



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



WURTZ PROMOTED TO CHIEF WARRANT OFFICER FIVE

The South Dakota Army National Guard promoted John Wurtz of Rapid City, to the rank of chief warrant officer five, during a ceremony at Camp Rapid on Friday, March 24, 2023. This is the highest rank of the warrant officer corps.

Wurtz began his military career in 2000 with the 1085th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) as an aircraft electrician. He attended warrant officer candidate school and helicopter flight school at Fort Rucker, AL and graduated in 2003 as the honor graduate.

Wurtz holds the position of commander, Detachment 5, Company C, 2/641st Aviation. His unit operates the C-12 airplane, responsible for transporting personnel and cargo. He was previously assigned as the commander of Detachment 2, Company B, 935th Aviation that provided advanced maintenance for rotary-wing aircraft.

Wurtz deployed to Kosovo in 2008 and Kuwait in 2012 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He also supported missions in Nicaragua and the Southwest Border. He is qualified in the UH-60 Blackhawk and LUH-72 Lakota helicopters and the C-12 airplane. Wurtz is a qualified Aviation Safety Officer and Maintenance Test Pilot.

Wurtz and his wife, Heather, have three children and reside in Rapid City, SD. He was recently inducted into the Montana State University Hall of Fame for track and field.

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SDDVA MINI CONFERENCES

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting their Spring Mini Conferences April 25-27 in Rapid City, Pierre, and Brookings. These conferences are designed to update county and tribal veterans service officers on issues relating to filing claims for veterans.

During the conferences, SDDVA will be providing a brief update followed by training on Nexus letters and medical opinions, ratings review, appeals and the PACT Act.

Training will run from 10:00 am—2:00 pm at each location. Soup and sandwich will be served for those attending the Pierre session.

Locations for the conferences are as follows:

Apr 25—Pennington County Veterans Service Office—(321 Kansas City Street—Suite 100)—Rapid City

Apr 26—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre

Apr 27—VFW Post 2118—(520 Main Avenue)—Brookings.



HOOPER NAMED DIRECTOR OF NURSING AT MICHAEL J. FITZMAURICE STATE VETERANS HOME

Chuck, Johnson, superintendent at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home, has announced that Natalie Hooper is the new director of nursing at the Home.

Natalie has been with the State Veterans Home for eight years. She began her career at the Home in 2006, where she spent three years working as a certified nursing assistant. Natalie left for a few years to pursue her education, returning in September 2018 as a PRN nurse. From 2019 to 2022, Natalie served as the resident care coordinator, and in June 2022 she was named the assistant director of nursing.

As director of nursing, Natalie will play a critical role in leading the overall coordination and execution of nursing services at the Home and oversee all staff who provide nursing care to our residents.

VA WAIVES COPAYMENTS FOR ELIGIBLE NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs has announced that eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans are no longer required to make copayments for health care and urgent care received through the VA. It is estimated to impact approximately 25,000 American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans.

Under this new policy, the VA will reimburse copayments paid on or after Jan. 5, 2022 and waive future copayments for eligible American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans.

Beginning Tuesday, April 4, veterans can submit documentation to qualify for the copayment exemption. Eligible veterans include any veteran who [meets the definitions of “Indian” or “urban Indian”](#) under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act – including veterans who are members of an American Indian Tribe, certain veterans who are descendants of Tribe members, Alaska Native Veterans, and [more](#).

“American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans deserve access to world-class health care for their courageous service to our nation,” said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. “By eliminating copays, we are making VA health care more affordable and accessible — which will lead to better health outcomes for these heroes.”

To receive this financial relief, eligible veterans should mail 1) a completed VA Tribal Documentation Form (VA Form 10-334), and 2) a copy of official tribal documentation demonstrating that they meet the definitions of “Indian” or “urban Indian” to PO Box 5100, Janesville, WI 53547. For more information on copayment waivers for Native American and Alaska Native Veterans, visit [here](#).

VA posted a [final rule for public inspection](#) in the Federal Register today establishing the waiver and process for veterans to submit documentation to have their VA copays waived. This rule implements Section 3002 of the [Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, M.D. Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020 Public Law 116-315](#), signed into law Jan. 5, 2021.

Click these links to learn more [about copayment exemptions for Native American and Alaska Native Veterans](#) and [VA benefits and programs for American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans](#).

NATIONAL PRESCRIPTION TAKE BACK DAY

Have you ever wondered what to do with expired or unused medication? Many are at a loss with what to do with their old medication, so it collects from year to year. Keeping unused or expired medications can be dangerous especially for children and teens.

Prescription drugs are safe only when used by the person it was prescribed for and obtained from a pharmacy. It's one of the reasons why it is so important to clean out expired or old medication you no longer use. With the national DEA prescription drug take back day coming up on April 22, here are some helpful tips to help you get rid of your unused or expired drugs.

- Drop off at one of the take back locations. Many take back locations like pharmacies and police stations accept medications year-round.
- Pick up a DisposeRx packet at your local pharmacy or fill out a form on the Avoid Opioid website: <https://www.avoidopioidsd.com> and have them mailed directly to you for FREE!
- Scratch out all your personal information on the empty medicine packaging to protect your identity and privacy. Throw the packaging away.
- Ask your local pharmacy about their Safe Disposal Program. Many have their own kiosk or program to take back unused or expired medications.
- To Flush or Not to Flush... There are medications that are safe to flush and some that are not. Search the U.S. Food & Drug Administration's (FDA's) Flush List for certain medications. When in doubt, always ask your local pharmacist if a medication is flushable. For more information about these safe disposal options, visit <https://www.avoidopioidsd.com/take-action/safe-medication-disposal/>.

FDA's Flush List: <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know/drug-disposal-fdas-flush-list-certain-medicines#FlushList>.

Keep medications you are currently using safe and secure in a medication lock box.



**National Prescription Drug
Take Back Day is**

Saturday April 22nd

VETERAN STAND DOWN PINE RIDGE



WHEN - June 9, 2023 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
WHERE - Pine Ridge Pow Wow Grounds, Pine Ridge, SD

SERVICES OFFERED

LUNCH
CLOTHING
VA BENEFITS
HOUSING REFERRALS

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES
LEGAL ASSISTANCE
READJUSTMENT COUNSELING
MUCH MORE!

* Please bring a copy of your DD214, Dependent information, and identification to the event. Documentation is needed so we can fully serve you and your needs.

For questions, contact:

Adriane M. Cox at 605-499-8671, VA Black Hills
Heidi Rubins at 605-490-3592, VA Black Hills
Shawnee Red Bear, USMC Vet, Oglala Sioux Tribe Veteran Service Officer at 605-867-55577 (work) or 605-407-8733 (cell).

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Black Hills Health Care System



UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 7—State Offices Closed

Apr 10—State Offices Closed

Apr 15—American Legion State Commander's Workday—Wings of Valor Lodge—(45618 278th Street)—Parker—9:00 am (CT)

Apr 19—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—MJFSVH—Hot Springs—3:00 pm (MT)

Apr 21—PURPLE UP for Military Kids Day

Apr 21-23—Vietnam and Era Veterans Reunion—Ramkota—(2111 LaCrosse)—Rapid City

Apr 25—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pennington County Veterans Service Office—(321 Kansas City Street—Suite 100)—Rapid City—10:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)

Apr 26—SDDVA Mini Conference—American Legion Post 8—(520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)

Apr 27—SDDVA Mini Conference—VFW Post 2118—(520 Main Avenue)—Brookings—10:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)

Apr 29—Midwest Honor Flight Guardian Training—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)

May 1-3—Fareway's Midwest Honor Flight Round Up Campaign at participating stores

May 5-6—DAV Department of South Dakota State Convention—DAV Headquarters—(1519 W. 51st Street)—Sioux Falls

May 6—Midwest Honor Flight Guardian Training—American Legion Post—(818 W. St. Patrick Street)—Rapid City—10:00 am (MT)

May 16—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 14—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—9:30 pm (CT)

May 17—QDOBA Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—Sioux Falls

May 29—SDDVA Memorial Day Program—South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—(25965 477th Avenue)—Sioux Falls—8:30 am (CT)

May 29—State Offices Closed

May 31—Midwest Honor Flight Mission 15—Welcome Home Ceremony—Sioux Falls Convention Center—9:30 pm (CT)

Jun 8—11—American Legion State Conference—Oacoma

Jun 9—Veterans Stand Down—Pine Ridge Pow Wow Grounds—Pine Ridge—10:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)

Jun 14—Chick-Fil-A Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser

Jun 15-18—VFW State Convention—Mitchell—(4-H Grounds)

Jun 19—State Offices Closed

Jun 25—3rd Annual Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride—Sioux Falls—(starts at the Alliance and ends at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery)—2:00 pm (CT)

Jul 4—State Offices Closed

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Jul 17—Tee it Up for the Troops—Arrowhead Country Club—Rapid City—8:00 am (MT)
 Jul 19—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Sisseton—9:00 am (CT)
 Jul 29-30—Sioux Falls Air Show
 Jul 29—Korean War/Defense Veterans Appreciation Day—Brookings County Outdoor Adventure Center
 (2810 22nd Avenue S)—Brookings—9:00 am to 3:00 pm (CT)
 Aug 10-11—South Dakota Suicide Prevention Conference—Sioux Falls Convention Center
 Aug 28—Barrel House Day of Giving for Midwest Honor Flight
 Aug 31—Veterans Day at the SD State Fair
 Aug 31—Sept 4—SD State Fair
 Sep 4—State Offices Closed
 Sep 5—7—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell Street)—Sioux Falls
 Sep 20—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Rapid City
 Oct 9—State Offices Closed
 Oct 21—Elvis Night/50's Dance Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser—SD Military Heritage Alliance—(1600 W. Russell
 Street)—Sioux Falls
 Nov 4—Northern Hills Veterans Appreciation Fair—Sturgis Community Center—11:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
 Nov 10—State Offices Closed
 Nov 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Sioux Falls
 Nov 13—Barrel House Day of Giving for SDVC Wreaths Across America
 Nov 23—State Offices Closed
 Dec 16—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux
 Falls—11:00 am (CT)
 Dec 25—State Offices Closed

2024 Events

- Jan 10—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Pierre
 Feb 16—18—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Deadwood
 Jun 20—23—American Legion State Conference—Pierre
 Dec 14—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—
 11:00 am (CT)

2025 Events

- Feb 14—16—American Legion Mid-Winter Conference—Oacoma
 Jun 19—22—American Legion State Conference—Huron
 Dec 13—Wreaths Across America Wreath Laying Ceremony at South Dakota Veterans Cemetery—Sioux Falls—
 11:00 am (CT)

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