



**KEEPING OUR PROMISE TO  
AMERICA'S VETERANS**

# Disabled American Veterans Department of South Dakota

## Quarterly Bulletin

1519 W 51st St • Sioux Falls, SD 57105

605.332.6866

SD.dav.org/01 and www.dav.org

email: admin@davsd.org

www.facebook.com/DAVDeptofSD

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### HAVE A WONDERFUL THANKSGIVING, MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Brookings Chapter #22 Commander Bob Hill and Department of SD Treasurer Gene Murphy represent the DAV at the South Dakota State Fair. We thank Bob for sharing his Korean War Memorial display.



DAV member Rick Albrecht was presented the Chet Sorenson Veteran of the Year award from President Connie Johnson of the South Dakota Veterans Council at the South Dakota State Fair on Veteran's Day,

### DAV DEPARTMENT AND AUXILIARY 2022 FALL CONFERENCE OCTOBER 7TH & 8TH DAV HEADQUARTERS • 1519 W. 51st Street, Sioux Falls

HOSTED BY DAV ARTHUR H. MUCHOW  
CHAPTER NO. 1 OF SIOUX FALLS.

- Oct 7th
- 5pm.....Dept. and Aux. Commanders' Reception Meal
- Oct 8th
- 8-9am ..... Breakfast
- 9-10am ..... Joint Meeting
  - o Speakers from the SFVAHCS (VHA and VBA)
  - o East and West HTC Briefs
  - o NSO Brief
- 10am-Noon .....Dept and Aux Meetings
- Noon-1pm ..... Lunch
- 1-2pm ..... Final Meetings (if necessary)

PLEASE SEND YOUR CHAPTER AND AUXILIARY UNIT  
RESERVATIONS FOR MEALS BY OCTOBER 1ST

### SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COUNCIL (SDVC) 2023 LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTIONS TO MOVE FORWARD

SDVC approved a resolution to lobby the State of South Dakota to amend South Dakota Codified Law Chapter SDCL 10-4-10 and 10-4-41, to include the service-connected disabilities 70%-90% for the property tax exemption.

SDVC approved to lobby the South Dakota Legislature during the 2023 session to pass legislation to amend SDCL 33A-1-22 to include the stipulation that counties with Veteran Populations of 1000 to 3999 according to the most recent Annual VA GDX Report have at a minimum one full-time dedicated County Veterans Service Officer; and for counties with greater than 4000 Veterans an additional one full-time dedicated County Veterans Service officer be employed for each additional 4000 Veterans.

SDVC approved to introduce a resolution to the South Dakota Legislature to research placement of Veterans in community nursing homes with funding from federal, and State governments and Veterans in rural states.



## VETERAN'S DAY NOVEMBER 11

To our men and women in uniform, past, present, and future, God bless you and thank you.



**IT'S ALL ABOUT FAMILY**  
*by Joe Parsetich, Commander*

Several Christmases ago, my wife and son gave me a couple of those DNA collection kits you see advertised on television. With this gift, I could learn more about my roots. I knew I had been adopted as a baby from a Catholic Charities orphanage in Chicago, but my parents had kept many of the other details from me.

I was shocked when the results came back. First, I learned my birth parents were Puerto Rican, a surprise to someone who was told his whole life he was Italian. It turns out that was a fabrication by my adoptive parents to protect me from racial prejudices present in Chicago during my youth. I also learned I had five brothers, a sister, 250 first and second cousins, and more than a thousand third and fourth cousins. And, although my biological mother passed away years ago, I was able to meet my biological father, who is now 95. I was welcomed into a wonderful culture and family I never knew I had. And it feels great.

That's how I feel about DAV. Until I received help with my VA claim and attended my first chapter meeting in 2009, I didn't know anything about the organization. But I quickly discovered it's a welcoming family of fellow disabled veterans. We're all from different backgrounds, branches and eras, but we're bound together by a common thread.

As we all know, keeping a family together requires everyone's effort. I certainly didn't join DAV to just be a member. I came to help. Because before I was even a member, DAV was there for me as I began facing the issues haunting me from my time at Tan Son Nhut Air Base near Saigon during the aftermath of the Tet Offensive in 1968. It's an honor to give back to this organization that has done so much for me.

I have a diverse employment background, from being a police officer to training exotic animals to hosting a veterans-focused show on public radio in Great Falls, Montana. These experiences have given me countless stories to share, but more importantly, they've provided me with the ability to relate to lots of different people. It's been a joy to connect with others and point them to DAV, the Auxiliary and the work we do.

Through that work, our organizations have a renewed energy. We're reconnecting with our roots of proactive volunteer service. To me, there's no better feeling than helping fellow veterans and their families.

When we nurture this feeling, more veterans will know how much we care about them.

The work we do in our areas is also attractive to younger veterans and others in the military community, many of whom are looking to join an organization that's focused on service.

We should all be proud of how we provide ill and injured veterans and their families the ability to live life with respect and

dignity. It's an incredible honor to take the reins as your national commander, and I look forward to continuing to serve alongside you in this pursuit.



**STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY**

*Marc Burgess,  
National Adjutant*

Almost every time I flip through the contents of DAV Magazine, I am struck by one thing in particular: the span of generations represented in our pages.

In this issue alone, we feature the story of Paul Kerchum, a survivor of the Bataan Death March, and Rafael Sierra, who

earned his citizenship through service in the U.S. Army. We also share groundbreaking Gulf War illness news, which may help to address conditions that have plagued that generation of veterans for decades, as well as a story of Marines reunited years after their service in Cuba.

On top of that, we focus in on the newest generation of volunteers through the story of our latest DAV Scholarship recipient. To me, this goes to the heart of our mission. We are here to serve veterans of all generations with the skills and talents we have each been given and to encourage participation of the American people in the promise that was made to those who served.

You will often hear that diversity is strength, particularly when it comes to the military and veteran communities, which are full of individuals from different backgrounds. Deeper than that, though, the strength really lies in drawing on our unique individual experiences while uniting under a common cause to create positive change.

That is what I see as our charge and challenge—to find those commonalities that connect us across time and space and use them as fuel to lift each other up. The stories here in this magazine reflect that very theme. That ability, borne by our members, volunteers and supporters, is what has powered DAV for over a century and is what will continue to do so in the years to come.



**COMMANDER'S COLUMN**

*by Cdr Dan Francis*

Well, where did the summer go, as it will soon to be the Fall Conference October 7th and 8th. Be sure to get a reservation into the DAV Headquarters and let them know who will be attending. We had a great turn out for the 727 Poker Run and all the money raised will go into the Hospital Transportation Program in South Dakota. The DAV Arthur H. Muchow (AHM) Chapter Number 1 had a great turn out at the South Dakota State Fair, and they appreciated all

the help from Watertown Chapters 6, Aberdeen 13, and Davison County 27. A Lot of contacts were made with Veterans and many items of interest were sold for local programs and services. Northern Hills Chapter 11, Aberdeen Chapter 13, Rapid City Chapter 3 and AHM Chapter 1 all sent representatives with me to the SD Department of Veterans Affairs Benefits School in Pierre. In addition, Rapid City Chapter 3, Aberdeen Chapter 13, Brookings Chapter 22, and AHM Chapter 1 sent representatives to the National Convention in Orlando, Florida. Many new ideas came from this, and we appreciated all the presentations and meeting new DAV Members from around the Nation. In July, I went to the Commanders Training at DAV National and I highly recommend as a member progresses into the Department leadership to attend this training.

A few thoughts for our Chapters in South Dakota, remember we are here for fellow Veterans, we need to keep that in mind when we make our decision on where we put our money and time. You all are doing great things for our Veterans, but I want to point out that fact. In addition, remember to turn in your Local Volunteer Assistance Program Hours and let us continue to work together to help our fellow Veterans. Thank you for what you do.



**AUXILIARY COMMANDER'S COLUMN**

*by Auxiliary Cdr Vinceen Hanson*

Fall is fast approaching. With that said, there are a few events you may want to put on the calendar:

**DAV SD Fall Conference, October 7-8**

DAV Headquarters, Sioux Falls

Hotel info: Comfort Inn & Suites: 605.275.9577

Room rates are \$129/night and reference DAV by September 5 Also with our Fall Conference, don't forget our annual bake sale. Please remember to bring your delicious baked goodies. This is a big fundraiser for our State Auxiliary.

**DAV 14th District Fall Conference, October 22**

Billings, MT

During the months of September/October, I will be trying to make my unit visits. I'm looking forward to seeing what great things your units are doing for our veterans. If you have ideas for fundraising or veterans projects, please share them. The big winner will be the veteran.

To end, I want to extend my gratitude to all auxiliary members for all that they do. See you when I visit your unit or at the Fall Conference.

**83rd ANNUAL DAV OF SD CONVENTION AND 71st ANNUAL DAV AUXILIARY STATE CONVENTION BOOKLET**

The Disabled American Veterans (DAV) Sioux Falls Chapter No. 1 will be hosting the 83rd Annual Disabled American Veterans Department of South Dakota Convention and 71st Annual Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary State Convention in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, May 5th-6th 2023.

The DAV gives veterans the best representation before the Veterans Administration, Congress and the White House. The DAV has many programs and services that they provide FREE to disabled veterans and their families throughout South Dakota and the Nation.

The DAV is asking for your support of our veterans disabled in wartime service by placing an advertisement in the convention program booklet.

Advertising rates are: Page size – 4.75” W x 7.75”H (inside of booklet only)

- Full Page – Full Color \$300
- Full Page – Black & White \$275
- Half Page – Black & White \$175
- Quarter Page – Black & White \$95

Please email advertisements in pdf format to [admin@davsd.org](mailto:admin@davsd.org), attention convention booklet ad. Make checks payable to DAV Chapter No. 1 Convention Fund and send it along with this form to: DISABLED AMERICAN VETERANS CH No. 1, 1519 W 51st St, Sioux Falls, 57105 by April 1st, 2023.

Name/Business: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

For questions, call (605) 332.6866. Thank you for supporting the DAV of SD.

**DAV DEPT OF SD SR VICE COMMANDER'S COLUMN**

by Christine Speirs

Hello fellow South Dakota DAV members. Fall is the perfect time to invite new members to our Chapter meetings. With the addition of the PACT Act, opportunities abound for recruiting new members. CSOs, while you are filing a claim, ask the veteran if he/she is a DAV member. Perfect opportunity for you to inform the veteran of our \$100 discounted life membership if they are not a member.

I have had veterans tell me they are not going to file a claim because their health issues are not that bad. I then ask the veteran if their health issues were caused by a civilian worker's comp claim, would they file. A majority said they would. There is a stigma with the word "disability", especially with the younger veterans. I tell them not to look at their health issues as a disability, but as a worker's comp claim. If they are having issues that stem from their time in the service, it's because of them doing their JOB. It is our duty as DAV members to help the younger veterans break through this stigma. Breaking through this stigma will lead to helping more veterans, which will lead to more members.



**Population Summary**

Execution Date: 9/19/2022 2:35:23 PM

		Current Year					Goal		
DCU No	DCU Name	Total Trial	Total Part Life	Total Full Life	Total Paid Members	Total Members	Goal	Goal %	Goal Variance
40	Department of South Dakota	0	99	4,445	4,544	4,544	4,655	97.62%	-111
1	Arthur H Muchow #1	0	31	1,910	1,941	1,941	1,962	98.93%	-21
3	Rapid City #3	0	28	1,213	1,241	1,241	1,270	97.72%	-29
4	Coyote State #4	0	25	60	85	85	85	100.00%	0
6	Watertown #6	0	2	173	175	175	184	95.11%	-9
11	Northern Hills #11	0	9	352	361	361	370	97.30%	-10
13	Swanson O Connor #13	0	0	270	270	270	276	96.74%	-9
18	Oahe #18	0	3	214	217	217	227	95.59%	-10
19	Milbank-sisseton #19	0	1	86	87	87	97	89.69%	-10
22	Brookings #22	0	0	138	138	138	148	93.24%	-10
27	Davison County #27	0	0	29	29	29	36	80.56%	-7

**Your Chapter History:** As a new member, it is important to be aware of the history of your Chapter in order to feel like you truly belong. The orientation trainer should provide new members with some background on your Chapter. If you happen to be a charter member of your Chapter, you and your fellow members will have a chance to form the history of your Chapter.

**Chapter Officers:** The officers of your Chapter include the commander, immediate past commander, junior vice commanders, adjutant and committee appointees. Each Chapter elects annually a commander, a senior vice commander and one or more junior vice commanders and can elect or appoint an adjutant and a treasurer. It may elect or appoint other officers as necessary to operate the Chapter. Appointed officers serve at the pleasure of the appointing power. Neither a Chapter commander nor any vice commander may serve as Chapter adjutant or treasurer. Duties of each office can be found in your Chapter's bylaws.

**Purpose:** To uphold and maintain the Constitution and the laws of the United States; to realize the true American ideals and aims for which those eligible for membership fought; to advance the interests and work for the betterment of all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans; to cooperate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and all other public and private agencies devoted to the cause of improving and advancing the condition, health and interest of all wounded, gassed, injured and disabled veterans; to stimulate a feeling of mutual devotion, helpfulness and comradeship among all wounded, gassed, injured

and disabled veterans; to serve our comrades, our communities and our country; and to encourage in all people that spirit of understanding which will guard against future wars.

**Governing Bodies:** The governing bodies of the organization include the national convention, the National Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, the state Departments and Chapters.

**Nonpartisanship:** DAV is non-political and non-sectarian and the name of the organization or name of any subdivision can not be used in representing the desires or wishes of its membership in any political, sectarian or labor dispute.

**Mission Statement: Keeping Our Promise to America's Veterans**

We are dedicated to a single purpose: empowering veterans to lead high-quality lives with respect and dignity. We accomplish this by ensuring that veterans and their families can access the full range of benefits available to them; fighting for the interests of America's injured heroes on Capitol Hill; and educating the public about the great sacrifices and needs of veterans transitioning back to civilian life.

**This mission is carried forward by:**

- Providing free, professional assistance to veterans and their families in obtaining benefits and services earned through military service and provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other agencies of government.
- Providing outreach concerning its program services to the American people generally, and to disabled veterans and their

## PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORTS

families specifically.

- Representing the interests of disabled veterans, their families, their widowed spouses and their orphans before Congress, the White House and the Judicial Branch, as well as state and local government.
- Extending DAV's mission of hope into the communities where these veterans and their families live through a network of state-level Departments and local chapters.
- Providing a structure through which disabled veterans can express their compassion for their fellow veterans through a variety of volunteer programs.

Wishing everyone a happy and safe fall!

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### 1ST JR VICE COMMANDER'S REPORT

*by 1st Jr. Vice Mark Wolf*

#### SDDVA ANNUAL BENEFIT SCHOOL GIVES DAV CSO'S A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE ON HELPING VETERANS

South Dakota Department of Disabled American Veterans had an opportunity for a few seasoned Chapter Service Officers to attend and participate in the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs (SDDVA) Annual Benefit School August 15-17 2022 in Pierre, SD. Eight (8) members representing four (4) Department chapters were able to attend. Brief introductions were made by everyone attending the training. It was nice to put County Veteran Service officers (CVSO) names to faces from the past encounters in South Dakota. Training was broken into two levels called Basic and Advanced training.

Between the two levels of training there were Common core classes presented to both groups these were Writing class, Interviewing Techniques, and How to review a rating decisions.

The agenda and instructor time limits were closely followed. The organization of the slides following were spot-on, well followed. The Basic Training covered: Building a Claim, Types of Claims, Common Secondaries, CFR Basics. The Advanced Training covered: Bilateral Factors, Chronic, Secondary, and Aggravated Conditions, Appeals Case Studies, Gastrointestinal Diseases, Sleep Apnea, Gulf War Syndrome.

There was always two way communications between the entire audience and the speakers. Everyone was treated respectfully, courteously and was very helpful with each other, even during break discussions.

The three day event featured the following speakers:

- VA Sioux Falls Health Care System, presenter Aaron Pollard. <https://www.va.gov/sioux-falls-health-care>
- SD Veterans Cemetery Update presenter Erin Brown. <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/veteranscemetery/default.aspx>
- Folds of Honor, South Dakota presenter Brad Coleman. <https://foldsofhonor.org>
- Midwest Honor Flight, Presenter Aaron Van Beek. [info@midwesthonorflight.org](mailto:info@midwesthonorflight.org)

The take away learning from this event was a far better understanding and appreciation of what our SDDVA County

Veteran Service Officers do for SD veterans and their families beyond filing basic claims for them. The DAV attendees gained a better understanding on eligibility to the South Dakota Veterans Cemetery, ordering headstones, applications for burial, and who to call when needed. It's all about learning how to do our jobs better, for each of us helping the veterans we serve. If we cannot help the veteran within our DAV network ourselves, we can also utilize the SDDVA network as well. Everyone attending the training was treated with dignity, offering open discussion between all who attended. I came away with valued information to improve my serving the veterans in N & NE SD. The Network connection CVSO's names with their location will be better utilized when

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### DAV CHAPTER, SWANSON O'CONNOR CHAPTER 13 ANNUAL DAV PHEASANT HUNT X2

*by Pheasant Hunt Committee Chairman Ron Lindner*

Pheasant Hunt still available: Thursday, 20 OCT 2022 at the Duane Reidel's family pheasant food plots.

Hunting by invitation only to all current DAV members and new members in the process of joining. We sincerely appreciate you committing to attend once you've signed yourself up. The considerable planning that was necessary to make our event successful for both our volunteers and DAV members goes so much smoother for everyone. Thank you!

There is a limited number of hunters invited to each event.

- Bring your own shotgun and your own ammo.
- SD hunting license is required.
- Overnight lodging is on your own.

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### DAV 100TH NATIONAL CONVENTION

*by 1st Jr. Vice Commander Mark Wolf*

This year was exceptionally challenging for South Dakota Disabled American Veterans to attend our National Convention in Orlando FL. Not due to possible convention cancellations or due to covid-19 or convention closures moving it to other states. But due to the unsureness of traveling from South Dakota to Orlando, FL then returning to South Dakota without cancellations or reroutes. Everyone overcame the problems, eventually.

Our 100th anniversary convention was excellent. Every morning, every day from 7:30 AM until 5:00 PM there were numerous meetings and seminars to attend. One person cannot possibly attend them all. You needed to be on top of your game by preplanning your next day events every evening. Everyday there were three (3) to five (5) training seminars with business meeting offered that were great opportunities to listen and learn from the DAV leaderships best.

It is a great occasion to work with members from throughout the U.S. who all have the same professional outlook of the DAV we serve.

Please take the time to watch and listen to the DAV Year in review video. Google [DAV 2021-2022 Year-In-Review - YouTube](#)

*next page*

continued...

If you would like a better understanding of the seminars and the meetings content, visit our DAV.org web site. You may need to register using your membership number if it is your first time. Type in, 2022 National Convention. You will be able to look up all the Convention Presentations and Videos presented. They are in either video or PDF format, there are nineteen (19) listed. Lots of valuable information is presented here.

## SOUTH DAKOTA WINS LVAP DIVISION 5 AWARD

Volunteers are vital to our organization's success and help us fulfill our promise to injured veterans. Nationally our Local Veterans Assistance Program volunteers logged a staggering 1.6 million hours helping veterans with activities outside of VA medical facilities. A big thank you, from SD DAV Department!

South Dakota was recognized as leader of Division 5 for our LVAP competition standing. In the attached photo, accepting the prestigious award for South Dakota is our current South Dakota Department Commander Dan Francis.



Pictured L to R: Barry Jesinoski, DAV Executive Director, Dan Francis, SD Dept DAV Cdr, John Kleindienst, DAV National Volunteer Services Director and Andy Marshall, DAV National Cdr

Of interest looking at the statistics, not only was South Dakota at the top of Division 5. South Dakota has more volunteers than Thirty-Three (33) other states and one U.S. territory!

## SOUTH DAKOTA WINS JUDGE ROBERTS S. MARX AWARD

The award is presented to the department that completes the year with the highest percentage increase of fully paid life members over goal. The 2022 winner is the DAV Department of South Dakota. The award is presented during the first business session of the DAV National Convention in Orlando, Florida,

From District 14 (SD, ND, MN, MT) our new National Commander Joe Parsetich comes from and Great Falls, Montana. Vietnam War veteran Joe Parsetich was unanimously elected national commander of the more than 1 million-member DAV (Disabled American Veterans) at the organization's 100th National Convention in Orlando, Florida.



Pictured in the pinning ceremony L to R: Andy Marshall, outgoing DAV National Commander, Joe Parsetich, incoming DAV National Commander.

During the Service and Legislative Seminar and while attending various meetings a reoccurring excitement came out over the pending signing of the H.R. 3967, the Honoring our PACT Act. This bill offers a solution to toxic exposures and our fellow veterans and

their families. Over 40 veteran and military service organizations support the Honoring Our PACT Act. The signing of it occurred at the end of the national convention. This will have a major affect for 1000's of veterans and impact our NSO's& CSO's with waves of claims. For more information CTRL Click this link.

<https://www.dav.org/learn-more/news/2022/start-your-pact-act-outreach/>

## 2ND JR. VICE COMMANDER'S COLUMN

by *Tim Walsh*

Happy fall and an early Seasons Greetings to all South Dakota DAV members. This is our last bulletin for year 2022 and it has been a busy year for the department. Looking forward to seeing all of you at our Fall Conference at the Department headquarters the 7th and 8th of October.

The Department was very busy at the South Dakota State Fair doing outreach and fundraising in our first year as Department of South Dakota, Chapter One owners of the building located on the grounds. It is a work in progress and in the future, we are hoping that the entire department along with the auxiliary can benefit from this acquisition. I want to thank all of the chapter and auxiliary members from throughout the state whose time and effort made our first year a success.

By the time you receive this bulletin the 3rd Friday of September will have passed and National POW/MIA will have been celebrated. I'm sure all of you had your various observances of this special day as we did in Sioux Falls. The 11th Annual Ceremony was held at our Veterans Park in Sioux Falls and we even had the family of one of our South Dakota MIA's from the Vietnam war in attendance. Gene Murphy was the guest speaker and delivered an emotional and heartfelt story of POW's he has personally had the honor of hearing about their experiences.

The DAV 5k run, walk or roll event takes place November 5th

in Cincinnati and virtually November 5-30th. Visit DAV5k.org to learn how to field a team for this annual event. Remember to promote the DAV and do something special for yourself and all of our Veterans on November 11th, (Our Special Day). Happy Halloween, Happy Thanksgiving, and Merry Christmas to all.

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## WEST RIVER NEWS

by *Dick D. Turnwall*

What happens with west river DAV Chapters? Chapter 3 Rapid City and Northern Hills Chapter 11 work together doing VA disability claims. Chapter 3 has their own building and are open Monday to Friday to do VA disability claims. Chapter 11 meets at a local American Legion, so we do claims when veterans call for help. Chapter 3 also does claims on the first Saturday of each month at their building, while Chapter 11 does claims on the third Saturday of each month rotating between four area towns (Piedmont, Deadwood, Spearfish and Sturgis). What's unique about this set-up is on the Saturdays we schedule claims workshops, the Chapter Service Officers from both Chapters travel to help each other. If a Saturday has few Veterans needing help, we take the time to do some training. We have one CSO who is very familiar with Unemployability claims and another CSO who is very familiar with Dependents Indemnity Compensation (DIC) claims. We take the opportunity to have the experienced CSO review the claim forms and information required. In addition, Chapter 3 also has a Department Service Officer travel to VA Hot Springs on Thursdays to do claims for Veterans in that area.

Northern Hills Chapter 11 has the towns of Deadwood and Sturgis in our area, which increases the opportunity for fundraising events. Deadwood Chamber of Commerce hosts multiple events throughout the year including concerts such as Hank Williams Jr, Dwight Yoakum, Big & Rich, etc; St Patrick's Day celebration, Professional Bullrider's Rodeo, Kool Deadwood Nites car show, Professional Snow Mobile Races, and many others. Chapter members hold fundraisers by giving out stick flags for donations. As a result, for the past five (5) years, Chapter 11 has been able to fund six (6) Veteran's scholarships, donate to VA Black Hills Health Care to help hospitalized veterans buy hygiene items, paying for veterans to go on the Midwest Honor Flight, donate to Cornerstone Mission to support homeless veterans, Veteran's Honored Interment, and several other groups that support veterans.

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## WEST RIVER HOSPITAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM Fulfilling Our Promises to America's Veterans

by *Jack C Post II, Hospital Transportation Service Coordinator  
Ft Meade VAMC*

I've been reflecting on this mission statement quite a lot. Is it ONLY about assisting veterans with filing VA claims & getting them to and from medical appointments via the transportation network?

A few weeks ago I was getting gas & an OEF/OIF veteran who recognized I was with the DAV approached me. He very nervously said his PTSD was off the charts this day & needed help immediately!

He was receiving treatment in our local VA system but had been unable to talk with someone & just kept getting voicemail leaving messages with clinic receptionist etc. This stress was

intensifying his PTSD.

I thought he might be in crisis mode so I contacted the mental health clinic via an "unpublished back number" I know.

A provider contacted him within minutes, I ran into this veteran the following week. He said he was doing much better & asked me to schedule him for a ride to his next appointment. How differently this situation may have turned out, if I'd only been a "transportation coordinator" when he needed help?

Helping veterans outside of our normal duties when we see the need is something to be more cognizant of. The other day, I reached out to a veteran flying a sign on a corner. I asked him if he'd like a ride to the VA or Veteran Outreach Center to meet with a case worker I know. The veteran knew the case manager I mentioned, thanked me but, declined the offer. I told him I'd have a DAV van stop by the next day to see if he changed his mind.

I have a best friend. An Air Force vet who was a homeless alcoholic on the streets of Denver for 20 years. Countless people reached out to him over the years. They took him to rehab programs, veteran stand downs but, to no avail. One day a veteran, & case manager who had been after him for years got him in a program & he's been sober for 14 yrs & works for FedEx delivering packages.

The time that you reach out to a veteran maybe "the time" that MIRACULOUSLY changes their life.

Let's not wait for the VA or another outreach programs to help veterans we see RIGHT in front of us. Help them & LEAVE NO VETERAN BEHIND. One day it might have been or might be us walking in their shoes.

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## EAST RIVER HOSPITAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM

by *John Huntington, Hospital Transportation Service  
Coordinator Sioux Falls VAMC*

Things are very slowly getting back to some sort of normalcy, Tim Steppan has been added to the Center for Development and Civic Engagement, formally known as Voluntary Services. I have known Tim for a number of years and look forward to working with him.

In the future DAV travel, Center for Development and Civic Engagement, and Engineering Services (Fleet Manager) are going to meet at 10am every Friday morning and go over and hopefully resolve any issues that we may have. Our last meeting included Cesar Emano Jr who visited from Iowa City, Iowa VA and is involved with the Sioux Falls Fleet.

Covid 19 boosters are available by going to primary care and making a request. Be sure and bring your vaccine card. The VA is also offering Drive-up flu vaccines during the following times:

- Wednesday, October 8 8am-4pm
- Saturday, October 15 8am-4pm
- Tuesday, October 18 8am-4pm
- Thursday, October 27 8am-4pm

We have tentative figures for August Volunteer drivers showing that 184 Veterans were transported, 649 hours were spent doing so and 14,900 miles were driven.



# OPERATION: KEEP THE PROMISE

2022



## DAV LEGISLATION: PRIORITIES AND VICTORIES

by Joy Ilem, National Legislative Director

We're coming off yet another momentous national convention. The robust turnout of our engaged and thoughtful members shows that DAV is stronger than ever as we continue to advocate for the nation's ill and injured veterans. Such strength

has provided DAV with an influential voice and earned us an authoritative seat at the table in Washington for more than 100 years.

And we've seen several legislative victories this year because of your grassroots advocacy.

Two imperative DAV-supported bills—signed into law by the president this summer—will expand breast cancer screening to more women veterans. Women who served in known areas harboring materials that cause toxic exposures and those who live in more rural parts of the country will benefit from increased access to mammogram services. We've long known that detecting breast cancer earlier will save lives, which is why DAV was passionate about getting the Making Advances in Mammography and Medical Options for Veterans (MAMMO) and Dr. Kate Thomas Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans In Combat Environments (SERVICE) Acts to the president's desk.

Another top legislative priority is improving military sexual trauma (MST) claims. According to the Department of Veterans Affairs' national screening program, 1 in 3 women and 1 in 50 men report having been sexually assaulted during their service. With such stark numbers, the VA must make the process of filing these claims easier. It is past time to lift the additional burdens for veterans of such trauma.

The Servicemembers and Veterans Empowerment and Support Act of 2021, which is being considered by Congress, would ease the onerous evidentiary requirements to submit MST claims. It would also expand the type of documents accepted to include nonmilitary records, such as civilian medical records and opinions.

We're also laser-focused on advancing other vital bills related to DAV's critical policy goals before the end of the 117th Congress. Improving and expanding mental health services, helping to stem the tragedy of veteran suicide, giving more homeless veterans a much-needed hand up, and strengthening the VA to ensure we provide world-class care to those who served us all are still within the grasp of this Congress.

We know veterans, particularly DAV members, are not content with standing on the sidelines. Your advocacy matters and is embedded

in your actions. And acting has never been more effortless with DAV's Commander's Action Network. By going to [DAVCAN.org](http://DAVCAN.org), you can see all of the pivotal pieces of veterans legislation that will substantially affect our brothers- and sisters-in-arms.

The 117th Congress may be in its home stretch, but we must stay focused to ensure we accomplish our legislative goals for our fellow veterans.

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## PACT ACT SIGNED INTO LAW

by Matt Saintsing • September, 15, 2022

The Honoring our PACT Act is the biggest toxic exposure veterans bill to ever be considered

Veterans exposed to harmful substances will find it easier to receive their earned benefits now that the largest and most comprehensive toxic exposure legislation ever is now law. Signed by President Joe Biden in August, the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act (Public Law 117-168) expands health care benefits to millions of veterans of all eras—including future generations—who come into contact with noxious material while serving in uniform.

Among its many impactful provisions, the Honoring Our PACT Act will reduce bureaucratic obstacles for an estimated 3.5 million veterans who seek VA benefits due to burn pit exposures during the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and other hostile locations. The law adds nearly two dozen presumptive conditions related to burn pit exposure, meaning veterans who served in overseas locations with active burn pits no longer have to prove their exposure or establish direct service connection if diagnosed with ailments listed in the law that are known to cause such conditions. The new law also expands medical coverage by extending, from five to 10 years, the time period that combat veterans who were discharged or released on or after Oct. 1, 2013, have for guaranteed enrollment in the VA health care system. For combat veterans whose service was completed before that date, the law provides a one-year open enrollment period.

The signing of the PACT Act is the culmination of years of work by DAV members and advocates who lobbied Congress to keep our promise to America's veterans. In 2008, DAV brought the critical issue of burn pits to the American public's attention. DAV initiated the pilot for a Burn Pit Registry, which the Department of Veterans Affairs adopted in 2014.

For Vietnam veterans, this landmark legislation will finally make hypertension a presumptive condition for those exposed to Agent Orange, making it simpler for the VA to award benefits to them or their survivors. The law also expands all Agent Orange presumptions to cover veterans who served in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Guam, American Samoa and Johnston Atoll.

"The Honoring Our PACT Act represents a major shift in how the VA will care for veterans exposed to toxic chemicals and other hazardous substances," said DAV National Legislative Director Joy Ilem. "This legislation is another step toward ensuring this nation makes good on its promise to care for all the brave men and women who volunteer to serve their country and defend our freedom."



“No longer will our veterans exposed to harmful substances have to fight the VA for the benefits they earned in service to us all,” added DAV National Commander Joe Parsetich. “This is a historic victory for veterans, and DAV is proud to have been there every step of the way in advocating for this lifesaving legislation.” Learn More Online Find updates to other major veteran legislation by joining DAV CAN (Commander’s Action Network) at DAVCAN.org.

#### **H.R. 8686, the Wounded Warrior Research Enhancement Act**

This directs the Department of Defense (DOD) to award grants to entities with the purpose of advancing orthotic and prosthetic care for members of the armed forces, veterans, and civilians who have undergone amputation, traumatic brain injury (TBI), and other serious injuries resulting from combat or military service.

If passed, grantees would be required to research actions that can be taken to prevent amputation of limbs, the point in the course of patient treatment during which orthotic and prosthetic intervention is most effective, the orthotic interventions that are most effective in treating the physical effects of TBI and the effect of the aging process on the use of prosthetics. Grant funding would also be used to improve existing orthotic and prosthetic technology and the development of new technologies.

#### **S. 4580, the Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act**

S. 4580, the Lactation Spaces for Veteran Moms Act, would require each VA medical center to create a lactation station for veterans who are nursing.

As growth in the number of women veterans using VA health care continues, VA must ensure that it creates environments that are safe and welcoming to all veterans. This includes private, convenient and hygienic lactation stations women can easily and safely access while they are obtaining the health care they have earned.

#### **H.R. 7589, the Reduce and Eliminate Mental Health Outpatient Veteran (REMOVE) Copays Act**

This bill would eliminate medical care copayments for veterans’ first three mental health visits in a calendar year.

Overcoming the stigma of seeking mental health treatment is in itself a victory. For some service-connected veterans, these copayments are a significant barrier to medically necessary care. Financial obstacles should not be another challenge or deterrent to receiving potentially life-saving mental health treatment.

#### **H.R. 8398, the DRIVE Act**

Veterans who are seeking care for service-connected conditions or veterans with service-connected conditions rated at least 30% are among veterans who are eligible for beneficiary travel pay, which may include reimbursement for mileage, tolls and sometimes expenses, such as meals or lodging.

Unfortunately, the current mileage rates for beneficiary travel do not always cover the actual expenses for gas and associated costs of using a personal vehicle. The difference in the current mileage rate for reimbursement for veterans (41.5 cents) compared to federal employees using personal vehicles for business (62.5 cents) highlights the inadequacy of the rate for veterans’ travel. Such expenses may serve as a barrier to care, especially when gas prices are high.

#### **EXPANDING VA DENTAL CARE**

*posted on July 12, 2022 by Matt Saintsing*

The Veterans Dental Care Eligibility Expansion and Enhancement Act of 2021 (S. 3017) would remove the current barriers to VA dental care by broadening eligibility for all veterans enrolled in VA health care. The bill also seeks to address the shortage of dentists by providing incentives to dental school students and mandates the expansion of VA dental clinics in all 50 states.

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**12-2pm**  
**DAV Center**  
**1519 W 51st St**  
**Sioux Falls SD**

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## NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER REPORT

by *Owen Richards, National Service Officer, Supervisor*

Good day everyone, I am excited to share with you the wonderful news that you may not have heard yet, and that is the passing of the PACT Act.

The PACT Act is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

The PACT Act (1) expands and extends eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and Veterans of the Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 era, and (2) expands eligibility for benefits for Veterans exposed to toxic substances. For Gulf War and Post 9-11 Veterans, that includes: Brain cancer, Glioblastoma, Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type, Gastrointestinal cancer of any type, Head cancer of any type, Lymphoma of any type, Lymphatic cancer of any type, Neck cancer, Pancreatic cancer, Reproductive cancer of any type, Kidney cancer, Melanoma, Asthma (diagnosed after service), Chronic rhinitis, Chronic sinusitis, Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis, Emphysema, Granulomatous disease, Interstitial lung disease (ILD), Pleuritis, Pulmonary fibrosis, Sarcoidosis, Chronic bronchitis, Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

For Vietnam Veterans and other Veterans exposed to tactical herbicides, that includes two Agent Orange presumptive conditions: Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS), High blood pressure (hypertension).

Please, keep in mind to utilize your local DAV NSO Office.

### VA BLACK HILLS CARE SYSTEM

by *Teresa Forbes | Chief Experience Officer*

Thank you, DAV members for your continued partnership in providing high quality care to Black Hills Veterans.

VA is modernizing how Veteran's check-in for appointments. We are launching our new pre-check-in and mobile check-in options. It is expected to save time by easily confirming demographic information (contact, next of kin, and emergency contact) ahead of the appointment and check-in via mobile device on the day of the appointment. You will always be able to check in at the window with our Medical Support Assistants if you prefer! It's up to you. We love to hear from Veterans through our appointment surveys.

Through the VSignals survey, 94.8% of Veterans who responded said they trust VA Black Hills to be their provider. Veteran comments help us improve and share the positive responses with staff. We truly appreciate your feedback!

Everyday there is exciting progress on the Rapid City VA Clinic. We are looking forward to caring for Veterans at this new state of the art facility next summer.

It's flu season again and it's time think about prevention efforts.

The next time you come to one of our facilities ask about getting your flu vaccine to stay well.

September is Suicide Prevention Month, and we want Veterans to know they do not have to tackle life's challenges on their own. The addition of 988 to reach the Crisis Line is an important change that makes it easier to remember the number to reach out. Together let's share the message don't wait, reach out now. VA is ready to help.

Finally, thanks to all of DAV volunteers and partners. Stay in touch with us on our social media channels like Facebook and Instagram to keep up to date with everything going on with Veteran care!



### VA SIOUX FALLS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

*Sam Otto | Public Affair Officer*

#### Sioux Falls VA Receives Award for Most Improved in Outpatient Experience

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System on Wednesday received the Most Improved in Outpatient Experience Award for fiscal year 2021 at the VA's Patient Experience Symposium in Washington D.C.

Dr. Pendergrass, Acting Director, received the award on behalf of the SFVAHCS by Dr. Shereef Elnahal, Under Secretary for Health for the Department of Veteran Affairs.

“This award recognizes everyone's effort over the course of a year to improve the experience for our patients,” said Dr. Donna Jark, Acting Chief of Staff. “I am very proud of the work done by the entire care team.”

The award recognizes the SFVAHCS for having the most improved patient satisfaction scores across the Veterans Health Administration's primary care outpatient clinics during the 2021 fiscal year. Sioux Falls had an improvement from 72.6% to 83.5%, an increase of 10.9%.

The dedication and drive of the staff in Sioux Falls, the outreach clinic in Wagner, and each of the VA community based outpatient clinics in Aberdeen, Watertown, Dakota Dunes, and Spirit Lake, are credited for taking the feedback to heart and acting upon it, said Dr. Jark.

Feedback from Veterans through surveys in overall satisfaction, a rating of the provider, the effectiveness of care coordination, and communication with the patient are some of the areas collected to determine the results for the award.

“This award is a recognition of the work by the entire outpatient care team to improve the ease and effectiveness for Veterans at each interaction with the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System,” said Damian Donahoe, Supervisory Health Systems Specialist, Patient Experience Officer. “They each try to provide exceptional service to Veterans and the team acted upon feedback from the Veterans to make small, but impactful changes to improve the overall experience.”

The Customer Experience Symposium is a two-day, hybrid virtual learning event to equip Veteran Health Administration leaders and frontline staff with tools to improve the care experiences of our Veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors. Participants will discover new and existing tools and best practices to mature and sustain patient experience programs.



Ch. 1 assisted with the Gold Star Memorial in Sioux Falls in memory of Fallen DAV Members.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### OCTOBER

- 1st – Saturday..... DAV Transportation Network Vehicle Grant Requests Memo Released  
2022 DAV Auxiliary National Fall Conference Ends- Lexington, KY  
Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication – PVT Frederic Schroeder – Madison City Armory– 1pm  
Midwest Honor Flight Mission 13 – Welcome Home Ceremony- Sioux Falls Convention Center – Sioux Falls – 7pm (CT)
- 3rd – Monday. BHNC Unaccompanied Veterans Memorial Service – Sturgis – 9am (MT)
- 7th – Friday..... DAV & AUX. FALL COMMANDERS’ RECEPTION – DAV HQ – SIOUX FALLS – 5PM (CT)**
- 8th – Saturday.....DAV & AUXILIARY 14TH DISTRICT FALL CONFERENCE – DAV HQ – SIOUX FALLS Breakfast 8am (CT) / Joint Session 9am / Business Meetings 10am / Lunch and 727 Presentation at Noon / Meetings if Necessary 1pm**
- 10th – Monday... COLUMBUS DAY/NATIVE AMERICANS DAY – OFFICE CLOSED**
- 12th – Wednesday .....Sioux Falls VAHCS Stakeholders Conference Call –10a (CT)
- 13th – Thursday..... U.S. Navy Birthday – Established 1775
- 20th - Thursday..... DAV Swanson O’Connor Pheasant Hunt
- 21st - Friday..... PVA Dueling Pianos Fundraiser = SD Military Heritage Alliance – Sioux Falls – 7pm (CT)
- 23rd – Sunday .....Anniversary of 1983 Beirut Barracks Bombings
- 27th – Thursday..... Navy Day
- 31st – Saturday..... Reboots No-Cost Business Training – Noon-2pm – DAV HQ  
Operation Rolling Thunder Ended – 1968

### NOVEMBER

- 1st-30th ..... Grand Falls Casino – DAV Giving Back Fund Raising – DAV Sioux Falls
- 5th - Saturday..... We’ve Got Your Six Veterans Appreciation Fair – Sturgis Community Center – 11a (MT)
- 7th-13th ..... National Operation Green Light -Show Respect for Veterans
- 9th – Wednesday ..... Sioux Falls VAHCS Stakeholders Conference Call – 10a (CT)
- 10th – Thursday..... U.S. Marine Corps Birthday – US Marine Corps Established – 1775
- 11th – Friday..... VETERANS DAY – Office Closed**  
Signing of World War I Armistice – 1918  
Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication – CPT Tommy Callies - Howard High School – 9:30am (CT)  
Fallen Hero Bridge Dedication – S2 Wayne – Wagner High School – 2pm (CT)
- 14th – Monday..... DAV Department of SD 2022 Convention Raffle Prizes  
Deadline- Chapters/Members
- 16th – Wednesday .....SD Veterans Council Meeting – DAV HQ– Sioux Falls – 9am (CT)  
Legislative Roundtable – DAV HQ – Sioux Falls - 12pm (CT)
- 17th – Thursday..... Legislative Roundtable – Watertown Time TBD (CT)
- 18th – Friday. Legislative Roundtable – American Legion Post 8 – Pierre Time TBD (CT)
- 19th – Saturday. Legislative Roundtable – VFW Post 5860 – Spearfish – 10-11:30am(MT)
- 24th – Thursday..... “HAPPY THANKSGIVING” – Office Closed
- 25th – Friday ..... Office Closed

### DECEMBER

- 6th – Tuesday ..... Governor Noem’s Budget Address
- 7th – Wednesday .....Japan Attacks Pearl Harbor – 1941  
**NATIONAL PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY**
- 14th – Wednesday ..... Sioux Falls VAHCS Stakeholders Conference Call – 10a (CT)
- 16th – Friday ..... Battle of the Bulge Began – 1944
- 17th – Saturday ..... Wreath Across America – SD State Veterans Cemetery – ‘Sioux Falls – 11am (CT)
- 24th – Saturday..... CHRISTMAS EVE– OFFICE CLOSED**
- 25th – Sunday ..... MERRY CHRISTMAS**  
Christmas Party for VA Patients at VA Sioux Falls – 8:30am
- 31st – Saturday ..... NEW YEAR’S EVE– OFFICE CLOSED**



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**DAV NATIONAL SERVICE OFFICER**

**OWEN RICHARDS**

EMAIL: dav.vbasux@va.gov

**VA REGIONAL OFFICE**

2501 W 22nd • VARO 101

Sioux Falls, SD 57117

Phone: 605.333.6896

**CHAPTER MEETINGS**

**Sioux Falls - DAV Club**

5:30pm, 2nd Tuesday

1519 W 51st St, Sioux Falls

**Rapid City - DAV Club**

7:30pm 2nd Wednesday

101 E Madison St, Rapid City

**Watertown - American Legion**

7:15pm 2nd Monday

1412 9th Ave SW, Watertown

**Piedmont - American Legion**

7pm 2nd Thursday

101 Pine St, Piedmont

**Aberdeen**

Plymouth Congressional Church

7pm 2nd Tuesday

431 W Melgaard Road, Aberdeen

**Pierre - American Legion**

7pm 3rd Tuesday

520 S Pierre Street, Pierre

**Milbank-Sisseton**

10:30am 1st Saturday

Pizza Ranch, Milbank

**Brookings - American Legion**

7pm 2nd Tuesday

1229 Western Ave, Brookings

**Mitchell - VFW**

7:30pm Last Tuesday

215 N. Main St., Mitchell

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**PLEASE SHARE YOUR INPUT!**

We are considering transitioning from this newsletter to an online event/informational website only in FY 23/24.

Be prepared to discuss this at the October Fall conference.

**BULLETIN SCHEDULE**

**APRIL: Submittal Deadline:**

March 10th

**JULY: Submittal Deadline:**

June 10th

**OCTOBER: Submittal Deadline:**

September 10th

**JANUARY: Submittal Deadline:**

December 10th

Email all reports to:

admin@davsd.org

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