



South Dakota Department of the Military  
 South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



## HOUSE BILL 1179 SIGNED INTO LAW

Governor Dugaard recently signed into law House Bill 1179 which redefines the state's definition of veteran.

On hand for the official signing were (left to right): Rep. Roger Solum, Rep. Matthew Wollmann, Sen. Dan Lederman, SDDVA Sec. Larry Zimmerman, Terry Paulsen (PVA) and Michael Olson (PVA).

**Inside this issue:**

WWII Veteran Shares War Story	2
Davison County Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Event	3
Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Celebration in Pierre	4-5
SDNG Trains with First Responders	6-7
SFVAHCS Hosts Clothesline Project	7
Bataan Memorial Death March	8
Upcoming Events	9





# DAVISON COUNTY HOSTS WELCOME HOME CELEBRATION FOR VIETNAM VETERANS

Jessica Davidson, County Veterans Service Office for Davison County, stepped outside of the box and offered something a little new and relaxing for her Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home.

She coordinated her own little town square with vendors, including two massage therapists who provided free chair massages. Door prizes were awarded, and information on benefits was provided.

While walking through her mini town square veterans could sample éclairs, cream puffs and fresh fruit.

A veteran thanking Jessica for the event noted, "The last time I wore my uniform was in 1972 at the Chicago O'Hare airport." He said, "a little girl ran up to me saying 'soldier man' and then the little girl's mother grabbed her daughter by the arm and said don't talk to him. She called me a baby killer and spit on me."

Throughout her event, Davison stressed to her heroes that this community, this state, this county and this CVSO are resilient advocates for South Dakota's heroes.



**WELCOME HOME**  
A COMMUNITY FOR VETERANS

# THANK YOU AND WELCOME HOME VETERANS



Once again, the communities of Pierre and Fort Pierre rolled out the “red carpet” to South Dakota’s Vietnam Veterans. Although, it’s been decades since the Vietnam War began, most would agree that the reception they received this



weekend and during the 2006 dedication of the Vietnam Memorial was much more sincere and heartwarming than the greeting they received upon their return home from war.



Guest speakers Pierre Mayor Laurie Gill, Senator Ried Holien, SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman, and Governor Daugaard all shared one same message—“thank you and welcome home.”

SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman opened his remarks on Sunday with “Good Morning!” Before he could finish, the crowd responded “Good Afternoon,” Only to hear the Secretary respond “Good Morning Vietnam!”



He noted that this is a day to remember those that are here and those that did not make it home. “This weekend we honor our great heroes from the Vietnam War, they left their family’s to fight a war that the public opposed,” said Zimmerman. “We knew then and we know now they were heroes fighting for freedoms many miles away from home. We will never forget them.”



“These heroes served honorable and bravely,” said Zimmerman. This Welcome Home Celebration afforded all of us an opportunity to show our unified gratitude for their service and sacrifices that these veterans made on our behalf.”

On Saturday morning, Darwin Goodspeed, director of the Sioux Falls VA, as well as Kathleen Metzger and Jesse Blankenship from the Dakotas Regional Office spoke with Vietnam Veterans about benefits and assisted veterans with the filing of claims.

In addition to the VA briefing, a town hall forum was held to discuss Agent Orange followed by a celebration dinner and a pre-screening of the “Last Days in Vietnam.”

Helicopter Pilot Steve Novotny escorted the caravan of Vietnam Veterans from Fort Pierre to the Pierre Capitol Lake Visitors Center for the Remembrance Ceremony.

For many this weekend afforded our heroes with an opportunity to reunite with other heroes, rekindle friendships and relive stories.

The two-day celebration ended with veterans placing flowers into the wreath in honor of a veteran lost in combat.

A special thank you to the South Dakota State Council of Vietnam Veterans of America, community leaders, service organizations and volunteers for making this a special weekend for our heroes!!!! Always remember, no matter the day, no matter the location, when you encounter a Vietnam Veteran, take a moment to say “welcome home and thank you for your service.” It is an expression of gratitude that is long overdue!!!!



## SD CIVIL SUPPORT TEAM TRAINS WITH FIRST RESPONDERS

The South Dakota National Guard's 82nd Civil Support Team participated in a multi-agency first-responder exercise at the water reclamation plant in Sioux Falls, March 19.

The incident exercise involved a simulated explosion to one of the buildings on site, simulated casualties and possible chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosives contaminants in the area. The incident commander, from Sioux Falls Fire Rescue, had a number of agencies involved in support as they worked the situation based on priority of threat.

"Today, the goal was to be better prepared for a radioactive event and gain more experience working with outside agencies," said Master Sgt. Alan Tuschen, 82nd CST operations noncommissioned officer. "At any training event we conduct, we are trying to exercise our procedures and how to make ourselves better and more efficient so we can advise an incident commander quickly and safely."

The state and local first responders have a proven capability to deal with most emergencies. However, if a situation involves weapons of mass destruction or a military chemical agent it could quickly overwhelm the existing agencies. The 82nd is trained to handle these unique circumstances. Once called upon, the CST integrates into the Incident Command System in support of the incident commander.

"We all receive different training and techniques so it helps everyone involved consider a new, more effective way of doing business," said Tuschen.

Sioux Falls Fire Rescue, the Sioux Falls bomb squad, the Department of Criminal Investigations bomb squad and the 82nd CST all worked together as the situation evolved. Once the CST was called upon by the IC, they moved into action and assessed the situation for CBRNE characteristics, provided assistance and advisement on appropriate response actions to the civilian responders and worked to identify any unknown substances/agents that may be present in the area of explosives.

"In the event of an actual response, it helps us skip the steps of meeting who we will be working with and learning their procedures," said Tuschen. "We already know who we need to talk to, we have an idea of what priorities each entity has, their equipment capabilities and during these exercises everyone learns something new."



(continued)

## SD CIVIL SUPPORT TEAM TRAINS WITH FIRST RESPONDERS (CONTINUED)

The CST combines the skills of six sections: command, operations/administration, survey, medical, communications, and logistics/decontamination.

The unit comprised of 22 full-time Army and Air Guardsmen who bring a wide range of career experience from the military and civilian sectors. Each team member completes over 850 hours of technical training by agencies including National Fire Academy, Department of Defense, Department of Energy, and Environmental Protection Agency.

The 82nd's mission is to support local and state authorities at domestic incident sites by identifying agents and substances, assessing current and projected consequences, advising on response measures and handling requests from the governor for additional military support. This includes incidents involving the intentional or unintentional release of CBRNE and natural or man-made disasters that result or could result in the catastrophic loss of life or property in the United States. The CST is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for rapid deployment for response operations.



"Getting to know these professionals involved, working with them and learning from them is always invaluable training," said Tuschen. "It helps us to provide a disciplined, well trained and equipped team to protect the people and assets of South Dakota and the United States."

## SIoux FALLS VA HOSTS CLOTHESLINE PROJECT

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System will host its second annual Clothesline Project – a visual display intended to raise awareness about the impact of military sexual trauma (MST), sexual assault, and sexual abuse. Survivors (both male and female) have decorated t-shirts to reflect their experiences and bring awareness of the impact of sexual trauma. The t-shirts will be displayed for public viewing on a clothesline in the front foyer of the medical center April 6-9, 2015.

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and VA provides free care for mental and physical health conditions related to MST. One in five female and one in 100 male Veterans have told their VA health care providers they experienced sexual trauma while in the military.

Veterans should contact Charlotte McGrath, Women Veterans Program Manager, at 605-336-3230, Ext. 7747, or Robin Carter-Visscher, PhD, local VA MST Coordinator, at 333-6890, to participate or find out more about the display.



## SD GUARD MEMBERS MARCH TO HONOR FALLEN AT BATAAN MEMORIAL DEATH MARCH

A group of South Dakota National Guard Soldiers joined thousands from across the country to march through the high desert terrain of White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22 for the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March.

The 26.2-mile march honors the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II.

The prisoners were forced to march to POW camps, beginning on the southern end of the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines, more than 60 miles in the scorching heat through the Philippine jungles.

The horrible conditions and harsh treatment of the prisoners during the Bataan Death March resulted in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. Those who survived faced the hardships of a prisoner of war camp.

Sgt. Jeremy Eccleston, a member of the 842nd Engineer Company in Spearfish, has completed the march three times now. This year, he found inspiration locally and reached out to family members of Sgt. Lloyd L. Kelly (1920-1965), living in Rapid City.

Eccleston spoke with Tanya Nelson, Lloyd's granddaughter, and asked her if he and another Soldier (Staff Sgt. Brian Johnson of the 842nd Engineer Company, Detachment 1, in Belle Fourche) could do the march in her grandfather's honor.

"It meant a lot to our family," said Tanya, who first asked her father, Marlin, and uncles, Joe and Clayton, how they would feel about their father being honored by local Soldiers in this year's march. "They were honored. It was so nice to hear about people wanting to march in his honor after all these years."

During the march, Eccleston and Johnson each wore a ribbon honoring Kelly and carried another, which they presented to Tanya, March 26 in Rapid City.

Other South Dakota Soldiers drew inspiration from Bataan survivors themselves, who attended this year's memorial march and shared stories of their hardships with marchers firsthand.

Participants in the event include individuals, teams, runners, walkers, marchers, active duty, Guard and Reserve, wounded warriors, and veterans and each finds their own reason to complete the marathon-length march.

Since its 1989 inception, the memorial march has grown from about 100 to more than 6,500 participants from across the U.S. and several foreign countries.



A group of South Dakota National Guard Soldiers gather before the start of the 26th Annual Bataan Memorial Death March at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico, March 22, 2015. Eight members of the SDARNG marched in the 26.2-mile event that honors the tens of thousands of Soldiers, Sailors and Marines, both American and Filipino, who were taken prisoner, April 9, 1942 by Japanese forces in World War II and force-marched to POW camps resulting in an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 deaths. Pictured from left to right are: Staff Sgt. Mark Poncellet, 211th Engineer Company, Sgt. Ryan Dannon, 211th Engineer Company, Madison; Staff Sgt. Louis du Randt, 211th Engineer Company, Staff Sgt. Shawn Dempsey, 153rd Engineer Battalion, Huron, and Sgt. Katherina Schaefer, 842nd Engineer Company, Spearfish.

# Upcoming Events

- Apr. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)  
Apr. 14—World War II Stories Relived—SDNG Museum—Pierre—7:00 pm  
Apr. 15—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting (DAV—Sioux Falls) 10:00 am  
Apr. 23—ICVCSF Conference—Aberdeen  
Apr 24—ISVCSF Conference—Yankton  
May 1-3—DAV Convention—Sioux Falls Holiday Inn City Centre  
May 5—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sturgis (Veterans Club—868 Main Street) —10:00 am (MT)  
May 6—SDDVA Mini Conference—Pierre (Post 8 American Legion—520 S. Pierre Street) —10:00 am  
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—Sioux Falls (VA Regional Office) —9:00 am  
Jun. 18-21—VFW State Convention—Yankton, SD  
Jun. 24—Black Hills Job Fair—Western Dakota Tech—Rapid City—12:30—5:00 pm (MT)  
Jun.. 25-28—American Legion 97th Annual State Convention—Huron Crossroads Convention Center  
Jul. 6—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)  
Aug. 5-9—AVTT Traveling Vietnam Wall Comes to Sioux Falls (Sanford Pentagon Sports Complex)  
Aug. 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre  
Oct. 9—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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