

DAKOTA PACK

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD • SPRING 2020

TRADITION OF SERVICE

Soldier continues family legacy of service, support to community

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- Guardsmen, families, employer awarded for service

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- Air Guard opens new indoor weapons range
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- 196th MEB & 115th SC to deploy to Africa



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Magazine of the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard

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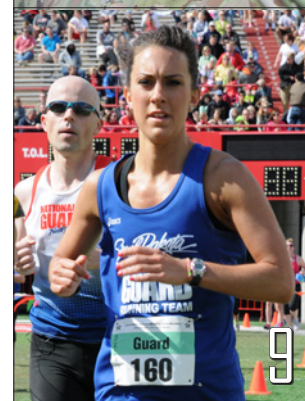
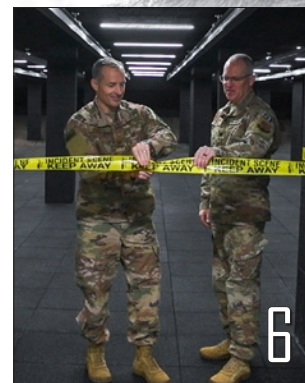
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On the Cover

Spc. Jacey Garcia, an electrician with the 155th Engineer Company, poses in uniform in Spearfish, Nov. 8. Garcia is a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe and is using his experience in the South Dakota National Guard to help his community. (Photo by Sgt. Dustin Jordan)

Message from the Adjutant General

As I write this article, the South Dakota National Guard is heavily engaged in a fight we have never been in before. Throughout our history, the South Dakota National Guard has been called upon when our state and nation needed us. We tell and re-tell the stories of how our South Dakota National Guard showed up at times of great need, deployed around the globe, supported our citizens, saved communities and saved lives. The Rapid City Flood, The Spencer Tornado, the 97 bizzards and the 2011 mass flooding are just a few state active duty missions that quickly come to mind. The South Dakota National Guard's response to the Coronavirus will be the next chapter in our history.

Today, our Soldiers and Airmen are prepared to conduct a wide variety of missions. These missions include medical planning and staffing, standing up alternate care facilities, support to public safety entities, construction missions, transportation missions and in some cases, simply being the helping hands our communities need to keep people safe and cared for.

To our current Soldiers and Airmen, I want to say thank you for your flexibility in this uncertain time. Our state and nation is facing a challenge unlike any we have ever faced before. The situation on the ground is continually changing and the missions we must be prepared to conduct is a moving target. Your professionalism and state of preparedness are commendable.

Most importantly, I want to say thank you for being in the South Dakota National Guard. As we often talk about, you are the one Percent! You are the one Percent who has stood up and said you are willing to serve and to protect your state and country. You will go into harm's way, so others don't have to. The fact that all of you have made that commitment is the very rock from which we begin everything. It is our foundation!

I want to continue to urge all of our Soldiers and Airmen to continue to maintain their personal readiness. Take care of yourself. Get healthy - stay healthy. There may come a time when we need each of you to join into this response. Stay in the fight. We are not anybody else, we are the South Dakota National Guard and we show up when called.



In closing, I want to leave you with these thoughts. We as a nation have never seen or fought anything like this. This is an attack on our homeland and we must stand to fight it. We don't get to take a knee when the going gets tough. That is not who we are or what we signed up for. As the South Dakota National Guard, we will answer when we are called. We will go into the fight and we will do our part to win. We will help and rescue people in their greatest times of need. We will save lives. We will get through this together and we will win. Thank you for your service to our state and nation. Thank you for being a part of our South Dakota National Guard family.

God bless each of you, your families, our state and our nation.

Sincerely,

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey P. Marlette
The Adjutant General

Message from the Senior Enlisted Leader

COVID-19 has drastically disrupted our lives. Schools and colleges are closed and many of the social gatherings like dinner with family and friends, church services, and going out to eat, to name a few, has stopped. We are encountering several different stressors in our lives that we have never experienced. As members of the South Dakota National Guard, we belong to a family. You take care of your family and I am asking you to take care of your Guard family. This is especially important now during this COVID-19 pandemic. I am asking that you reach out to each other and periodically check in with your leadership. If you are struggling and need help, please let someone know.

I attended the two week Nominative Leaders Course this past December. During part of the course, we had the opportunity to visit with the Sergeant Major of the Army, Michael Grinston. SMA Grinston's main message was centered on his new initiative called "This is My Squad." Have you heard about it?

The intent of the new initiative is to strengthen teams and squads and create cohesion among all Soldiers. Soldiers need to focus on all the positive attributes of being a Soldier and the members of a team/squad (Guard family). Doing this will hopefully address problems that our Guard family currently deal with like sexual harassment and assault, bullying, suicide prevention and domestic issues, while also building SDNG readiness priorities. SMA Grinston, as well as myself, hope that these problems can be addressed by instilling this mindset into Soldiers that "This is My Squad and I DON'T LET ANYTHING HAPPEN TO THEM."

I want "This is My Squad" implemented throughout the South Dakota National Guard the same way it is inculcated across the Army. All Soldiers need to take the time to get to know every member in their team/squad. During these times of social distancing it is as easy as a text or a phone call. How are you? How is your family? Do you need anything?

Remember the SDNG is your family. Just like you are proud of your family and protect them from harm, I ask that you do the same with your SDNG family. Please take care of yourself and your family. I look forward to getting out and visiting units once the travel ban and social distancing is over. I am so proud of you! Thank you for being in "My Squad and SDNG Family."



For more info on "This is My Squad" visit the following websites:

- <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/736998/sma-panel-my-squad>
- https://www.army.mil/article/232263/sma_to_soldiers_understand_the_people_around_you

Sincerely,

Pat Couser

Command Sgt. Maj. Pat Couser
Senior Enlisted Leader



(Courtesy photo)

Sgt. 1st Class Chris Peters talking to his squad during drill. NCOs own the culture of small units and are empowered to take care of Soldiers and families. Officers trust NCOs to create a work environment where Soldiers want to come to work, train, and grow.

153rd Eng. Battalion receives new CSM

HURON – Command Sgt. Maj. Marcus Stacey, of Sturgis, assumed responsibility as the senior noncommissioned officer for the 153rd Engineer Battalion during a change of responsibility ceremony in Huron, Dec. 7.



Stacey accepted the duties as the unit's senior enlisted leader from Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Devries, who has been in the position since January 2016.

As the unit's senior NCO, Stacey is responsible for advising the unit commander, Lt. Col. Jason Thomson, on all aspects of the battalion's enlisted Soldiers, providing guidance and mentorship to those Soldiers and assisting in ensuring the battalion is prepared to handle all missions it is assigned.

"It is an honor to lead such amazing Soldiers as your command sergeant major," Stacey said. "Command Sgt. Maj. Devries has done an outstanding job, and I look forward to the opportunity of working with all of you."

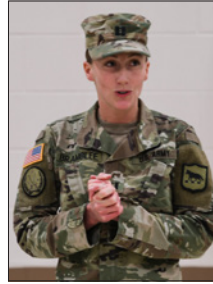
"I want to thank all of the Soldiers of the 153rd Engineer Battalion for the opportunity to serve you," Devries said, who has elected to retire after a 24 year career in the SDARNG. "The Guard is like family to me. After 24 years, I have decided to hang up the uniform, but I know this battalion will continue to do great things."

Stacey began his military service 1986, enlisting as a motor transport operator. He reclassified as a general construction engineer in 1999 and served in the 842nd Engineer Company, 153rd Eng. Bn. and 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. He deployed to Iraq in 2003-2004 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, as well as Afghanistan in 2011-2012 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 153rd has approximately 475 Soldiers in four units in five communities throughout South Dakota. The 153rd assists assigned units in meeting training, administrative and logistical requirements to maintain the unit's readiness in support of their state and federal missions.

HHC, 196th MEB changes command

SIOUX FALLS – Capt. Ellen Bramble took command of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, during a change of command ceremony in Sioux Falls, Dec. 7.



Bramble assumed responsibility from Capt. Chace Larsen, who served in the position since October 2017.

"I am thrilled," Bramble said of taking command. "We as the MEB contribute to a fantastic reputation across South Dakota, and I look forward to bringing success and leadership to this unit. As we go forward, I am excited for all the changes that will come with this position."

As the HHC commander, Bramble is responsible to Col. David Daily, 196th MEB commander, for ensuring the MEB's nearly 200 Soldiers meet training, administrative and logistical requirements to achieve unit readiness.

"Part of leadership is about getting everyone else better every day," Bramble said. "Within this command, I want to facilitate and support every single Soldier."

Larsen, who is staying in the unit as a staff officer, said leaving his command was a bittersweet experience, but he has full confidence the unit will continue to improve with Bramble at the helm.

"My time as the HHC commander has been and will always be one of the highlights of my career," Larsen said. "I have never served with a better group of Soldiers."

Bramble began her military service in April 2009 as food service specialist with the 139th Brigade Support Battalion in Brookings. She received her commission as an engineer officer in August 2012 from the SDSU Army ROTC program. Since her commission, Bramble served as the construction officer for the 155th Engineer Company (vertical construction) while deployed to Kuwait in 2015. She served as the operations officer for the 200th Engineer Company (multi-role bridge) in 2016, as well as their platoon leader from 2012-2015. She held the position of the engineer liaison officer with the MEB since 2017.

April is Month of the Military Child



RAPID CITY – April marks the nation's "Month of the Military Child," a time to honor military youth in communities who have been impacted by deployments, as well as the unique opportunities and challenges that all military children face.

The South Dakota National Guard invites everyone to join in and be part of "Purple Up! For Military Kids Day," being held April 17.

South Dakotans are encouraged to wear purple on that date and share their photos through social media as a tangible way to show their support and thank all military children for their strength and sacrifices.

"This is a perfect time to celebrate military children and to recognize their character, strength and resilience," said Taryn Broomfield, SDNG Child and Youth Program lead coordinator. "Our military youth are impacted daily, whether their service member is home, deployed, at drill, or away attending training or school."

There are more than 6,400 military children in South Dakota with parents or guardians who serve in the National Guard, Reserves and active duty. Of these children and youth, over 3,800 are affiliated with the SDNG.

Gov. Kristi Noem demonstrated her support of military kids by signing a proclamation announcing April 2020 as the Month of the Military Child.

Established by Casper Weinberger in 1986, the Month of the Military Child recognizes the important role military children play in our communities. We pause each year to honor the millions of military children for their contributions to their families.

"Military kids are an integral part of our families and communities, and they serve too," said Broomfield. "Please celebrate the military children in your life and thank them."

174th Cyber Protection Team returns home from tour

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – Seven Soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 2, 174th Cyber Protection Team arrived home in early March after completing a state-side deployment to the U.S. Capital region. The Rapid City-based unit returned after a 14-month deployment where they supported defensive cyber operations to protect the nation's cyber infrastructure and address emerging cyber threats.

The Soldiers are part of a nearly 40-member team and includes detachments in North Dakota, Utah and Colorado. While deployed, the unit provided support to U.S. Cyber Command to engineer, install, operate and maintain critical infrastructure. The unit members also supported Task Force Echo, which is the largest mobilized National Guard cyber force in support of U.S. interests to date.

The Det. 2, 174th CPT Commander, Capt. Christopher Wenk, said the unit's deployment was successful and the unit completed many tasks and a validation exercise that enhances their capabilities to support future state and federal cyber missions.

"The Task Force Echo mission supports Soldier professional development, state cyber requirements, and building cyber capabilities for the total U.S. Army," Wenk said. "After mobilization, sustainment training must support the future requirements of both the cyber mission force and state missions.

"During the mission we were able to conduct and execute a successful Final Operating Capability Validation exercise, in which over the course of five days we used the hunt, clear and defend model to execute against malicious activities as a team," Wenk added. "The successful validation exercise makes us the 3rd Army National Cyber Protection Team to be part of the Cyber National Mission Force, which opens many doors in support of our nation's cyber assets."

Sioux Falls National Guard units to deploy to Africa

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

SIoux FALLS – Two Sioux Falls-based South Dakota Army National Guard units have received a mobilization order for a 10 month deployment to Africa beginning in late August and early September.

About 190 Soldiers with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and nearly 40 Soldiers with the 115th Signal Company will deploy to Djibouti to support U.S. Africa Command in support of allied nation partnerships and regional security and stability goals.

The 196th MEB will deploy in late August and will command and control assigned units and support the security, mobility, and functional operations of forces in a designated region. The 115th SC will deploy in early September and provide operational support and management of communication and information systems to a supported brigade.

The units will report to Fort Hood, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas.

Soldiers participate in indoor match at Ellsworth AFB



(Photo by Sgt. Fiona Berndt)

Sgt. 1st Class Grant Serna with the 881st Troop Command aims his M16 rifle during the Adjutant General's Indoor Match, Feb. 21, at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

Story and photos by Sgt. Fiona Berndt - 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE – Soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard participated in the Adjutant General's Indoor Match, Feb. 21-23 at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

The indoor match allows Soldiers from the SDARNG to compete for a spot on the state marksmanship team.

During the match, hosted by the Joint Force Headquarters Marksmanship Section, Soldiers have the ability to compete in teams while getting additional training and experience with the M-16A2's rifle and the M9 pistol.

"It was a lot of fun," said Sgt. Timothy Glidden, supply sergeant for the 881st Troop Command and 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment. "It's a different way of shooting and more complicated compared to qualifying. It was also good to get experience with a M9 and different shooting positions."

During the event, Soldiers compete in different stages. During each stage, they are required to shoot either the M16 or M9 from the standing, sitting, or prone position, and have a limited amount of time to make their shots. The number of shots they get in their target and the proximity to the center determines their score.

"The state matches give newer and less experienced shooters an opportunity to learn higher level of skills," said Sgt. Thomas Carpenter, a Soldier with the 109th Regional Support Group. "It also allows experienced shooters the ability to refine their skills."

Carpenter is entering his third year with the State Marksmanship Team. He enjoys the camaraderie of the team and the ability to learn new skills from other shooters.

"Every year experience builds," Carpenter said. "Shooting is a perishable skill. Each achievement leads you to your next, so these events are always a lot of fun."

The indoor match is one of many shooting events available to SDARNG Soldiers. There is an upcoming outdoor match in May and a regional match in August. If you are interested in participating in future matches, please contact Sgt. 1st Class Kerry Slaba at kerry.j.slaba.mil@mail.mil or (605) 737-6969.

114th Fighter Wing opens new indoor shooting range



(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

Airmen from the 114th Security Forces Squadron practice firing weapons at the new indoor shooting range at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls. The range consists of 12 shooting lanes with a state-of-the-art ventilation system.

Story by Staff Sgt. Jordan Hohenstein – 114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

SIOUX FALLS – The South Dakota Air National Guard opened a new indoor shooting range in January on Joe Foss Field.

This facility will give the 114th Fighter Wing the ability to conduct weapons qualifications from their home base and increase base readiness.

The range was prefabricated off site and consists of several Conex boxes that were transported and assembled at Joe Foss Field by contractors. Although the project has been in planning for a few years, the project only took about two months to assemble.

The range consists of 12 shooting lanes with a state-of-the-art ventilation system.

“It’s built to be very versatile,” said Master Sgt. Jeremy Water, 114th Security Forces NCOIC of combat operations.

The firing range has the ability to simulate low light and nighttime conditions as well as a 360 degree target adjuster. It also features sound adjustments to simulate different noises Airmen might hear in different situations.

The range is electronically controlled in a master control room by instructors using either a desktop computer or a tablet to make adjustments. Each of the shooting lanes is equipped with a touch screen that can make simple adjustments to the desired shooting scenario as well. The range also has adjustable lights allowing users to simulate nighttime scenarios without having to wait until its dark.

“The indoor facility allows its users to qualify any time of year and any time of day,” said Master Sgt. Wayne Muser, 114th SFS NCOIC of combat arms.



(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

Airmen from the 114th Security Forces Squadron practice firing weapons at the new indoor shooting range at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls. The range consists of 12 shooting lanes with a state-of-the-art ventilation system.

Wajer and Muser plan to hold weapons qualifications twice weekly and every primary Unit Training Assembly. This gives Airmen multiple options to get qualified.

This facility is expected to save tens of thousands of dollars annually. It is saving on travel and lodging cost because Airmen who required weapons qualifications had been traveling to Volk Field Air National Guard Base, Wis. in the past.

The facility still has to undergo final testing before it will be ready for regular use.

National Guard gives combat medic priceless training

Spc. Leannah TeKrony, a combat medic specialist with the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, demonstrates how to put on a tourniquet properly during a training exercise in Grafenwohr, Germany, Jan. 30
(Photo by Spc. Tyler O'Connell)



Story by Spc. Tyler O'Connell – 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

GRAFENWOHR, Germany – A female combat medic specialist from the small town of Estelline, South Dakota, is serving with the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion currently deployed in support of Operation Atlantic Resolve in Grafenwohr.

Spc. Leannah TeKrony has been drawn to the medical field and the military ever since she was a child.

"It started when I was about 8 years old," said TeKrony. "I had a huge respect for military personnel, and I had a doctor's outfit with a stethoscope, so I would pretend to be a military medical person."

TeKrony had her doubts about being able to join the military.

"I didn't understand when I was younger that women could be in the military at the time," said TeKrony. "As I got older, I realized there are things like the National Guard and how more military occupational specialties have opened up to women. There came a point when I realized, I can do that."

After the doubt passed, fear of talking to a recruiter started to settle in.

"It was kind of scary to me, because I knew if I went to a recruiting office that I was going to join," said TeKrony. "After talking to a recruiter a few times, I felt a deep calling and I knew it was what I wanted to do, especially if I could get into the medical field."

During initial training, TeKrony received three top awards: Iron Medic, Leadership Award and Distinguished Honor Graduate, and was selected for a significant leadership role in training.

"It's a pretty difficult course," said TeKrony. "It was the first time in my life where I was really recognized for doing what I felt was right. I was crazy humbled and honored."

TeKrony then found herself attached to the 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion, where she went on back-to-back deployments, one with each battery.

"I never wanted to just sit in South Dakota," said TeKrony. "I never want to sit in just one place, that's why these deployments have been great. I like to go places and do and see different things."

Hard times and times of learning come with deployments.

"A few things that I learned on the first rotation is that you need to use that feeling you feel when you don't know and it makes you uncomfortable," said TeKrony. "I use that to motivate myself to search for answers and to go ask people for help."

Throughout all that time as a combat medic, a Soldier gets to learn a lot of medical procedures that most civilian nurses are not allowed to do.

"I've gotten to do sutures, cyst removal, toenail removal, wart excisions on feet and fingers," said TeKrony. "It's pretty amazing because a lot of the time on the civilian side, it is only the providers that are allowed to do such things."

TeKrony has been taking college classes while deployed to further her medical career.

"I've definitely been drawn to a lot of specialties in my life," said TeKrony. "After being here, I would definitely like to work in an ER; however there is a part of me that would like to go to a more dangerous place to be able to take care of these things that happen daily, whether that be in the Army or civilian side."

TeKrony highly recommends anybody interested in entering the medical field join the National Guard as a combat medic specialist.

"It would be a great steppingstone into the medical career," said TeKrony. "Not only are you more exposed on the military side, but you also get the experience to carry into the civilian side."

SD Guardsman carries on tradition through service

Story by Sgt. Dustin Jordan – SDNG Public Affairs Office

SPEARFISH – For some, the military is a way to see the world while learning the skills to become successful in life. However, for one South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier it is about so much more. For Spc. Jacey Garcia it is about continuing a family legacy and helping the community where he grew up.

“My family has been in the military for as long as I can track back. My father was in Vietnam, my uncle and grandfather were in the Marines, and my father’s uncle was in Korea,” said Garcia. “All the way back to my great-great-grandfathers we were always warriors.”

Garcia is a member of the 155th Engineer Company in Wagner, where he serves as an interior electrician. He chose to be an electrician to gain skills to help him fix things around the house and have a skillset to put on a resume.

Outside the National Guard, he is pursuing his degree in education from Black Hills State University in Spearfish. Garcia says the military has given him the skills to be successful in his first year of school.

“My parents and the military have instilled discipline in me,” said Garcia. “When there is something to get done you have to go do it. It does no good to wait around. That has really helped me stay on top of things in college.”

Garcia is a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe. In recognition of Native American Heritage Month, he took some time to explain the importance of the observance to him and his people.

“It’s really important for people to know the history of our country. It is good to recognize our mistakes from the past - the way that Native Americans were treated was wrong,” Garcia said. “Having a month dedicated to Native American people is important because it gives us the opportunity to learn and talk about our history. It gives Native Americans a bigger stage to share our culture.”

Garcia recognizes that the National Guard allows him to be a role model and a voice for the people on the reservations. He believes that it is important to use his position in the military to help the people from where he is from.

“I think it’s important to understand that there are all types of people in the world and they all struggle in different ways,” said Garcia. “It is important for us to use our voices for good. I want to learn as much as I can and do the best possible for my community.”

Garcia chose the National Guard so that he could help the people from the community where he grew up.

“When you do something within your community, and you know every one personally, it makes it feel that much better,” said Garcia. “If the Guard does a project and helps a family out, and you know that family, it really makes you feel a sense of pride.”

The National Guard has been a benefit Garcia said. He reflected back on the types of people he has met during his time in the National Guard.

“Before I went to basic training, I was only around Native Americans and white Americans in my community. I didn’t have very many relationships with different types of people,” said Garcia. “The military has allowed me to get past mental and social barriers towards other people that I had growing up. Some of my best friends in basic training



(Photo by Sgt. Dustin Jordan)

Spc. Jacey Garcia, an electrician with the 155th Engineer Company, poses in uniform in Spearfish, Nov. 8. Garcia is a member of the Yankton Sioux Tribe and is using his experience in the South Dakota National Guard to help his community.

were people that were completely different than me.”

Garcia says helping people in his community is what he enjoys the most about being in the National Guard.

“The feeling you get and how you can make someone else feel by helping them leaves an impression on you,” said Garcia. “If I help somebody, and they really benefit, it gets me motivated to go out and do it again.”

Garcia has some advice for anyone that is thinking about joining the National Guard or the military in general, just do it!

“Don’t be that person that says I was going to join, but I just didn’t,” said Garcia. “The military will teach you much more than you ever thought it could, and you are going to get to do a lot of stuff with some awesome and amazing people.”

Life is a marathon, not a sprint

By Sgt. Fiona Berndt
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY – Most people cringe at the thought of running long distances, but the South Dakota Army National Guard's Capt. Becky Linder uses running to find peace of mind while balancing being a single-mom, a company commander, and an avid marathoner.

"I love the feeling after mile four or five, after you've gotten over the 'ugh, I don't want to go for a run' attitude," said Linder, commander of the 1742nd Transportation Company in Sioux Falls and Flandreau. "You fall into a pace or mindset and you can start thinking about life and can use it to digest thoughts."

Linder, a Rapid City native, began running in sixth grade during a hometown running camp. From there, she continued to participate in cross-country, track, and other activities throughout high school. While in school and with some persuasion from her twin sister Beth, she joined the SDARNG in 2005.

"She [Beth] has always been someone I look up to," Linder said. "She always wants more for herself – our mom was a single mom of four kids and we just had to figure it out, but there's definitely a reason that God put us on this earth together."

Linder went to Basic Combat Training between her junior and senior year of high school, and then completed her Advanced Individual Training after she graduated high school in 2006. While attending the University of South Dakota, she gave birth to her son Karter in 2007, and began to balance work, school and being a single mother, but she took the challenge head on.

Later in 2008, Linder was hired as a full-time employee with the SDARNG as a drug demand specialist with the Counter-Drug program. During the next four years, she continued to work in the Counter-Drug Office while pursuing her bachelors and masters degrees, raising her son, and completing her first deployment to Afghanistan in 2010. It was during her deployment that Linder began running long distances again.

"I would wake up early and run the half-mile track in the motor pool and as terrible as Kabul smelled, the view of the mountains were beautiful, especially if they had snow," Linder said. "It was a way to release what I needed to and get into a good mindset for what I needed to do that day."

When she returned home, she went back to her role in counter drug and finished her bachelor's degree in alcohol and drug studies with a minor in sociology. She also continued to run and began doing races.

During her deployment, Linder had heard of the National Guard Marathon Team. The team consists of 55 National Guard members from all over the country, only 15 of those are female, who participate in marathon races throughout the year. She reached out and began preparing for the tryout and her first full marathon: the Lincoln Marathon. Linder competed in 2012 and ran a 3:35:55 to make the team.

"I was so overwhelmed," Linder said. "I remember training and

wondering how I was going to feel after I completed 26.2 miles, but I set my mind right and accomplished it and was happy to come back to South Dakota and representing it in a good way."

That same year, Linder decided to take on another challenge and began Officer Candidate School. She credits her decision to become an officer to her experiences working with officers in her units and during her deployment.

"She always wants to be a better leader and seeks out those opportunities," said Lt. Col. Anthony Deiss, public affairs officer for the SDNG. "She advocated for herself to have that command

opportunity and those challenging and tough opportunities; she's dedicated and hardworking like that."

Linder has made many meaningful connections through her Guard career and especially through the National Guard Marathon Team. She has been on the team for eight years and attributes the team as a retention tool for her. She loves the fact that the group is full of like-minded individuals who like to challenge themselves and each other through the unique experience of running marathons.

Linder has ran in 37 marathons, to include two ultra-marathons of 50 miles each. Aside from her first marathon, one of her most memorable experiences was doing the Boston Marathon in 2014, a year after the Boston Marathon Bombing. Linder recalls the day as sunny and 65, and the streets of the race were filled with people.

"I sat next to a woman on the bus who was there the year prior," Linder said. "The people who couldn't finish the year before due to the bombing were invited to come back the next year to finish. This woman was a half mile from where the bombs went off and described how blessed she was to be able to go back and run it, and that really motivated me to do well that day."

Linder continues to do new marathons every year and her personal goal is to run a marathon in every state. She enjoys taking her son with her on trips so he can experience new environments as well. Linder's son Karter has completed a few 5Ks and did his first season of cross-country this year. She feels it is important for him to see that you can be a successful athlete and successful in other areas of life.

"Being a single mother, raising a son and getting an advanced degree – she always pushes herself personally and professionally," Deiss said. "She's motivated, hard-working, dedicated, and passionate about any job that she does. She's a driven Soldier."

Whether it be a marathon, a deployment, taking care of her son, or commanding her company, Capt. Becky Linder has been able to maintain resiliency through her love of running.

"Mind over matter, that came from my sixth grade running camp and it's always stuck with me," said Linder.



SD Guard members, families, employer and public servant receive awards for distinguished service

By SDNG Public Affairs Office

The South Dakota National Guard presented seven awards for distinguished service to several Soldiers, families, an employer and a public servant during its 2020 Dining-Out at the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Pierre, Feb. 6.

The annual event brings together National Guard members from across the state for a formal evening to honor the organization's history and to recognize individual achievements from the past year.

The awards presented include recognition of outstanding volunteerism by SDNG families, support by a South Dakota employer who employs a service member, lifetime service by a public servant in support of the SDNG mission, and recognition of several Soldiers for acts of heroism.

The event keynote speaker Gov. Kristi Noem and Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, SDNG adjutant general, presented the awards.

Pro Patria Award – 3M Aberdeen



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class, Heather Trobee)

3M Aberdeen receives the South Dakota Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Pro Patria Award during the SDNG Dining-Out in Pierre, Feb. 6. The Pro Patria Award is presented annually to one South Dakota employer who provides exceptional support of national defense through leadership and personnel policies that support employees serving in the National Guard or Reserve.

3M Aberdeen is awarded the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Pro Patria Award. The Pro Patria Award is presented annually to one South Dakota employer who provides exceptional support to national defense through leadership practices and personnel policies that support employees serving in the National Guard or Reserve.

3M is a global innovation company working to improve daily life for hundreds of millions of people all over the world. 3M Aberdeen is one of their world-class manufacturing facilities with a mission to be the global site of choice in the safe production of respiratory, filtration, and tape products.

Sgt. Jerrica Loeschke of the SDNG's 740th Transportation Company works as a die-cleaning specialist at 3M Aberdeen. Based on the support that she and her fellow Reserve Component service members receive

from 3M Aberdeen, she nominated her employer for the Pro Patria Award. Those policies include both pay and benefits, such as differential pay for the difference between 3M pay and military pay for up to four 40-hour weeks per year for annual training and up to 18 months for deployments outside of the U.S. Other policies range from supervisor training to hiring preference to service member and family support.

During periods of military service, 3M offers their Guard and Reserve employees, as well as their families, with options to stay connected through a "Soldier Care Checklist," and includes items from information and activities that families might take advantage of such as social gatherings, lawn care or snow removal.

3M's plant leadership also shows their support by attending mobilization and welcome home ceremonies and sending care packages overseas. When employees are deployed, 3M also hangs signs right over the employee entrance so every employee, every day, gets to see this and think about fellow co-workers that are currently deployed.

Sgt. Loeschke isn't alone in recognizing 3M Aberdeen's exceptional support either, as 23 supervisors have been nominated for, and received, the Patriot Award by their service member employee, dating back to 2011.

The Williamson Militiaman Award – Chief Warrant Officer 5 Duke Doering (Retired)



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class, Heather Trobee)

Retired CWS Duke Doering, center right, receives the Williamson Militiaman Award presented by Gov. Kristi Noem, Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, and retired Maj. Gen. Ronald Williamson. The award recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-Soldier/Airman as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard and the defense of our country.

The Williamson Militiaman Award recipient is retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 Duke Doering of Rapid City.

The Williamson Militiaman Award, established in 1987 by Maj. Gen. Ronald F. Williamson, recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-Soldier or Airman as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard and the defense of the country. Doering served the state and nation for over 44 years in military uniform. Originally enlisting into the South Dakota Army National Guard in

1955, he received an appointment as a warrant officer in 1978 and served in various positions and leadership assignments throughout his career.

Doering's duty assignments in military education, training, marksmanship, force integration, and unit mobilization and readiness provided valuable technical expertise that developed and prepared Soldiers and units for state and federal missions. Doering was also selected for a prominent leadership role as the first state command chief warrant officer for the SDARNG. He was awarded the Legion of Merit for distinguished service upon his retirement in 1999.

Additionally for the past eight years, Doering served at the SDNG's part-time state historian, completing research and cataloging of the organization's 158-year history and lineage of service. He has published over 500 history articles, sharing countless stories of the SDNG since its origins in 1862.

He has also captured nearly 90 personal interviews with key leaders of the organizations that were influential in the shaping and investment of the National Guard. Due to Doering's work, he has uncovered dozens of untold stories of SDNG service members and units, and he has brought to light their unique story as part of the SDNG history.

The Adjutant General's Family Award – The Muser Family



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class. Heather Trobee)

The Muser Family (Master Sgt. Wayne Muser and wife, Donna, and children) receives the Adjutant General's Family Award presented by Gov. Kristi Noem and Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, during the South Dakota National Guard Dining-Out in Pierre, Feb. 6. The award recognizes family members who support service members in an exemplary manner while managing family, careers, or even hardship, all the while not seeking recognition for their sacrifices.

The Adjutant General's Family Award recipient is the Muser Family. The award recognizes family members who support their service members in a truly exemplary manner while managing family, careers, or even hardship, all the while not seeking recognition for their sacrifices.

Donna and her husband, Master Sgt. Wayne Muser, are the epitome of a healthy and resilient military family. Master Sgt. Muser is a member of the 114th Security Forces Squadron has been in the military for almost 18 years.

During this time, Donna has served by his side supporting the 114th SFS Airmen and has been a key volunteer for the unit over the past three years. She and their six children have been there for Wayne and the SFS during their many deployments, helping and guiding families down the path of resiliency.

Early in 2019, Wayne deployed for six months along with other members from the 114th SFS. During this time, Donna was in constant

contact with the other 13 families of the Airmen who had deployed. She kept in constant contact with them and helped families cope with the effects of deployment.

Donna helped to ensure families felt the support from the 114th Fighter Wing and planned events for the families where they could connect and converse during the stressful time.

In addition to helping the military families during Wayne's deployment, Donna continued to homeschool their six children. She also sold their house, bought a new house on a farm and moved their entire family.

Their children have also been active in helping 114th SFS families, putting together and sending multiple care packages overseas.

The Muser Family is the pillar of excellence when it comes to their dedication and support of the service members and their families of the South Dakota National Guard.

AUSA Volunteer Family of the Year Award – The Ellwein Family



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class. Heather Trobee)

The Ellwein Family (Sgt. Maj. Dianne Ellwein and husband, retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 Fredrick Ellwein, and children) were recognized for being awarded the Association of the United States Army Volunteer Family of the Year Award for 2019. The Volunteer Family of the Year Award embodies the spirit of volunteerism and recognizes the Ellwein Family who provided exceptional service to the U.S. Army, its Soldiers and families while on active-duty assignment in U.S. Army Europe in Wiesbaden, Germany.

The South Dakota National Guard recognized the Ellwein Family for being awarded the Association of the United States Army Volunteer Family of the Year Award for 2019.

Ellwein Family members Sgt. Maj. Dianne Ellwein, retired Chief Warrant Officer 4 Fredrick Ellwein, and their children Katlin, Tyler and Austin, were presented the AUSA Volunteer Family of the Year Award for exceptionally meritorious service in direct support of Soldiers and families while serving on active duty for U.S. Army Europe in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Dianne has been a member of the SDNG for nearly the past 40 years, and Fredrick is a retired SDNG member with over 22 years of military service.

While on an active-duty tour for the past four and a half years for U.S. Army Europe, the Ellwein Family spent countless hours giving back to their community and participating in activities that promote the wellbeing of Soldiers and their families. In 2019 alone, the Ellwein Family amassed almost 4,400 hours of volunteer work in a variety of community, church and civic causes.

The Volunteer Family of the Year Award embodies the spirit of volunteerism and recognizes family members who provide exceptional service to the U.S. Army, its Soldiers and families with impressive contributions in the Wiesbaden military community.

SDNG Medal of Valor – Staff Sgt. David Fischer, Lt. Col. Phillip Stiles and Col. Joseph Jacobson

Staff Sgt. David Fischer, Lt. Col. Phillip Stiles and Col. Joseph Jacobson were each presented with the SDNG Medal of Valor for performing individual acts of heroism.

The SDNG Medal for Valor is awarded to any individual who, while a member of the SDNG, distinguishes themselves by heroism - not involving actual conflict with an armed enemy - while in the Armed Forces of the United States and performing normal civilian functions and/or duties.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class, Heather Trobee)

Staff Sgt. David Fischer is awarded the South Dakota National Guard Medal for Valor and presented to his wife, Shawn Fischer, and son, Spc. Cayden Nobel, by Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, SDNG adjutant general, and Gov. Kristi Noem, during the SDNG Dining-Out in Pierre, Feb. 6. Fisher received the Medal for Valor posthumously for exemplary heroic actions while responding to a structure fire, which took his life in Tilford, S.D., on Sept. 7, 2018.

Staff Sgt. David Fischer is awarded the SDNG Medal for Valor posthumously for exemplary heroic actions while responding to a structure fire in Tilford, South Dakota, on Sept. 7, 2018. Fischer served as a member with the Rapid City-based 82nd Civil Support Team for the SDARNG, and also served as the assistant fire chief with the Sturgis Volunteer Fire Department for 22 years. Fischer perished in the line of duty while responding to the structure fire that threatened both life and property in the Tilford community.

Upon arriving on scene, Fischer took immediate action to assess the situation while communicating with the fire station and dispatch personnel. Putting the needs of others before his own, Fischer's quick response, assessment, and prompt request of additional assets to the fire help control a quickly growing fire threatening more lives and property.

Lt. Col. Phillip Stiles is awarded the SDNG Medal for Valor for exemplary heroic actions while saving a drowning swimmer in Cancun, Mexico, on March 13, 2019. Stiles responded to a distressed swimmer in a severe hazard area about 100 meters off the beach at a local resort hotel.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class, Heather Trobee)

Lt. Col. Phillip Stiles is awarded the South Dakota National Guard Medal for Valor and presented by Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, SDNG adjutant general, and Gov. Kristi Noem, during the SDNG Dining-Out in Pierre, Feb. 6. Stiles received the Medal for Valor for exemplary heroic actions saving the life of a drowning swimmer in Cancun, Mexico, on March 13, 2019.

Without regard for his own safety, Stiles quickly grabbed a floatation device and swam through very rough water to rescue the drowning swimmer. Stiles reached the distraught and fatigued swimmer and swam with him back to shore. Stiles' bravery and quick action saved the person's life.

Col. Joe Jacobson is awarded the SDNG Medal for Valor for exemplary heroic actions assisting a man suffering from a life-threatening allergic reaction in Rapid City, South Dakota, on July 9, 2019. A technician performing services at Col. Jacobson's residence was in need of medical assistance after being stung by a yellow jacket.

On their way to the hospital, the man lost consciousness and went into anaphylactic shock. Jacobson immediately called 911 and dispatch routed them to a nearby fire station where first responders were ready to provide medical assistance. Jacobson's instinctive reactions and concern for the safety of others provided quick response during a life-threatening situation.



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class, Heather Trobee)

Col. Joe Jacobson is awarded the South Dakota National Guard Medal for Valor and presented by Maj. Gen. Jeff Marlette, SDNG adjutant general, and Gov. Kristi Noem, during the SDNG Dining-Out in Pierre, Feb. 6. Jacobson received the Medal for Valor for exemplary heroic actions assisting a man suffering from a life-threatening allergic reaction in Rapid City, S.D., on July 9, 2019.



(Photo by Sgt. Dustin Jordan)

Col. Deb Bartunek mentors Lt. Col. Tracey Graves and Maj. Mike Roselles on March 12, at Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City. Mentorship is an important part of developing Soldiers.

Mentorship, more than meets the eye

By Sgt. Dustin Jordan – SDNG Public Affairs Office

What is a Mentor? The answer to that question is very broad. A mentor can be many different things. According to Col. Deb Bartunek “Mentorship is something that happens when you develop relationships with people.”

“You can’t force yourself onto somebody if they are not willing to listen to what you have to offer,” said Bartunek. “I think mentorship is basically a relationship where people share knowledge and experiences with someone, so that they can reach their goals and if it’s beneficial to them, fantastic.”

Service members may not be clear on if they want a mentor or not. They may not even know that they have mentor. In many cases mentorship happens naturally as people work with one another.

“People don’t always seek out mentors. Sometimes, they end up developing relationships with people that they work with and end up

going to those people for support or just someone to listen to,” said Lt. Col. Tracy Graves. “When people develop a relationship they will lean on that relationship. It’s about building a support system”

Many times becoming a mentor just happens naturally during the relationship building process. Through those relationships people develop a trust that the person they have a relationship with has their best interest in mind.

“People end up developing relationships with coworkers and go to those people for support,” said Graves. “When you develop a relationship with someone, those are the people that you are going to lean on.”

Having a mentor in the military is very similar to the support system that people need in their everyday lives.

“It’s the exact same thing as having a support system. Those support systems are what help you grow personally and professionally,” said Graves. “When things are hard you can reach out to that support system and they can help you get through, and when things are good it’s nice to celebrate the achievements of the people that you have worked with.”

Mentors can act as a support system for not only someone’s

professional development, but their personal life as well.

"Life is difficult, there is no reason to go at it alone in a constant struggle. That's why you have relationships with people to help make decisions easier or give you a different perspective," said Maj. Mike Roselles. "You want to have different personalities and relationships that you can bounce different ideas off, whether it's professionally or personally. Everyone should have that support, if they don't, they need to start reaching out."

A person will not have just one mentor through their entire career. In most cases, they will have many different mentors as they progress in the organization.

"If you want to be a well-rounded individual, you need to have many different people in your life to round you out as an individual personally and professionally," Roselles said.

Mentorship is not a one way street. It can be beneficial for the mentor just as much as the mentee. It can be a formal meeting, or as informal as a group of people that sit down and exchange ideas.

"It's beneficial to listen to the different opinions advice and

experience that we all have," said Bartunek. "Mentorship goes both ways. Just because someone is a higher rank does not mean that mentorship is a one way street. I see mentorship as just relationships and building trust and sharing knowledge."

Mentoring is not something that has a specific starting or stopping point in a career. When someone decides to mentor another person it can be for the rest of their career.

It's not a specific time frame. Over the span of an entire career you work with people and have their best interest in mind and you share your knowledge with them," said Bartunek. "If you keep the knowledge that you gain to yourself you are not doing your job."

Mentorship takes place every day in the National Guard. Whether it is by first line leaders, commanders, first sergeants, or a group of colleagues sitting around together discussing work and life. It is a career long commitment to both parties personal and professional growth. No matter the circumstance it can definitely be said that mentorship is what keeps the future of our organization bright.

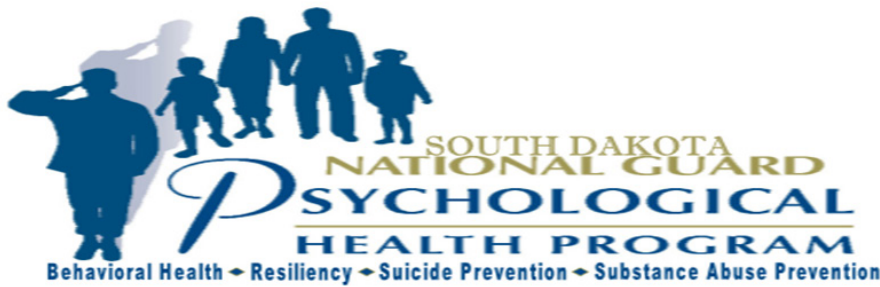
"If you want to be a well-rounded individual, you need to have many different people in your life to round you out as an individual personally and professionally."

Maj. Mike Roselles



(Photo by Sgt. Dustin Jordan)

Col. Deb Bartunek, Lt. Col. Tracey Graves and Maj. Mike Roselles on March 12, at Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City. Mentorship helps Soldiers develop both personally and professionally.



Greetings from your SDARNG Psychological Health Team! We are a very diverse, passionate and dedicated team here for one main purpose – to help Soldiers and their families be the best they can be. Our team consists of a variety of different positions – each one working in conjunction with the other to create a focused and cohesive team here to support you. This article serves an overall introduction to our program and the people here for you!

The lead of our team is Lt. Col. Amber Heinert, director of Psychological Health and Resiliency Programs, and Jeff Hurst is our psychological health coordinator. Both Heinert and Hurst are licensed clinical social workers.

Heinert oversees the direction of the Psychological Health and Resiliency Programs supporting the SDARNG and Hurst provides the majority of clinical case management for Soldiers and is the primary access point for educational briefings/trainings/presentations specific to behavioral health topics.

These topics include, but not limited to: psychological first aid, behavioral health diagnosis specific presentations, moral injury, vicarious trauma, PTSD, stress management, anger management, mobile and web resources specific to psychological health.

The behavioral health team additionally consists of the following critical personnel:

four M-day behavioral health providers and three 68Xs, or behavioral health technicians, that are embedded in units. You will learn more about each of us in the upcoming months.

The next critical component of the Psychological Health Program is the R3SP team. This is the Resiliency, Risk Reduction and Suicide Prevention Team. This team consists of four individuals that work together to bring engaging and focused training to all units across our state as well as monitor trends and provide support and resources to the behavioral health team as needed. The resiliency portion of this team is led by Maj. Sarah Jensen. The Suicide Prevention Program manager is Ms. Sue Keller. Sue joined the team this month but is no stranger to the SDARNG and comes with a wealth of experience along with dedication and passion to serve as the SPPM.

Many of you know Kristi “Cricket” Palmer – she is the state alcohol drug control officer. She is our resident expert on drug and alcohol abuse prevention and intervention. She could not do her job without Mr. Paul Brosz, the state prevention coordinator. He is the expert on trends and policies related to drugs and alcohol. He is passionate about helping individuals avoid a substance abuse problem and how to help Soldiers and/or family members get connected with resources if

struggling with substance abuse concerns.

Last but certainly not least is Sgt. Shaun Kuharski, the state drug testing coordinator. He has a very important job ensuring our force is drug free and safe and works hand in hand with Cricket and Paul to address concerns and offer training, resources, and help as concerns arise.

As a team, we are here for our Soldiers and families. Our ultimate goal is to provide compassionate, holistic care and consultation to leadership promoting Soldier care. Additionally, to provide engaging and quality training that has the ability to truly impact change in our organization and to create connections and relationships that are necessary to address stigma around behavioral health care and provide the resources and support to Soldiers and family members seeking and/or in need of appropriate services.

Lt. Col. Amber Heinert – 605-737-6582

Director of Psychological Health & Resiliency Programs

Maj. Sarah Jensen – 605-737-6948

R3SP Coordinator (Resiliency, Risk Reduction, Suicide Prevention)

Jeffrey Hurst – 605-737-6521

Psychological Health Coordinator

Kristi (Cricket) Palmer – 605-737-6973

Alcohol and Drug Control Officer

Paul Brosz – 605-737-6990

Prevention Coordinator

Sue Keller – 605-737-6954

Suicide Prevention Program Manager

Sgt. Shaun Kuharski – 605-737-6566

Drug Testing Coordinator

SDNG Person of Resilience Award: Sgt. 1st Class Vanderwerff



The Psychological Health team was honored to award Sgt. 1st Class Amber Vanderwerff the first ever South Dakota National Guard Person of Resilience Award. Vanderwerff was presented with her award at the 740th Christmas Party on Dec. 13. The same evening she was also honored with a promotion from staff sergeant to sergeant first class.

The award nomination was submitted by a fellow Soldier in her unit. The award criteria states they are a person who has not let adversity define them. They found resilience by moving towards a goal beyond themselves, transcending pain and grief by

perceiving bad times as a temporary state of affairs. They showed strength of inner self and define themselves as capable and competent. Vanderwerff met all these criteria and more!

If you know of someone who deserves recognition please email Maj. Sarah Jensen or look on the Psychological Health Programs share point site located under the G1. There are three different awards available, the Innovation Award, the Above and Beyond Award and the Person of Resilience Award. Full descriptions of each award are located with the nomination forms.

Certain peace in uncertain times

By Chaplain, David Stimes – Joint Force Headquarters

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” These are powerful words Jesus left with his disciples to give them comfort in a confusing time. Sound familiar? We are certainly experiencing a confusing and troubling time, unlike most of us have ever experienced before. Are we turning to God? To His Word? Believing it? Finding peace in the storm? Or are we stuffing the pantry with pasta and rice, Tylenol and toilet paper, ground beef and soup, even frozen pizza. Yes, that isle was empty at Walmart too. Who knows where we will be in this calamity by the time this article is published. Our hope is that we will be regaining our normal. But maybe our normal isn't where God wants us to be. People are turning back to God in this difficult time. Attending more virtual worship services and passing on more spiritual messages on social media. Isn't that a good thing? “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).



What a great time to turn to the Word and strengthen our faith. It is normal for anxiety to rear its head in uncertainty, but there is no better time to trust and obey, and spend time calming that anxiety with the timeless and proven words of our Lord. Nothing else has the power. Other things can be temporarily helpful, but nothing else is eternal (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). Turn to a Christian radio station, play praise and worship music, spend more time in prayer, in the Word, leave your Bible open next to your bed and see if you sleep more peacefully in the comfort and focus of His glorious presence. Enjoy his presents too. Your relationship with the Lord, your family, friends, neighbors, church family, co-workers, and your abundance. Every good and perfect gift is from Him (James 1:17).

When we turn to our faith, we can know He has purpose in this (James 1:2-12). Trust “Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will” (Ephesians 1:11). Focus on seeking what He would have you learn about yourself and others. How He is shaping and molding you, perhaps pruning you (John 15:1-8), refining you into a better image of Jesus through this experience. We tend to grow the most in trials, not the good times when we can so easily lose our focus on Him. Focus on what is really important as well. Isn't it sweet to spend more time with family, even tackling adversity together, teaching and learning from one another?

Why is it so important to find peace in trials? We might be the only Bible others are reading. We can demonstrate what His peace does in us and through us. Our obedience and faith lead to a peace that will seem unusual to others. And when they ask, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). But I can't! Sure you can. Just be yourself and share your own story. You have all you need (2 Peter 1:3). You don't need a Masters in Theology. Look at the prayer of Peter as he began sinking because he took His eyes off the Lord, “Lord, save me” (Matthew 14:30). Not exactly a theological treatise, yet absolutely effective in securing the immediate help of Jesus.

Where do you stand today? In peace (Philippians 4:4-7) and trust (Psalm 20:7-8; Proverbs 3:5-6; Romans 9:33), or stuffing the pantry with a little more (Luke 12:16-21).

How do you want to remember this time when you reflect back in the future? God is good...all the time...His grace is sufficient! May the Lord turn His face toward you and give you peace! Amen.

Importance of mentorship

By Sgt. 1st Class Brain Voight – 2020 SDARNG NCO of the Year

Mentorship is often overlooked as a key component of developing a Soldier, a person, and a valuable member of society. Mentorship allows knowledge, skills, and wisdom to pass from one generation to another, guiding people to do their jobs, be better people, and thrive in the world. The most common example is a parent guiding his or her child to better themselves and the world. If mentors share their institutional knowledge, field craft, and care for Soldiers, the South Dakota National Guard will continue to be a successful and resourceful enterprise.

As important as mentorship is, it is sometimes undervalued. Not keeping our peers and subordinates up to date with the knowledge one has is detrimental to the Army. Without mentorship, we fail to preserve field craft that has taken generations to build. Without it, we fail to instill the values and work ethic of the Army. Without it, we fail to learn from one another. Mentorship is more important today than ever. As technologically interconnected as the world is, it is easy to get separated from those who are right beside us. Ensuring our peers and subordinates interact with an effective mentor who cares about Soldiers as people is the first step in connecting us to one another.



Mentorship should not be a job, but an opportunity for two people or groups to expand their knowledge, abilities and emotional intelligence. In the military some tend to think of mentorship flowing from a person of higher rank to one of lower rank. The Army generally approaches mentorship as wisdom handed down to young Soldiers as experienced Soldiers pass on general knowledge, field craft, a fighting spirit, and the Warrior Ethos. This isn't always the case. Less experienced Soldiers help their superiors understand their world and how to lead a younger generation. In a mentorship relationship everyone wins. Typically both the mentor and mentee come out more productive, happier, and healthier.

I have had countless mentors in my career, but Sgt. 1st Class Sam Schaefer immediately comes to mind. As my superior and now as a peer, he has shown me what a mentoring relationship should look like. He's exemplified how to care for my Soldiers and my family while also demonstrating substantial field craft, helping me be a better NCO and mentor. At the same time, we are both able to view the world through different lenses and have a more tolerant mindset. I would not be the person or NCO I am today without his mentorship. I am a mentor; we all are, even if we are not aware of it. Taking care of my Soldiers, empathizing, discussing ways of improving processes, learning from those younger than myself, and providing 17 years of institutional knowledge to my Soldiers is an important and satisfying endeavor I engage in daily. We sometimes overlook our mentoring relationships. Acknowledging these relationships is an important, influential process that needs to be reflected on and actively developed in all aspects of our lives.