After two years of virtual participation at-home, approximately 500 veterans from across the country are set to compete in the United States Department of Veterans Affairs’ National Veterans Golden Age Games, July 18-23, in South Dakota.

Veterans age 55 and older will return to live competition and clinics at multiple venues throughout Sioux Falls. Events will be held at the Ramkota, Sioux Falls Convention Center, Howard Wood Field, Denny Sanford Premier Center and McCart Field.

Through its “Fitness for Life” motto, the National Veterans Golden Age Games motivates veterans to commit to fitness through daily recreational movement and activity. The rehabilitation event demonstrates the essential value of sports and complements VA rehabilitation programs and year-round training offered to veterans at VA facilities across the country.

During the six-day event, senior veteran athletes will compete in 14 sports: air pistol, air rifle, badminton, blind disc golf, boccia, cornhole, horseshoes, nine ball, pickleball, powerwalk, shuffleboard, table tennis, and track and field. Exhibitions this year include air rifle for those visually impaired and kickball as a team sport.

The VA presents the annual event with support from national sponsors, Veterans Canteen Service and other corporate and local sponsors that recognize the role fitness plays in lives of older Americans.

Since 2004, the National Veterans Golden Age Games have been a qualifier for the National Senior Games, a member of the U.S. Olympic Committee. Medalists of some National Veterans Golden Age Games events can compete further among America’s elite senior athletes.

Follow the events at #GoldenAgeGames for real-time stories on @Sports4Vets Facebook and Twitter.
On July 16th, 2022, 988 will become the national three-digit phone number for all mental health, substance use, and suicide crises. 988 calls will be routed to South Dakota’s only National Suicide Prevention Lifeline center, The Helpline Center, transitioning from the current Lifeline number, 1-800-273-8255. 988 will offer rapid access to behavioral health support through connection with trained crisis specialists.

When someone calls, chats, or texts 988, they can expect to be connected to a crisis specialist who is trained and prepared to deliver support to anyone experiencing a crisis. Because a crisis is defined by the person or family experiencing it, the crisis specialist will engage with the person to understand and address the person’s unique concerns and needs. The intervention may include assessment, stabilization, referral, and follow-up for individuals at high risk for suicide and/or poor mental health outcomes.

988 is opening the door to a robust crisis system that can de-escalate mental health crises and connect individuals to the most appropriate care. With 988 as the first component of our system, there is hope to see:

- A change in the community response to behavioral health crises.
- A decrease in suicides and other poor mental health outcomes.
- A reduction in health care spending and use of law enforcement with more cost-effective early intervention.

It is up to each state to ensure crisis services are adequately funded and available to anyone, anywhere, anytime. The 988 Implementation Plan for South Dakota was finalized in January 2022 with the Behavioral Health Crisis Response Stakeholder Coalition. The Stakeholder group has key members from behavioral health crisis response and prevention services across the state. Click here to learn more about 988 at: https://sdsuicideprevention.org/988-2/.
HOW WILL 988 DIFFER FROM 211

211 is a non-emergency number for finding community resources, such as food banks and shelters. 911 is currently used for all emergencies, including mental health emergencies. Mental health crisis calls may result in potentially dangerous and traumatizing outcomes when police are called, especially in historically marginalized communities. Despite their best efforts, 911 dispatchers usually have not received specific training on how to handle mental health and suicide related calls. Although law enforcement response is often not necessary or appropriate for mental health crisis situations, police are typically the first responders activated by 911 calls.

988 will be a mental health crisis number, and calls will be handled by National Suicide Prevention Lifeline counselors. These counselors are highly trained to assist people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis. In fact, based on data provided by Lifeline call centers, approximately 98% of answered Lifeline calls do not require an emergency response. Of the 2% of the calls that do require emergency response, over 60% of those calls are ones where the caller agrees that emergency services are needed and collaborates with the Lifeline counselor to receive those services.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL 988

Anyone in need of crisis support for themselves or someone else should call 988 starting on July 16, 2022. 988 is an opportunity to transform our country’s behavioral health crisis system to respond to anyone in need. The Lifeline accepts calls from anyone who is suicidal or in emotional distress, including substance use crisis.

IS 1.800.273.8255 GOING AWAY

No. Moving to 988 does not mean the 800 number goes away. Dialing either number will get people to the same services, no matter which number they use. In the end, 988 is an easier-to-remember way for all Americans to access a strengthened and expanded network of crisis call centers.
DITTER JOINS DAVISON COUNTY VSO TEAM

Courtney Ditter joins the Davison County Veterans Service Office team. She has enjoyed serving her country and now welcomes the opportunity to be able to help assist and guide her fellow veterans and their families.

Ditter was born in Sioux City, IA, but grew up in Kansas City, MO.

In 2013, Ditter joined the Army National Guard as an All-Source Intelligence Analyst, where she also helped train new recruits for the National Guard and prepare them for Basic Training. After her service, Ditter went on to Northwest Missouri State University where she received her bachelor’s degree in Human Services, with a minor in Psychology and Sociology. At this time she also volunteered to help student service members and veterans with school-related issues.

Ditter’s husband, Alex, also served in the Army National Guard for eight years.

GREENWOOD RELEASES NEW VERSION OF “GOD BLESS THE USA”

We all remember the day Lee Greenwood released the hit song “God Bless the U.S.A.” Now Greenwood, in collaboration with The United States Air Force Band, Singing Sergeants and Home Free, has released a new version of this great hit song. Check it out!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Japc8M8RQw&fs=e&app=desktop&v=0Japc8M8RQw&fbclid=IwAR22AnnmoQ_MECxLOz4K8oCOz9pfi-4aNRCrFCTk1IAXAwT1OylzvUOEZk
2022 Sioux Falls VA Health Care System Creative Arts Festival and Competition

August 10, 2022 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Sioux Falls VA Medical Center Chapel

Each Veteran or employee of the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System may submit up to 2 pieces of art or creative writing which were created in the last year. Please submit a separate form for each piece.

- Entry forms will be accepted July 6, 2022 - August 3, 2022.

- Please mail completed forms Sioux Falls VA Health care System, Attn: Ardell Fiedler, mail code 124, 2501 W 22nd Street, Sioux Falls, SD 57105 or email completed forms to ardell.fiedler@va.gov

- You may drop off your art work August 1 – 8, 2022 at the Chaplain’s offices on the 3rd floor of the Sioux Falls VA. If no one is available contact Nicole Haertel at ext. 6494.

- Please email creative writing entries in a Word document August 1 – August 3, 2022 to nicole.haertel@va.gov.

- Awards will be announced at 2:00 p.m. the day of the event.

- All artwork should be picked up at the end of the show unless other arrangements have been made.

- For more information or to have an entry form sent to you, please contact Sioux Falls VA Health Care System staff at 605-336-3230 Nicole Haertel EXT 6494 or Ardell Fiedler EXT 5982.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Jul 16—PFC David Gatton Bridge Dedication—Capitol Lake Visitors Center—Pierre—1:00 pm (CT)
Jul 18—23—National Veterans Golden Age Games—Sioux Falls
Jul 20—SD Veterans Council Meeting—American Legion Post 17 (1412 9th Avenue SW)—Watertown—9:00 am (CT)
Jul 23—American Legion State Commander Feltman’s Homecoming—AmericInn (1981 East King Street)
  Chamberlain—social at 12:00 pm, meal at 1:00 pm, and program at 2:00 pm (CT)
Jul 24—American Legion State Auxiliary President Homecoming—Chester School—12:00 noon (CT)
Aug 6—9—DAV National Convention—Orlando, FL
Aug 6—SSG Dan Cuka Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication—Yankton High School—1:00 pm (CT)
Aug 13—James Haider Bridge Dedication—BG Ernie Edwards Readiness Center—Watertown—10:30 am (CT)
Aug 14—19—Military Order of the Purple Heart National Convention—Rapid City
Aug 15—17—SDDVA Annual CTVSO Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre
Aug 18—23—USS Iowa Veterans Association Reunion—Ramkota Hotel and Conference Center—Rapid City
Aug 20—PVT August 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 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 14—17—Black Hills Veterans March
Sep 17—CPL Martin Fluegel Bridge Dedication—McCook Central High School—Salem—1:00 pm (CT)
Sep 21—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Rapid City
UPCOMING EVENTS

Oct 1—PVT Frederic Schroeder 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 Bridge Dedication—Howard High School—9:30 am (CT)
Nov 11—S2 Wayne Bridge 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

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military https://military.sd.gov/
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs https://vetaffairs.sd.gov
Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us