

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: pao@sd.ngb.army.mil

Web: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil>

www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard

www.flickr.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard



September 27, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Annual Veterans Honor March held in Black Hills

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota National Guard’s Enlisted Association hosted its 8th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March on Saturday, Sept. 24, in the Northern Black Hills.

More than 180 marchers participated in this year’s 26.2 mile march, which pays tribute to the many sacrifices made by this nation’s veterans.

“Our goal here is to honor our veterans in South Dakota, as well as march in memory of all the Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines throughout the years that have scarified so much for us,” said Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Lamp, Honor March coordinator.

Many of this year’s marchers included members of the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard.

“We hold our veterans high and we know how important they are to us and the freedoms that we have,” said Army Guard Staff Sgt. Sam Schaefer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion of Watertown. “It’s important to host events like this where people can come out and show their patronage and support for the veterans.”

“This is the biggest show of support that we have for our veterans,” said Air Guard Senior Master Sgt. Chad Oxender, 114th Security Forces Squadron of Sioux Falls, who has participated in five Honor Marches. “I would come out and participate even if I couldn’t march – just to show my support.”

Marchers started on the Mickelson Trail at the Rochford trailhead and finished at the Deadwood Fairgrounds. The march can take between five and eight hours to complete for the average person; however for marathon runners like Army Guard Sgt. 1st Class Michael Streff, 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute), he finished first in just 3 hours and 2 minutes.

“I do train for these types of events, but you don’t have to be a marathon runner to compete in something like this,” said Streff, of Spearfish. “It’s just great to see people come out and want to participate.”

Many participants not only ran for veterans of past wars, but also current ones.

“I’m running for those that have been deployed and who are currently deployed,” said Army Guard Master Sgt. Todd Grabow, Joint Force Headquarters of Rapid City. “What they are doing is a lot harder than what we did today, and it’s the least we can do to show our support.”

“Most of the people that marched are current veterans themselves from Iraq and Afghanistan, so hopefully in 20 years someone will be marching for them,” said Lamp.

The Honor March, which is a marathon's length, was open to all military service members and the civilian public, but you didn't have to be a marathon runner to participate. There was also a half marathon that marchers could partake in.

"You see the people who come out here to do this march and it's not your everyday marathoner," said Army Guard Staff Sgt. Chad Sietsema, Detachment 1, 740th Transportation Company of Aberdeen. "They are everyday people with a lot of patriotism and you can see the pride in them for doing it."

Participants competed as individuals or in five-member teams and completed the course by walking, running or marching.

For Sietsema, the march was also about team building. He, along with four other members, competed in the military team category to develop unit cohesion.

"It's a team building thing for us," said Sietsema, a second-year participant in the march. "We have a few new guys this year and are working toward building up our team."

Fellow team member and first-year marcher Spc. Derek Dorow said finishing the march gave him more than a sense of accomplishment.

"Accomplishment is an understatement," he said of finishing the march. "After a few miles you feel like you want to quit, but then time goes by and so does mile 10. You realize you've really gone somewhere, and before you know it you're down to the last mile and everyone is cheering you on as you finish.

"We started as a team, everyone stuck together, and we finished together," continued Dorow. "It's the whole camaraderie of it. It's an experience that's going to be repeated in my book."

Camaraderie is not only felt among team members, but between military services.

"It great to see the Army and Air Guard come together for this event," said Oxender. "The camaraderie, the unit cohesion is built that much bigger within our organization and throughout the state."

While the Honor March is held primarily to pay tribute to our nation's veterans, funds raised from the event go on to support veterans in other ways.

"We do raise some funds with the Veterans March," said Lamp. "One of the things we are raising the money for this year is to send five veterans to Pearl Harbor in Hawaii in December.

"We are still in the newer stages of the march, so we don't make a lot of money – just enough to increase what we can provide for the next year. Eventually, we hope to make some more money so we can offer some scholarships and send some veterans to school and those sorts of things.

"However, in the end, it's all about getting out and showing support for our veterans," ended Lamp.

-30-

PHOTOS: High-resolution photos for this release are available upon request or at: www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard



110924-A-9937D-002: Participants of the 8th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March take off from the start line Sept. 24, 2011, near Rochford, S.D., as they embark on the 26.2 mile march along the Mickelson Trail toward the finish line in Deadwood. More than 180 service members and civilians entered this year's march, which pays tribute to the many sacrifices made by this nation's veterans. (SDNG photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss) (RELEASED)



110921-A-9937D-069: Members of the Joint Force Headquarters team march along the Mickelson Trail while participating in the 8th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March Sept. 24, 2011, in the Black Hills of South Dakota. JFHQ members, from left, Master Sgt. Todd Grabow, Warrant Officer Chad Vickers, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Warren Hoffman, Maj. Brendan Murphy and Sgt. 1st Class Mike Strang placed first in the military team category. (SDNG photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss) (RELEASED)



110921-A-9937D-019: Staff Sgt. Sam Schaefer, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion of Watertown, takes a short breather while marching during the 8th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March Sept. 24, 2011, in the Black Hills of South Dakota. (SDNG photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss) (RELEASED)



110921-A-9937D-079: Members of the Warrant Officer team cross the finish line of the 8th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March Sept. 24, 2011, in Deadwood, S.D., as they complete the 26.2 mile march along the Mickelson Trail. More than 180 service members and civilians entered this year's march, which pays tribute to the many sacrifices made by this nation's veterans. (SDNG photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss) (RELEASED)



110921-A-9937D-079: From left, Sgt. Rebecca Linder, Sgt. 1st Class Rachel Hangman and Staff Sgt. Chasity Oswald, all of Sioux Falls, race toward a rest stop as their teammates trail in the distance during the 8th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March Sept. 24, 2011, in the Black Hills of South Dakota. (SDNG photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss) (RELEASED)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Benjamin Lamp at (605) 357-2939, or Maj. Brendan Murphy at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail brendan.murphy1@us.army.mil.