight-week option or a traditional option, which consists of 16 to 18 months of drill weekends and two two-week training periods.

“No matter which path the officer candidate chooses, traditional or accelerated, they all have the same requirements, the same training and the same classes that need to be completed,” said Lt. Col. Matthew Symonds, commander for this summer’s accelerated OCS program in South Dakota. “Our expectation once they leave here is that they are ready to be platoon leaders of our young men and women.”

OCS is taught in a high-stress environment, where candidates are tested academically and physically, both in the classroom and in field environments.

“The officer candidates have to complete a six-mile road march, a nine-mile road march, and a 12 mile road march which are all timed; as well as a four-mile release run, land navigation tests, and some academic tests,” said Symonds. “Everybody is still growing and learning when they leave here. We cannot give them all the tools; we just give them a good basis for what they need to do. We have helped them learn their strengths and weaknesses, so they know when they go out what to work on.”

In order for the candidates to be successful throughout the program, they had to rely on each other’s strengths and maintain a high degree of cooperation between one another.
NATIONAL OPERATION GREEN LIGHT FOR VETERANS CAMPAIGN

This coming Veterans Day, the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the National Association of County Veteran Service Officers (NACVSO) invite the nation’s 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs to join Operation Green Light and show support for veterans by lighting their buildings green from November 7 to November 13.

By shining a green light, county governments and their residents will let veterans know that they are seen, appreciated and supported.

NACo has set up a great website with sample resolutions, press releases, and graphics.

Click on the link below to learn more about the campaign and to utilize the resources they have.

BENNETT NAMED MJFSVH EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

Teresa Bennett has been named the August employee of the month at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

Teresa has been working at the Home for almost three years! She started in the kitchen and now serves as a homemaker in the Stars & Stripes neighborhood. She provides excellent care to our residents and is loved by residents and staff! “Teresa is dedicated and kind to staff and residents alike. She has helped the nurse’s “catch” when something is wrong with a resident multiple times because of her keen observations and knowing these residents like her own family.”
VA AWARDS $431 MILLION IN GRANTS TO HELP AT-RISK VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

On Aug. 1, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs awarded $431 million in grants to 258 non-profit organizations across the nation to help homeless and at-risk veterans and their families.

The funds, which are being awarded through VA’s Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program, will be available for use on Oct. 1.

SSVF grants enable community organizations to provide outreach and case management assistance to veterans, and help them access health care, financial planning, childcare, legal assistance, transportation, housing counseling, and other services.

“Nobody should be homeless in the country they fought to defend — nobody,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “These grant funds will help our partner organizations across the country provide at-risk veterans with the resources they need to stay in their homes, where they belong, or find a new home.”

In this calendar year, the VA has already placed more than 19,000 homeless veterans into permanent housing — putting VA on track to meet their goal of 38,000 permanent housing placements for homeless veterans in 2022.

In fiscal year 2021, SSVF served 114,175 participants, including 80,049 veterans and 19,266 children.


View the list of grantees and learn more about SSVF.
VA EXPANDS GRANT PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS HELPING HOMELESS VETERANS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs published a Proposed Rule, July 29, allowing Grant and Per Diem program grantees to receive reimbursements for costs associated with serving the minor dependents of homeless veterans.

This includes such costs as child supervision, transportation, and additional case management.

This regulation implements section 4204 of the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D., Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, which updates how VA reimburses GPD grantees by establishing a new rate for each minor dependent cared for by a homeless veteran. The regulation also implements an increase to the maximum amount that grantees can be reimbursed, up to 115% of the state home for domiciliary care rate, which will support grantees’ ability to provide care to veterans after the COVID-19 pandemic flexibilities end.

“Our work to end veteran homelessness depends on our ability to effectively support veterans and their family members,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “This new regulation will make it easier for Grant and Per Diem grantees to provide the services. Veterans’ families need to achieve independence.”

The GPD program has provided community-based transitional housing with supportive services for veterans since 1994 as they transition back to permanent housing. By the end of 2022, VA plans to place 38,000 homeless veterans into permanent housing.

View current GPD grantees and details about the program. The proposed rule is available at the Federal Register.
11TH ANNUAL  AUGUST 6TH
Poker Run

Registration 9-11 AM at VFW Post 5860
$20 Registration - $30 Per Couple

Poker Hands Will Be Drawn at The Last Stop at 5PM
Breakfast Buffet & Bar Will Be Available at The VFW

Prizes Awarded for High Hand and Low Hand
($100-$300) As Well As 50/50 Drawings

Poker Run Route:
VFW Post 5860, Spearfish, SD
Departing at 11AM

Sandcreek Trading Post, Beulah, WY
Dime Horseshoe Bar, Sundance, WY
Ponderosa Bar, Hulett, WY
Aladdin Store, WY
Stone House, HWY 34
SOB, St. Onges, SD
VFW Post 5860, Spearfish, SD

Rain or Shine: Cars Welcome

All Proceeds Benefit Spearfish Veterans Monument
Questions? Contact Rico (605) 639-5770
UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 6—SSG Dan Cuka Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Yankton High School—1:00 pm (CT)
Aug 13—SGT James Haider Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—BG Ernie Edwards Readiness Center—Watertown—10:30 am (CT)
Aug 14—Military Order of the Purple Heart National Convention—Rapid City
Aug 15—17—SDDVA Annual CT VS O Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 17—Sioux Falls VA Car Show (2501 W. 22nd Street)—5:30 pm—8:30 pm (CT)
Aug 18—23—USS Iowa Veterans Association Reunion—Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center—Rapid City
Aug 20—PVT August E. Otto Bridge Dedication—Claire City Community Hall—11:00 am (CT)
Aug 22—The Barrel House Day of Giving fundraiser for Midwest Honor Flight—Sioux Falls
Aug 27—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 11 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—9:30 pm (CT)
Sep 1—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair—Huron
Sep 2—RED Day at the State Fair—Group Photo at the Freedom Stage in Huron at 1:45 pm (CT)
Sep 1—5—South Dakota State Fair—Huron
Sep 3—727th/DAV Poker Run—Swiftel Center (824 32nd Avenue)—Brookings—10:00 am (CT)
Sep 5—Labor Day
Sep 9—11—PVA Annual Trapshoot—Crooks Gun Club
Sep 10—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 12 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—9:30 pm (CT)
Sep 10—Heroes Helping with Horsepower Military Appreciation Event—W. Main Street—Ethan—Festivities begin at 8:00 am (CT)
Sep 12—PVA Doug Brown Memorial Hunt—Howard
Sep 14—17—Black Hills Veterans March
Sep 17—CPL Martin Fluegel Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—McCook Central High School—Salem—1:00 pm (CT)
Sep 23—Veterans Stand Down—SD Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell) —Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)
Sep 28—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion—Rapid City—9:00 am—noon (MT)
UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 1—PVT Frederic Schroeder Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—VFW—Madison—1:00 pm (CT)
Oct 1—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 13 Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center Arena—9:30 pm (CT)
Oct 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—(20901 Pleasant Valley Dr)—Sturgis—9:00 am (MT)
Oct 10—Native American Day
Oct 15—Midwest Honor Flight Fifth Annual Hangar Dance—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm (CT)
Oct 21—PVA Dueling Pianos Fundraiser—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—7:00 pm (CT)
Nov 5—We’ve Got Your Six Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—(1401 Lazelle Street)—Sturgis—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
Nov 11—Veterans Day
Nov 11—Capt Tommy Callies Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Howard High School—9:30 am (CT)
Nov 11—S2 Wayne Bridge Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Wagner High School—2:00 pm (CT)
Nov 16—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Pierre
Nov 24—Thanksgiving Day
Dec 6—Governor’s Budget Address
Dec 17—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—11:00 am (CT)
Dec 25—Christmas

2023 Events

Jan 10—Governor’s State of the State Address
Jan 11—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting
Feb 10—12—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Huron
Mar 22—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting
May 17—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting
Jun 8—11—American Legion State Conference—Oacoma
Jul 19—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting

2024 Events

Feb 16—18—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Deadwood
Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre

2025 Events

Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron

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South Dakota Department of the Military https://military.sd.gov/
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs https://vetaffairs.sd.gov
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