



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



HILL TAKES OUTREACH TO A NEW LEVEL

Standing Rock Sioux Tribal Veterans Service Officer Manajah Hill, takes outreach to a new level!

Hill recently hosted a two-day team-builders training exercise in McLaughlin.

SDDVA West River Field Officer William Huffmon attended the conference and was impressed with the content of the program and the updates that were provided regarding projects that Hill is working on to improve the lives of our veterans. Presentations included: the journey home, veterans courts, Hud/Vash, Warrior Lodge residential program, compensated work therapy, veterans construction team, equine therapy, traditions and cultures.

Hill's Journey Home program is designed to address specific issues from ones military experience. It utilizes a multifaceted approach from both mainstream professional resources and support from established agencies and organizations, and natural resources and supports from the tribal community. The project focuses on OIF/OEF veterans in their transition to civilian life.

In addition, Hill has introduced another new project entitled "Warrior Lodge Residential Program." Located in the Bear Soldier District just a few miles north of McLaughlin, WLRP is a ten-bed transitional housing program for eligible veterans and is administered by the T/VSO. It is a drug/alcohol free environment that provides training and assistance to veterans in developing a healthy and drug free lifestyle that emphasizes sobriety, meaningful employment, and assistance in securing adequate housing.

"Manaja is building something amazing," said Huffmon. "There are very few programs in the state that strive to achieve this scope and degree of "whole person" approach to assisting our veterans." Huffmon continued, "While many areas have the individual programs available to veterans, nowhere have I seen the desire and dedication to the seamless integration of services and the constant strive to connect the partners and services with the sole aim of taking joint responsibility and dedication, in concert with the veteran, to provide the best degree of service, care, and encouragement to the person seeking assistance."

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RAPID CITY SOLDIERS HONORED DURING DEPLOYMENT CEREMONY

Family and friends of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, gathered for an activation ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Rapid City on May 13.

Five members of the Rapid City-based unit will deploy to Afghanistan in support of Task Force ODIN for up to one year.

"Whether it's a tragedy or disaster here at home or the nation's call to defend us here or abroad, the South Dakota National Guard is ready to respond. Today is a perfect example of that," said Gov. Dennis Daugaard. "Thank you for your willingness to serve our state and nation. I look forward to the day when you're back safe and sound."

Detachment 48 is a fixed-wing aviation unit comprised of pilots and operations specialists which operate the C-12 King Air. The unit's primary mission in theater is to provide aerial reconnaissance and surveillance in support of U.S. and coalition ground commanders in the field.

"Our primary focus is we support the ground troops, whether that is finding IED's (improvised explosive device) or doing route clearance finding insurgents, we provide battlefield intelligence to the commander on the ground," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Wayne Walker, Det. 48 commander.

"This deployment will be quite a bit different, we will be supporting ground commanders instead of conducting VIP missions," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Michael Williams, C-12 pilot and Afghanistan veteran. "I am looking forward to getting more flight experience as a pilot and to develop professionally."

This will be the third mobilization for the unit, which deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2008 and 2011.

"The fact that this unit has been called up on back-to-back deployments is a clear testament to its significant battle in the warfight," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. "I couldn't be more proud of this unit. I know that you have worked and trained hard. Every one of you are ready to go and do this mission, and it's an important mission, extremely important."

"We are starting to get used to this, there are five of us going on this deployment and we have thirteen previous deployments between us," said Walker.

"We know where we are going and what to expect," said Sgt. 1st Class Randall McCann, aerial sensor operator who has deployed twice. "There are not a lot of changes so my anxiety level is not as high." (continued on next page)



DEPLOYMENT (CONTINUED)

Although the soldiers will be away from their loved ones, they consider their unit a family.

"We are a very small unit with five members so we are all pretty close," said McCann. "It makes it easier to go with people you know and are close to. I consider them my second family."

The soldiers are not the only ones deploying. Their family also deploys by stepping up on the home front.

"To all the spouses and family members please know that your contributions do not go unnoticed," said Reisch. "It's often said that family members who remain behind take on

burdens often as great as the soldier or airmen that deploys, because you alone handle all the emergencies that happen during the next year."



How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.
-Winnie The Pooh

Reisch made it clear the Guard is here to help them in their time of need.

"Please know that we are here to help you," said Reisch. "We have plenty of soldiers and airmen that at a drop of a hat, if you need some help, we will be here for you."

"I'm going to miss my family the most, we have a close-knit family," said Williams. "I will miss just being home and doing things together. It will be good, but also a challenge. It will help with communication because we will have to learn to express ourselves through FaceTime or Skype."



HONORING OUR HEROES LEGACY

I'm sure we all remember our parents rousing us out of bed early on Memorial Day to decorate family graves. For many of us this was the first Monday after school got out and the last thing we wanted to do was get up before sunrise!

The process was simple — get dressed, load the tools in the car, and pick up some donuts for the trip. Once at the cemetery, we trimmed the grass, pulled weeds, washed off the headstones and placed flowers on the graves. While working on the graves, mom and dad would share the family lineage with us.

Although decorating soldiers graves with flowers and flags is an ancient custom that dates back to the Civil War, it wasn't until later in life that I comprehended the significance of remembering and honoring those who died while serving in the armed forces of this great country.

Our staff is honored to serve as the keepers of the South Dakota "Fallen Heroes Banners Exhibit," and as such I can't help but share the sentiment of a poem from Ken Carolan that appears on the wall in the Tomb Guard quarters at Arlington National Cemetery. It reads, "You are guarding the world's most precious gifts, you, you alone are the symbol of 200 million people who wish to show their gratitude and you will march through the rain, the snow, and the heat to prove it."

With pride and gratitude let us pause on this Memorial Day to remember great and brave Americans – to recognize their valor and rejoice in the blessings their bravery has secured. We know nothing of their individual thoughts and feelings as they met their fate. But we know they died for a cause greater than self.

They paid the ultimate price for freedom, and it is our duty to keep their legacy fresh in the memories of future generations.

Oliver Wendell Holmes called this "our most sacred holiday," and he urged that "we not ponder with sad thoughts the passing of our heroes, but to rather ponder their legacy – the life they made possible for us by their commitment and their pain."

Please, don't forget to honor those who served and paid the ultimate price.

Memorial Day
Message from SDDVA
Secretary Larry
Zimmerman



MONDAY, MAY 25TH

2015 MEMORIAL DAY
CEREMONIES



BLACK HILLS
NATIONAL CEMETERY

I-90 EXIT 34, STURGIS S.D

11:00 A.M. M.S.T.

PROGRAM SPONSORED BY
DEPARTMENT OF SOUTH DAKOTA
AMERICAN LEGION

1:00 P.M. M.S.T.

PROGRAM SPONSORED BY
OGLALA SIOUX TRIBE

SOME GAVE ALL

WOMEN SOLDIERS TAKE ON UNEXPECTED ROLES

You might not expect a local female hair stylist or preschool teacher is operating or fixing bulldozers, scrapers and dump trucks outside of their job, but for women serving in the South Dakota Army National Guard's 842nd Engineer Company it's common.

These female soldiers are breaking the stereotypes of what it means to serve as a woman in today's National Guard, and they serve in unexpected roles.

"More and more female soldiers are enlisting in positions that have been traditionally perceived as male only positions, such as heavy equipment operator or diesel mechanic within the 842nd," said Capt. Matt Sadler, 842nd commander. "I've also seen other company's within the state showing the same trend, females enlisting as truck drivers, artillery, etc."

Of the unit's approximately 160 members, 31 are women. Most serve as heavy equipment operators or heavy wheeled-vehicle mechanics. Based in Spearfish, Belle Fourche and Sturgis, the unit is a horizontal construction company that uses heavy machinery to build roads, air-strips and combat outposts and forward operating bases.

"Working with loaders and scrapers is a bit out of my comfort zone," said Pfc. Jessica Kling, who teaches preschool in Lemmon and operates heavy equipment in the 842nd. "I wouldn't choose to do this in my civilian life, but the National Guard gives me the opportunity to do something new and exciting."



From left: U.S. Army Spc. Kayleigh Lane, of Sturgis, Spc. Wiyaka Stands, of Mission, Spc. Rachel Newton, of Spearfish, Sgt. Danielle Walraven, of Lemmon.

These engineers also serve the state in the event of emergencies such as building levees during flood operations, digging fire lines to suppress wildland fires and assisting emergency crews during winter storms.

"I never would have imagined doing any of this before I joined," said Kling. "I figured I'm a girl, I don't need to do that kind of stuff, but once you start it's kind of fun."

Operating large equipment such as an excavator, a 24,000 pound machine, capable of digging 14 feet deep, can make these women feel empowered.

"High and mighty," said Kling, on how she feels when operating the large powerful road graders, bulldozers and excavators. "They are really intimidating at first... I think everyone has felt that way."

For most soldiers, the intimidation factor tends to fade after spending two weeks behind the wheel during annual training.

"I've learned the most at annual training," said Kling. "There is a lot of work and planning that goes into building a road. I didn't know I was capable of doing this, and once you see the end result it's pretty cool."

(story continued on next page)

For many of the women who work full time in what many people might consider traditional female careers, they get surprised or shocked reactions when explaining their job as soldiers to their customers.

"Whenever I have a client in my chair and they ask about my life outside of cosmetology school, I tell them I am a construction worker in the National Guard," said Pfc. Savannah Wheeler, of Box Elder. "Their faces drop and they are like 'What?'"

Choosing to be a mechanic in the National Guard wasn't a surprise for the family members of Spc. Kayleigh Lane, of Sturgis, who owns her own hair salon in Belle Fourche.

"As a child, I grew up working on cars with my dad," said Lane. "Mechanical work intrigues me, but I didn't want to do it full time, so I figured the National Guard would be the best way to do it."

Many of the women joined as mechanics in the 842nd to become more educated in maintaining and repairing vehicles. Heavy wheeled mechanics spend 13 weeks at advanced individual training learning how automotive engines work and how to trouble shoot to repair mechanical problems.

"I wanted to be a mechanic to learn how to fix my own car," said Wiyaka Stands, of Mission. "My car broke down in high school and it's expensive to fix, so I wanted to learn how to do it myself."

The women of the 842nd say they have grown personally and professionally and would recommend other women considering an engineer job to join their ranks.

"Operating outside of my comfort zone has given me confidence," said Wheeler. "That is why I would suggest women join the 842nd. This unit has allowed me to push my boundaries and accomplish things I never thought I'd do."



Upcoming Events

May 23—VVA Chapter 959 Agent Orange Town Hall Forum—DAV Chapter 1 House—9:00 am—3:00 pm
 May 23—9th Annual Greg Wagner Memorial Event—Alexandria—9:00 am
 Jun. 18—SFVAHCS Veterans Town Hall—SFVAHCS Auditorium—5:00 pm
 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
 Sept. 18—POW-MIA Ceremony—Sioux Falls
 Oct. 9—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)



Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home residents enjoy a day of fishing at the lake.

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