



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



TURNER COUNTY HONORS VIETNAM VETERANS

Tom Sparrow, Turner County Veterans Service Officer, coordinated a special day for Vietnam Veterans. "This is a great opportunity to honor these men and women, and say thank you and welcome home," said Sparrow. "Because of their faithful dedicated service to our great nation, we enjoy the freedoms we have today."

SDDVA's Program Manager Steve Oliva and Field Officer Mike Maske participated in this event. Oliva delivered a message from the Department and Maske read Governor Dugaard's proclamation proclaiming August 18, 2015, as Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in Turner County.



"The Vietnam War is a story of service members of different backgrounds, colors, and creeds who came together to complete a daunting mission," said Dugaard. "It is a story of Americans from every corner of our Nation who left the warmth of family to serve the country they loved. It is a story of patriots who braved the line of fire, who cast themselves into harm's way to save a friend, who fought hour after hour, day after day to preserve the liberties we hold dear:"

Maske also read a message from Lt. Governor Michels. Messages were shared from Sen. Thune,

Sen. Rounds and Rep. Noem as well.

Sparrow received great support from Turner County and from the local veterans service organizations for this welcome home celebration.

Great job Tom!



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REISCH AND ZIMMERMAN ATTEND



SDDVA Secretary Larry Zimmerman and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard, attended and were recognized for their support of our heroes during the annual Bullhead Pow-Wow.



Zimmerman had the great opportunity to meet Brenda White Bull, Marine, 1989 – 2009, and Kella With Horn, Army, 1986 – 1988, founders of the Lakota Women Warriors and presented each of them with one of his coins.

SDDVA CONDUCTS OUTREACH AT EAFB DAKOTA THUNDER AIR SHOW

SDDVA Field Officers Mike Maske and Kevin Bowen operated the SDDVA outreach booth at the Dakota Thunder Air Show this past weekend at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

This setting afforded the Department to reach out to veterans that were attending the Air Show.



**Ellsworth
Air Force Base**

SDDVA AND OUR PARTNERS ARE IN SEARCH OF KOREAN WAR VETERANS THAT MIGHT BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE AMBASSADOR PEACE MEDAL

Korean War veterans who served in the Korean Theatre of War from June 25, 1950, through October 25, 1954, may be eligible for the Ambassador Peace Medal. The Ambassador Peace Medal is for the Korean War Veterans who sacrificed for Korea's democracy and freedom and is aimed at expressing the Korean Government's gratitude and respect to them.

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs is taking the lead in informing veterans of this medal and is planning on recognizing the recipients in January of 2016.

"Recognizing these heroes one era at a time provides us an opportunity to thank and honor the sacrifices they made," said Larry Zimmerman, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. "Every veteran has a story to tell and along with that military service comes a variety of medals and awards".

Veterans that served during this time frame are encourage to contact their local County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer for an application. Veterans will need a copy of their DD214 form as well.

"Our Korean War Veterans are a great, tough, honorable generation", said Zimmerman. "This small token from South Korea is a chance for all of us to get to know these heroes and thank them individually."



ABRAHAMSON JOINS SDDVA TEAM

Dusty Abrahamson, the newest member of the SDDVA Claims Office team, said he is excited to be part of this great organization! "Like the people I plan on serving, I am a veteran." said Abrahamson.

Dusty spent six years as a Pavements and Equipment Operator with the South Dakota Air National Guard.

In his free time, Dusty enjoys playing sports, hunting, fishing, camping, and riding motorcycle.

Dusty has a passion for helping others and a strong commitment to community. He can be found helping with the youth baseball/basketball programs, as well as volunteering on the Fire Department.

Welcome to the team Dusty!!!! Dusty's email address is: dusty.abrahamson@va.gov.



SDDVA STAFF RECOGNIZED

This week, SDDVA Secretary Zimmerman and Deputy Secretary Pollard recognized three members of the SDDVA team for their tenure with the Department and with the State of South Dakota.

Those recognized were Steve Oliva (Program Manager), Shane Olivier (Education Program Manager), and Ryan Fowler (Education Representative).

Secretary Zimmerman thanked them for their dedication to our veterans and for being the voice for South Dakota's veterans.



BIG AND RICH SHARE THE STAGE WITH HEROES FROM THE MJF VETERANS HOME

Monday evening, our heroes from the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home had the opportunity to join the country music duo *Big & Rich* on stage at the Central States Fair in Rapid City.

First, they were treated to a VIP dinner behind the stage. Then they were introduced one-by-one on stage and were seated center stage for three songs, one of which was "*November 8*."

But probably the most touching event of the night was when our heroes were escorted back to their seats. The crowd moved to the aisles; shook their hands, hugged them and thanked them. It's a long overdue welcome home they will never forget.

Special thanks to Bill Davis, Randy Merrill, and the MJFVH staff, for making this special night a reality.



OUR HOME AWAY FROM HOME FOR OUR HEROES

It seems like just yesterday we were gathering in Hot Springs to break ground for our new Veterans' home.

All of the contractors and our staff have been working diligently to ensure the facility would be ready to open in early 2016. Thankfully, we have had a great team executing this project and I am pleased to announce that we are three months ahead of schedule! Yes, that's right – ahead of schedule!

If all goes as planned, we will get the keys to the new facility on or about the first of November and anticipate moving our heroes into their new home the middle of November.

Our new Veterans' Home is 133,000 square foot stacked two-story building with 52 skilled and 48 non-skilled beds. The town square will be the heart of social activity within the eight neighborhoods. As the home's Main Avenue, residents will gather there for social interaction with each other as well as visit the barber / beauty shop, post office, pharmacy, chapel, or to have a sandwich at the Bistro.

This new home is designed to support the natural patterns of home life. Residents have access to home living spaces such as a kitchen, dining room and living room.

Veterans, female and male, love living at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans' Home. Just visit sometime and you'll know what I mean. From the moment you walk through the doors, you know you are in a place that truly honors service. Most are in their 80s and 90s and served time in World War II, Korea or Vietnam.

We plan to have an open house and showcase our new home in early spring of 2016. We want our heroes to get settled in and adjusted to their new neighborhood culture prior to inviting our guests in.

Let us never forget the humble men and women who understand the call of duty, the meaning of honor and values of this nation. They did not serve for glory or fame. They served to preserve our way of life.



Larry Zimmerman, Secretary
South Dakota Department of
Veterans Affairs

their

View construction progress at:

***[http://www.truelook.com/
clients/scullconstruction-
webcam3/](http://www.truelook.com/clients/scullconstruction-webcam3/)***

GOVERNOR SIGNS PROCLAMATION SUPPORTING SD GUARD EMPLOYERS

Gov. Dennis Daugaard demonstrated his support of employers who employ National Guard and Reserve members by signing a proclamation announcing Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Week in South Dakota Aug. 16-22. The proclamation coincides with President Barack Obama's national proclamation announcing ESGR Week.

The proclamation recognizes employers who provide critical support to members of the National Guard and Reserve; allowing citizen warriors to serve whenever the nation calls, often foregoing financial gain and making sacrifices in the process.

ESGR is a Department of Defense agency that works to develop and promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees.

"Having Gov. Daugaard proclaim ESGR week in South Dakota means that we have the strong support from our governor for the U.S. military, especially our National Guard, Army Reserve and Navy Reserve men and women in South Dakota," said Ron Mielke, South Dakota ESGR state chair. "It also helps the citizens of this state understand the important role that ESGR has in building and maintaining the best relationship possible between our Reserve component members and their employers."

The proclamation coincides with the 2015 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award to be given Friday at the Pentagon to 15 employers nationwide. Black Hills Corp of Rapid City is one of the award recipients. The prestigious award is the nation's highest honor given to employers for exceptional support of National Guard and Reserve employees.

National Guard and Reserve forces comprise nearly half of the nation's military strength, and stand ready to answer the call to serve, whether serving alongside active duty counterparts all across the globe or responding to humanitarian crises at home and abroad.

Mielke says the proclamation also pays special tribute to the commitment of dedicated and supportive employers who continue to make service in the Reserve components possible.

"We are always looking for ways to increase the awareness of our ESGR committee in South Dakota to both our great employers but also the public in general," he said. "Our employers across the state need to know that ESGR is there for them as a resource to use relative to their relationship with Guard and Reserve employees in their organization."



EIGHT SOLDIERS COMMISSION AS SECOND LIEUTENANTS

Eight South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers took the Oath of Office and commissioned as second lieutenants during a ceremony at Mount Rushmore National Park, Aug. 15.

The second lieutenants recently completed Officer Candidate School through the SDARNG's 1st Battalion, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute).

In order to commission as officers, these Soldiers endured a culmination of three intense phases of training, which has prepared these officer candidates for the next step in their military career.

Throughout the course, the officer candidates faced multiple tests in physical fitness, ruck marches up to 10 miles and their ability to lead squad and platoon-size teams tactically through combat scenarios.

Brig. Gen. Kevin Griese, assistant adjutant general of the SDARNG, guest speaker for the ceremony gave advice to the newly promoted officers.

"As you take on and assume the duties and responsibilities of a second lieutenant there will definitely be challenges but nothing you won't be able to overcome," said Griese. "Trust in the training that you have received, keep in mind what you have learned, draw upon your experiences and make decisions."

The second lieutenants will now be assigned to units across the state and will attend Basic Officer Leaders Course where they will continue to train in leadership, tactics and branch specific capabilities.

Several presentations were made throughout the ceremony to include:

- * The Battalion Leadership Award was presented to the 153rd Engineer Battalion, of Huron, for the greatest number of students graduating from Officer Candidate School.
- * Second Lt. Mitchell Harms received the Endeavor Award for demonstrating the highest degree of consistent advancement, perseverance and devotion to duty during the training year.
- * Second Lt. Jeffery Marshall earned the Academic Excellence Award by attaining the highest academic rating for the school year.
- * Second Lt. Brady Wolfe earned the Army Physical Fitness Award for scoring the highest on the Army Physical Fitness Test.
- * Second Lt. Brady Wolfe earned the Erickson Trophy, awarded to the OCS graduate with the highest combined overall standing in leadership evaluations, academics, physical fitness and peer evaluations.

The following is the list of graduating officer candidates:

2nd Lt. Michael Crumb (Lennox) 730th Area Support Medical Company
 2nd Lt. Mitchell Harms (Sioux Falls) 1742nd Transportation Company
 2nd Lt. Adam Holtquist (Sioux Falls) Forward Support Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion
 2nd Lt. Jeromy Loken (Ipswich) Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion
 2nd Lt. Jeffery Marshall (Huron) Forward Support Co., 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion
 2nd Lt. Madison Stephens (Wall) 235th Military Police Company
 2nd Lt. Alex Toupal (Yankton) Battery A, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion
 2nd Lt. Brady Wolfe (Rapid City) 211th Engineer Company



VA ANNOUNCES NEW RULES REGARDING SERVICE ANIMALS IN VA FACILITIES

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has announced that it has revised its regulation regarding the presence of animals on VA property. The updated regulation will ensure VA practices remain consistent with applicable federal law. It will also assist individuals entering VA facilities in developing a clear and consistent understanding of the criteria governing facility access for service animals.

"As I have traveled to VA facilities throughout the country, I have heard from many veterans about what a vital role their service animals play in their lives," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert A. McDonald. "The revised regulation will ensure veterans and employees have clear guidance regarding the presence of service animals in our facilities. The VA remains committed to ensuring America's veterans have access to the health care benefits for which they are eligible."

Under the revised regulation, only dogs that are individually trained to perform work or tasks on behalf of an individual with a disability will be considered service animals. Other animals will not be permitted in VA facilities, unless expressly allowed as an exception under the regulation for activities such as animal-assisted therapy or for other reasons such as law enforcement purposes. The regulation further confirms that service animals may access VA property subject to the same terms that govern the admission of the public to VA property, and may be restricted from certain areas on VA properties to ensure that patient care, patient safety, and infection control standards are not compromised.

In accordance with required practices, the revised regulation was published in the Federal Register in November 2014, to obtain feedback from veterans, advocacy organizations and other stakeholders.

Over the next thirty days, the VA will provide training to frontline employees and ensure policies at all facilities are consistent with the new regulation.



RIEHL RECOGNIZED FOR 60 YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP



Carl Riehl, veteran and hero, living at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home was recently honored by leaders from the American Legion for his 60 years of continuous membership in the American Legion.

Thank you Carl, for your service to this great county and thank you for your years of service to South Dakota's veterans.

Upcoming Events

2015

- Aug. 21—Miss SD Send Off Celebration—American Legion Post 71—Hot Springs—6:00 pm (MT)
 Aug. 23—Miss SD Send Off Celebration—American Legion Post 15—Sioux Falls—3:00 pm (CT)
 Aug. 24-27—SDDVA Annual Benefit School—Ramkota—Pierre
 Aug. 26—SFVAHCS Women's Health Clinic Open House and Ribbon Cutting 3:30 pm (CT)
 Sept. 3—Veterans Day at the South Dakota State Fair
 Sept. 5—727th DAV Poker Run—Brookings National Guard Armory
 Sept. 10—VABHHCS Welcome Home—Main Street Square—Rapid City—6:00 pm—9:00 pm (MT)
 Sept. 11 — Veterans Stand Down—Wagner—National Guard Armory—9:00 am—1:00 pm (CT)
 Sept. 12—Vietnam Veterans of America State Council Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—Noon (CT)
 Sept. 16—SD Veterans Council—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
 Sept. 16—Veterans Town Hall Meeting—Fairgrounds—Mitchell—5:00 pm (CT)
 Sept. 17—Veterans Appreciation Day—Watertown
 Sept. 18—POW-MIA Ceremony—Sioux Falls Veterans Memorial Park—6:30 pm (CT)
 Sept. 18—Ellsworth AFB Retiree Appreciation Day— Exhibits 9:00 am—3:00 pm (MDT)—Luncheon 11:00 am—1:00 pm (MDT) - EAFB
 Sept. 19—Agent Orange Town Hall Forum—VFW Post 1273 (420 Main Street) - Rapid City—Two Sessions (one from 9:00 am—noon and one from noon—3:00 pm (MDT))
 Sept. 25—Veterans Stand Down—VFW—Sioux Falls (3601 S. Minnesota Ave.) - 9:00 am—2:00 pm (CT)
 Sept. 25-27—NCPVA Veterans Trap shoot—Crooks
 Oct. 5—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 Oct. 9—Women Veterans Conference
 Oct. 10—DAV Fall Conference—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls
 Oct. 24—VVA Agent Orange Town Hall Meeting—1519 W. 51st St—Sioux Falls—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
 Nov. 7—Vietnam Veterans of America State Council Meeting—Pierre Post 8 American Legion—Noon (CT)
 Dec. 8— Governor's Budget Address—Pierre

2016

- Jan. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 Jan. 12—SD Legislative Session Opens—Pierre
 Jan. 14—Veterans Legislative Breakfast—Pierre
 Jan. 27-28—State Tribal Relations Days—Pierre
 Apr. 4—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 April 15-17—DAV Convention—Rapid City
 Jul. 11—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)
 Oct. 3—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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