



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



CARPENTER'S COMMITMENT TO VETERANS IS UNENDING

By day, she serves as the Veterans Service Claims Assistant for Hughes County and one would think that was fulfilling and rewarding enough, but not for Sheila Carpenter. She wears her commitment to veterans 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

As a member of Pierre Elks Lodge 1953, Carpenter serves on the Veterans Committee and assists with two of their key projects—"We Care" and the "Veterans Christmas Holiday Gifting."

As a member of the American Legion Post 8 Auxiliary, Carpenter assisted with their "Buddy Basket" project. With this project they collected personal care/household items, as well as monetary donations. The baskets are then available for Carpenter to provide to veterans in need. Although the intent was to help veterans in her respective area, Carpenter was aware of a veteran in the Redfield area that had his home destroyed by fire and so she shared one of the Buddy Baskets with him.

When the community of Delmont was hit by a tornado, Carpenter contacted Douglas County VSO Fred Kuil to see if there were any veterans impacted. Buddy Baskets were shared with seven veterans and one widow that were impacted by the 2015 Mother's Day tornado.

Thank you Sheila for the role you play in enhancing the lives of our veterans. Your commitment is appreciated and commendable.



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MJFVH RESIDENTS AND STAFF PARTICIPATE IN VA2K WALK



Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home residents and staff participated in the VA Black Hills Health Care VA2K Walk last week. Left to right is resident Dale Friend, Pastor Deb Grismer, resident Paul Hofwolt, Volunteer Michel Dobb, Big Bird, resident Bud Murray, Activities Director Laura Inman, and resident Ronald Johnson.

SD THIRD BEST STATE FOR MILITARY RETIREES

South Dakota was named the third best state for military retirees in a recent study from the leading personal finance outlet [WalletHub.com](http://wallethub.com). You can find the full study here: <http://wallethub.com/edu/best-states-for-military-retirees/3915/>.

To help ease the burden of retirement planning for former military personnel, WalletHub analyzed the 50 states and the District of Columbia across 20 key metrics — ranging from job opportunities for veterans to the number of VA health facilities — that speak collectively to the economic environment, health care services and overall quality of life in each area.

Military Retirement in South Dakota (1=Best; 25=Avg.)

- 11th – Number of Veterans per 100 Inhabitants
- 6th – Number of VA Health Facilities per Number of Veterans
- 9th – Job Opportunities for Veterans
- 7th – Housing Affordability
- 17th – Number of Veteran-Owned Firms per 1,000 Inhabitants
- 2nd – Arts, Leisure & Recreation Establishments per 100,000 Inhabitants
- 2nd – Number of Federal, State & Local Hospitals per 100,000 Inhabitants



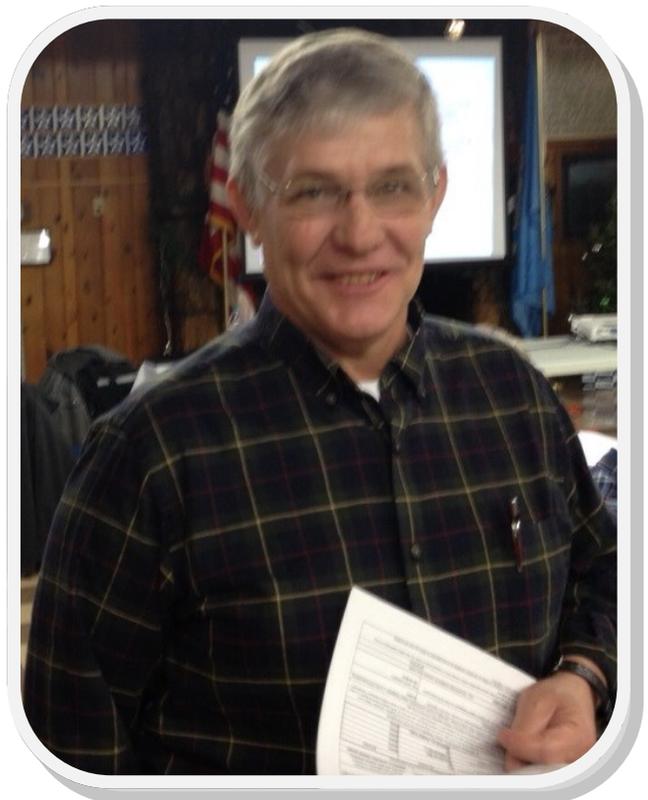
THOMSON PROMOTED TO PROGRAM MANAGER I

SDDVA's Donald Thomson was recently promoted to Program Manager I. This position was previously held by Jon Gohn in our Sioux Falls Claims Office.

Thomson will serve as the appeals specialist for the Department. Once a Notice of Disagreement has been filed all subsequent appeals, hearings, and paperwork will be handled by Don.

Don will also serve as the department trainer for our state service officers. He will also conduct weekly training classes with staff to ensure all personnel are receiving the most up to date information from the VA as well as policy and procedural changes.

Before joining the SDDVA team, Don served as the Lake County Veterans Service Officer.



MJF VETERANS HOME UPDATE



The garden is a love song, a duet between a human being and Mother Nature. ~Jeff Cox

Representatives of Bonnie Plants donated all these vegetable plants for the residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home to plant in their garden.

Bonnie Plants began in 1918 in the backyard of Bonnie and Livingston Paulk and has grown to include nearly 70 greenhouse locations around the country. They currently have around 500 sales representatives servicing more than 10,000 accounts throughout the United States with vegetables, herbs, and flowers.

Although the greenhouse at the Veterans Home was taken down for the construction project, several small garden areas have been created on the campus for the residents to plant, grow and enjoy their produce!

Essential advice for the gardener: grow peas of mind, lettuce be thankful, squash selfishness, turnip to help thy neighbor, and always make thyme for loved ones. ~Author Unknown

Previously we shared with you news that the Aurora, Brule, Davison and Jerauld Counties were partnering together on a project to collect items for the residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice Veterans Home.

Collection points have been set up at the courthouses in Wessington Springs, Chamberlain and Plankinton, as well as Cabela's and American Legion Post #18 in Mitchell, Mike's Corner in Ethan and the Farmer's Elevator in Mount Vernon. CVSO's Ron Falor and Jessica Davidson are lead on this project and are working with Dakota Wesleyan University Intern Jerry Stravia. Stravia is a combat wounded veteran who is currently a student at DWU.

Falor and Davidson will be working with MJFVH staff to secure items needed.

Hats off to Bonnie's Plants, Ron Falor, Jessica Davidson, Aurora, Brule, Davison and Jerauld County Commissioners and the respective contributors from those communities.



Happy rabbits in Hot Springs!!!!!!!!!!

CIVIL WAR MONUMENT REDEDICATION

Plans are set for the rededication of the Civil War Monument – the first war monument on the State Capitol grounds in Pierre – to take place Monday, June 1. The 11 a.m. CDT rededication will include a reenactment of the original dedication event held on June 1, 1920.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard will read the remarks made at the 1920 dedication by former Gov. Peter Norbeck. South Dakota Secretary of Veterans Affairs Larry Zimmerman will deliver the comments made by National Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) Commander-in-Chief Daniel M. Hall of Columbus, Ohio. Finally, Chaplain Michael Griffin with the South Dakota Army National Guard will recite the prayer given by GAR Chaplain H. H. Gunderson.

Members of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War (SUVCW), Department of Nebraska including South Dakota and North Dakota, will raise a special 35-star replica flag, acquired especially for the rededication event. This was the official flag of the United States from July 4, 1863, to July 4, 1865, during the latter half of the Civil War. The SUVCW will also perform their own dedication ceremony for the monument.

A group of Pierre citizens will sing two songs, "America" and "The Star Spangled Banner," both performed at the original dedication.

The Capitol Complex Restoration and Beautification Commission approved various upgrades to the Civil War Monument site including sidewalks, lighting, benches, landscaping and a flagpole.

Two interpretive signs highlighting the Civil War Monument itself and the history of the South Dakota GAR were installed at the monument site with the help of the South Dakota State Historical Society.



Original dedication ceremony of the Civil War Monument on June 1.

SFVAHCS TOWN HALL

The VA Dakotas Regional Office and Sioux Falls Health Care System are hosting a town hall for veterans, family members, veterans service organization representatives, and the public to provide feedback and recommendations about VA operations and VA programs.

The Town Hall will be held on Thursday, June 18, at 5:00 pm at the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System 4th floor auditorium (2501 W. 22nd Street).

The Town Hall affords the VA leadership to hear from veterans and to update veterans. New for this town hall, is a benefits clinic from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. During this benefits clinic, VA representatives will be available to receive claims for compensation benefits. The VA will have secure electronic access to benefit records and can answer questions about compensation claims. In addition, VA Business Office staff will also be present to answer questions about VA eligibility, non-VA Care, and the Veterans' Choice Act.

OPERATION BLACK HILLS CABIN

The team at Operation Black Hills Cabin (OBHC) reports they are ready for the 2015 families! OBHC will be hosting families from Utah, Illinois, Montana, Texas, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Arkansas, Georgia, Arizona, Kansas, North Carolina, California, New Mexico and two from South Dakota this summer.

OBHC is proud of the support they receive from the local business community and organizations (40+) who help host the families.

The South Dakota Community Foundation recently released a video promoting the cabin. The video can be viewed at: <https://vimeo.com/122006765>



OBHC Board Members — Jeff Baird, Pat Baird, Ione Fejfar, Marty Mahrt and Carol Johnson

MEMORIAL DAY THANK YOU

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs and the South Dakota Department of the Military would like to thank all of our staff members, County and Tribal Veterans Service Officers and our veterans service organizations for the role they played in promoting and hosting successful Memorial Day events throughout the state.

It takes a team to secure speakers and musical performers, coordinate logistics, secure volunteers, and promote the program. For all of those that played a role in this year's Memorial Day programs — thank you!!!!!!

SDDVA staff made presentations in Onida, Roscoe, Canistota, and Raymond.



Upcoming Events

- 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. 11 — Stand Down—Wagner—National Guard Armory—9:00 am—1:00 pm
- Sept. 18—POW-MIA Ceremony—Sioux Falls
- Oct. 9—BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service—9:00 am (MT)

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