



South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E. Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
Fax: 605-773-5380
<http://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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For more information, contact: Audry Ricketts at 605-773-8242 or audry.ricketts@state.sd.us (South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs)

Leaders Recognized for their Service to South Dakota's Veterans

PIERRE, S.D. – County and tribal veterans' service officers (CTVSO) and staff from the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) were recognized for their dedication to serving veterans and veterans' families at an awards program Monday, Aug. 26, in Pierre.

The annual event, organized by the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs, was held in conjunction with the veterans' benefits training conference for CTVSOs.

"Our County and Tribal Veterans Services officers serve as counselors, ministers, lawyers, fellow veterans and much more," said Greg Whitlock, Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "Veterans' needs vary from mental to physical health needs. These award winners are the best of the best. They care for each and every person that walks through their doors."

"These awards are a small token of recognition for dedication to veterans and their loved ones," said Aaron Pollard, Deputy Secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "Across this state men and women work hard each day to work for those who've served, those who received these awards are recognized by their peers as leading the charge in doing so."

Sheila Carpenter, veterans service claims assistant for Hughes, Stanley and Sully Counties, was awarded the 2019 Partner of the Year award. Sheila was recognized for her compassion, commitment, knowledge and professionalism when assisting South Dakota's veterans.

Susan Irons, county veterans service officer for Lincoln and Union Counties, received the 2019 Outreach of the Year award for being instrumental in recognizing veterans of all eras, contacting veterans wherever she goes and thanking them for their services.

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Craig Bennett, veterans service officer for Davison County, received the 2019 County Veterans Service Officer of the Year award. Craig was recognized for his outstanding commitment to enhance the lives of veterans by securing their benefits in a timely fashion and submitting flawless claims.

Joe Leasure, SDDVA state veterans service officer was awarded the SDDVA 2019 Employee of the Year award. Leasure was recognized for his commitment to the Department's partners and our veterans.

Sen. Mike Rounds, Representative Dusty Johnson and Governor Kristi Noem briefed the CTVSOs and the SDDVA staff as well as thanked them for the job they do.

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(Photos available upon request)