

THE FITZ BITZ TIMES

*The Official Newsletter of the
Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home*



A WORD FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

What a year! 2020 did not turn out as anyone expected. The coronavirus pandemic brought many new challenges and forced us to think outside the box so we could keep our veterans safe. Every challenge was met with a solution and I've never been prouder of the team that we have caring for our nation's heroes.

We were proud to be COVID-free for 229 days. While battling COVID, our staff went above and beyond, covering extra shifts and finding creative ways to keep our residents safe and active.

Although we look forward to the day we can return to more "normal" times, this time of social isolation reminded us to count our blessings. The Hot Springs community and the veteran community in South Dakota and beyond rallied and found ways to let the heroes of the South Dakota Veterans Home know they were remembered and appreciated. In the words of Irving Berlin, "We've got plenty to be thankful for." I hope you enjoy this look back at just a few of the things we were thankful for in 2020!

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ACTIVITIES

Activities have looked a bit different this year due to COVID restrictions and precautions but we still had fun! Our residents enjoyed bus rides, crafts, celebrating the birthday of each branch of service, singing groups, household movie nights with popcorn, a petting zoo, and much more! We appreciate our staff going above and beyond to keep our residents' minds active during this time of isolation. We hope these pictures of our heroes enjoying themselves bring a smile to your face.



Some of our "crafty" residents showing off their fall creations.



Residents enjoying a visit from feathered friends of the Rapid City Raptor Group.



Our oldest Air Force Veteran enjoys the honor of cutting the cake at the Air Force birthday celebration!



Two residents reflecting during a bus ride in the Badlands.

These weekly bus rides are one of our residents' favorite activities!



In August at the Annual Cemetery Walk, live performers depicted first-person accounts from the lives of some of Hot Springs' most famous historical figures who are buried at the State Veterans Cemetery.



Residents enjoyed outdoor performances by various artists and groups throughout the year. Pictured above is the group "Terry Dienes and Friends."

Thank you to each group that came! Our Veterans enjoyed every performance!

Touch 2 Play and iN2L Machines

This year we were able to purchase some new "toys" for our Veterans. In addition to movies, music, card games, puzzles, and interactive games like bowling and soccer, these machines also allow our residents to enjoy a scenic ride by bicycle, take a drive, and try their hand at flying!

Pictured right and below, residents enjoy interactive games and two residents take a new machine out for a test drive.



Quilts for Veterans

A special thank you to the Hot Springs Quilter's Guild for the beautiful quilts they made to honor some of our Veterans! As you can see from the photos, they brightened our heroes' day!



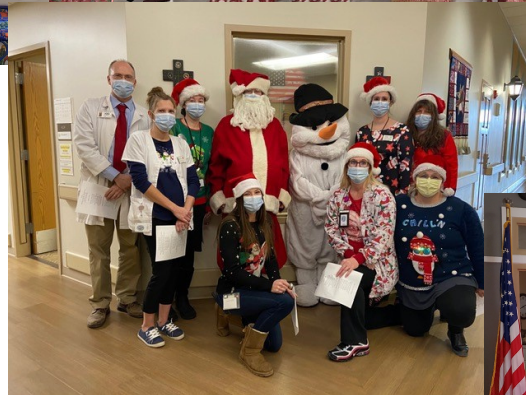
VOLUNTEERS

Every year, many generous individuals and organizations volunteer at the MJFSDVH. These individuals sponsor activities or special occasion meals that enhance the home-like environment. We encourage this interaction and partnering to continue within the veteran community and the local community of Hot Springs. In 2019, volunteers donated 1,370 hours to assist our veterans and staff. In 2020, COVID restrictions limited the volunteers and groups we could allow in the facility, but we continue to be overwhelmed by the generosity of organizations across the State and in our local community who found ways to support our veterans and staff despite the restrictions. As we strive to provide the highest level of care and support for our veterans, one of the things we never forget is that it would be impossible for us to do it alone. Thank you for your support!



Elks Steak Feeds

We appreciate the local Hot Springs Elks group, who have braved both the heat and cooler temps to honor our Veterans with a steak lunch once per month. Pictured above are the grill masters and their lovely assistants preparing and serving sides!



Christmas 2020

Pictured above are just some of the "elves" that brightened our heroes holidays! From donations, gifts, cards, candy, & even Christmas trees for resident rooms, the Veteran community across the state let our heroes know they were remembered and appreciated over the holiday season.

Above: Staff, joined by Santa and Frosty, caroled in each household to bring Christmas cheer!

SDVH CAMPUS IMPROVEMENTS

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic provided an excellent opportunity to get outside and make improvements to our campus. Our maintenance team and contractors did an excellent job completing projects to make our campus a safer, more energy-efficient, and enjoyable place to live and work.



1889 Soldier's Home Repairs

We also completed repairs to the original 1889 Soldier's Home, restoring the original grand staircase and making safety improvements to fire escapes to keep the building up to code. This building currently provides on-campus housing to some of our staff.



Solar Field

In 2020, the MJFSDVH activated our solar field which provides enough clean energy to power the facility during the day. Since activation, the solar field has provided an average savings of \$3,000 per month.



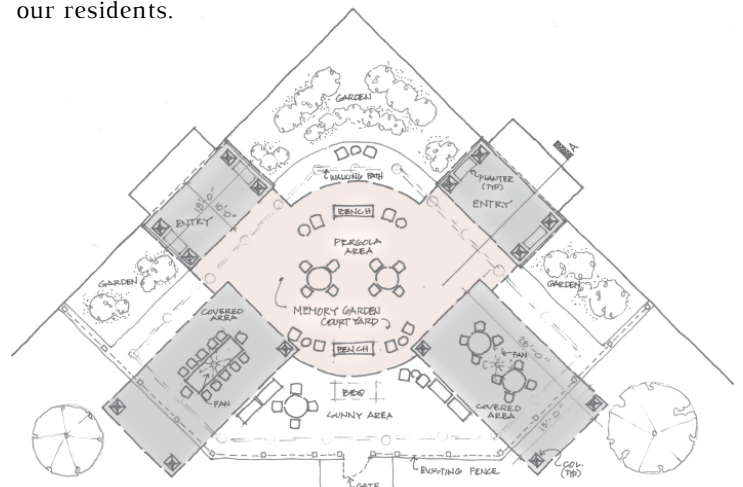
Star Academy Homes

We have also added three single-family homes for staff to our campus. These were relocated from the Star Academy campus and will help us to attract and retain high-quality staff for our facility.

Pictured right, a design schematic of the pergola & memory garden planned for the specialized memory care unit courtyard.

COMING IN 2021!

In 2021, using funds from the estate of retired Air Force Master Sergeant Arlyn Reinert of Texas, we plan to improve and expand our outdoor areas for residents – giving special attention to the courtyard off of our specialized memory care unit. This will allow residents to enjoy the outdoors in a safe environment designed specifically for their needs. We look forward to planning additional improvements with remaining funds to benefit our residents.



IS THE COVID VACCINE RIGHT FOR ME?

In January & February 2021, the SDVH will partner with Walgreens to offer the COVID vaccine to any SDVH staff and residents that want it. Below are some Questions and Answers* that we hope will help you consider whether or not the vaccine is right for you and your loved ones.

*FAQs taken from *COVID-19 Vaccine Education Toolkit* released by *The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine (AMDA)*.



What are some possible side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine? Will the vaccine make me sick?

- The vaccines currently being tested in clinical trials can cause short-term discomfort (such as headache, muscle pains, fatigue, chills, fever, and pain at injection site) in a percentage of the people who receive them. This is the effect of your body developing immunity. Clinical trial participants reported that the discomfort went away after a day, sometimes sooner. When you receive the second dose of the vaccine, the discomfort can be more pronounced. This is a normal reaction, so be prepared.

How will we know it is safe?

- Safety is the most important requirement for the vaccine and is assessed in trials by independent experts.
- Most adverse side effects occur within 6 weeks of vaccine administration, and the FDA has required 8 weeks of safety monitoring so it can track any side effects.
- FDA advises a minimum of 3,000 participants to assess safety. The current phase 3 trials have 30,000 to 50,000 participants. This really demonstrates how safety is a top priority for the FDA and medical community.

How long will the vaccine protect us?

- It is likely that we will not know the answer to that question when a vaccine is released. That will take more research.
- This vaccine may be like the annual flu vaccine, where we may need to have vaccine shots for COVID-19 on a regular basis. More research is needed to know this and it also depends on whether and how much the virus changes over the coming months to years.

When will we be protected after we get the vaccine?

- Even when people receive the vaccine they will not be immediately protected and will need to continue wearing masks, social distancing and practicing frequent hand hygiene.
- Some vaccines will require 2 shots, with a few weeks between each shot, and protection will usually occur about 2 weeks after the second shot.
- While no vaccine is 100% effective, some of the vaccines proposed are anticipated to be more than 90% effective. This will greatly reduce your risk of getting sick with COVID-19 and spreading COVID-19 to your loved ones.

What if I had COVID-19 or I took a test that showed I have antibodies? Should I still get the vaccine?

- Yes, even if you have had COVID-19, it is safe to get the vaccine and this can add additional protection without causing any harm.
- If you have had a test that shows you have COVID-19 antibodies, you should still get the vaccine. It is safe and can increase your protection from future COVID-19 infections.



South Dakota Veteran's Home Celebrates 4,500th Resident!!

In December 2020, we celebrated what the Michael J. Fitzmaurice South Dakota Veterans Home is all about by welcoming our 4,500th resident since opening in November 1889.

Staff welcomed our newest resident, Mr. Hiram M. Neiffer, a purple heart recipient. Deputy Superintendent Teresa Phillipson met Mr. Neiffer upon arrival and presented him with a personalized cake and said a few words on the great honor that it was for the SDVH to serve Veterans such as himself. Welcome, Mr. Neiffer!



Send a Note to a Veteran or Staff Member at SDVH!

Let a hero know you care - send a note to any resident or staff at the SDVH! Simply visit the link below and click the "Send a Note!" box. Link: <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranshome/default.aspx>

JOIN OUR TEAM!

Would you or someone you know make a great addition to the SDVH team? We are always looking for high-quality individuals to provide excellent care for our nation's heroes.

To view our current openings, please visit:
<https://bhr.sd.gov/job-seekers/>

Click "Online application process" then "All Open Positions." Under Agency, select "Veterans Affairs" then click "Search."

You can also call and speak directly to our Human Resources specialist at 605-745-5127 extension 1500250 to discuss available positions and benefits. Inquiries regarding clinical positions can be directed to our Director of Nursing, Susan Wilcox, at 605-745-5127 extension 1500217. We look forward to hearing from you!

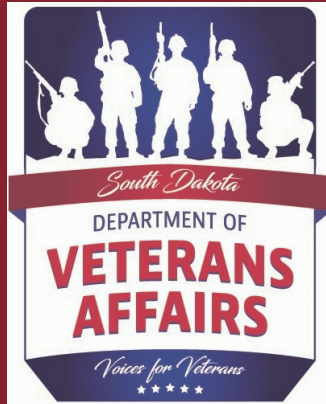


Michael J. Fitzmaurice
South Dakota Veterans Home

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ADMISSION INFORMATION

Are you or a loved one looking for a place to call home?
Consider the SDVH!

Admission Requirements:

- Resident of South Dakota in the last five (5) years
- Veteran with honorable discharge
- Widow of a South Dakota Veteran with honorable discharge
- Spouse of a South Dakota Veteran with honorable discharge who is also moving into the facility

For more information on qualifications or to request an application, contact our Admissions Coordinator, Lisa Woeppel, at 605-745-5127 extension 1500115 or send Lisa an email at Lisa.Woeppel@state.sd.us.

