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South Dakota to Dedicate 12 Bridges for 15 Fallen Heroes

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting 12 fallen hero bridge dedication ceremonies this year, honoring 15 veterans.

In 2019, Governor Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Veterans Affairs, Military, and Transportation launched the Fallen Heroes Bridge Dedication Program with the mission of dedicating state bridges to South Dakotans who were killed in action while serving their country or classified as missing in action.

“Naming South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen gives us the opportunity of remembrance, reflection, and respect—to honor the men and women who gave their lives in service to this nation,” said South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Greg Whitlock. “These men and women, so young and in such a short time, met their destiny on far off battlefields. In return for their great gift, there is nothing more complex or important that we can do but to ensure the memories of their shortened lives go on.”

This year’s 12 bridge dedications include:

- Jun 29—LT Donald R. and SGT Fred H. Harms—Tripp American Legion Post 142 (102 S. Main Street)— 2:00 pm (CT);
- Jul 3—SGT Lelund M. Kahler—Belle Fourche Rec Center (1111 National Street)—2:00 pm (MT);
- Jul 10—T/5 Harald Haraldsen—Buffalo Lions Civic Center (210 State Road 20)— 2:00 pm (MT);
- Jul 19—CPL Russell N. Ferdig—Elk Point United Parish (2102 E. Main Street)—2:00 pm (CT);
- Jul 24—CPL John C. McDowell—Corsica Travel Plaza (HWY 281 and Main Street)—11:00 am (CT);
- Aug 2—PFC John Tuin—Estelline American Legion Post 184 (222 Main Street)—1:30 pm (CT);
- Aug 5—RM2 Eugene L., RM2 Ordien F., and LT LeRoy M. Herr—Bristol High School Gym (500 S. 3rd Street)— 1:30 pm (CT);
- Aug 10—SGT Terry G. Rada—Geddes Multi-Purpose Center (409 Michigan Avenue)—12:00 noon (CT);
- Aug 17—SGT Dennis D. Lawver—Miller American Legion Post (402 S. Broadway Avenue)— 2:00 pm (CT);
- Aug 18—PFC Gunnar D. Becker—Sanborn County 4-H Building in Forestburg (23237 405th Avenue)—2:00 pm (CT);

- Aug 21—1LT Daniel J. Kirchgesler—St Thomas More High School in Rapid City (300 Fairmont Blvd)—2:00 pm (MT); and
- Nov 11—1LT Josef L. Thorne—Beresford High School Gym (301 W. Maple Street)—1:30 pm (CT).

“We are committed to preserving their memories and demonstrating our will to remember. We ask everyone to participate in one of the 12 bridge dedications scheduled in 2024,” said Secretary Whitlock

To learn more about South Dakota’s fallen heroes bridge dedication program, visit vetaffairs.sd.gov.