

**Congratulations SDDOT Staff!
Together, We Earned Performance
Excellence Network (PEN) Highest Honors!**



Use this [Link](#) to Secretary Jundt’s acceptance speech. Find our 2025 PEN application, final feedback report, and additional photos/videos on the Intranet at <https://intranetdot.sd.gov/stratplan.aspx>.



Congratulations 2026 Graduates



Congratulation to all staff celebrating a graduation milestone! Please view our annual slideshow [here](#) or simply click on the graphic. Find photos and graduate information on pages 20-22 in this newsletter.

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The Secretary's Corner



Recognition Rooted in Continuous Improvement

At SDDOT, our commitment to delivering safe, efficient, and innovative public transportation requires more than day-to-day excellence—it requires continuous reflection, alignment, and improvement. That is why participation in the Performance Excellence Network (PEN) brings meaningful value.

The true value of participating in the PEN assessment process is not the score or recognition—it's embracing a disciplined, proven approach to becoming a more aligned, innovative, and high-performing organization to deliver better results for South Dakotans.

Seeing Ourselves Clearly: The PEN assessment provides an objective, outside perspective on how we operate. It highlights our strengths—areas where we are already excelling—and identifies opportunities where we can improve. This insight allows us to move beyond assumptions and focus on what matters most, using a data-driven approach to guide decisions and prioritize efforts.

Aligning Around What Matters Most: SDDOT is a large, complex organization with teams working across the state. The assessment process helps ensure that our work—across divisions and programs—is aligned with our strategic goals. By looking at leadership, strategy, workforce, operations, and results as one connected system, we strengthen coordination and create greater clarity in how our daily work contributes to our mission.

Building a Culture of Continuous Improvement: Participation in PEN is not a one-time exercise. It's part of an ongoing cycle of learning, improving, and growing. The process encourages us to regularly evaluate how we're doing, measure progress over time, and make meaningful adjustments. We're building **a culture where continuous improvement becomes part of how we work**—not just something we talk about.

Learning from Proven Best Practices: Through the PEN framework, SDDOT gains access to nationally recognized best practices used by high-performing organizations. This allows us to benchmark our efforts, learn from others, and bring new ideas into our work—helping us innovate more effectively and avoid reinventing the wheel.

Engaging Our Workforce: One of the most valuable aspects of the assessment process is the opportunity for employee involvement. Staff across the organization contribute insights, share experiences, and help identify improvements. This not only strengthens the quality of the assessment but also builds a sense of ownership and engagement in shaping SDDOT's future.

Delivering Better Results for South Dakotans: Ultimately, everything we do comes back to serving others. By strengthening our processes, improving alignment, and fostering a culture of excellence, we are better positioned to deliver on our mission to enhance safety, efficiency, and reliability across South Dakota's transportation system for our customers.

SDDOT Earns Performance Excellence Network (PEN) Highest Honor

The Performance Excellence Network (PEN), a regional Baldrige-based program serving South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota, recognized 18 recipients across multiple organizations with 2025 Performance Excellence Awards at the annual conference held May 7-8, 2026. **SDDOT was one of the recipients; and the only organization to earn the Excellence Award designation – the highest recognition level awarded by PEN.**

“Our work toward continuous improvement doesn’t stop with the distinguished honor of being recognized at the Excellence Award level,” said **Joel Jundt, Transportation Secretary**. “Participating in the PEN assessment process over the past 13 years has given us the opportunity to step back and take an objective look at how we operate – understanding where we excel and where we can improve. That outside perspective helps us focus on what truly matters and to make data-driven decisions that strengthen our organization.”

The Excellence Award is based on the Baldrige Framework and reflects a rigorous, independent evaluation of an organization’s leadership, strategy, customers, measurement and knowledge management, workforce, and operations. The process includes an in-depth review by trained examiners and detailed feedback to help organizations strengthen and improve results over time.

“This year’s recognition includes a rare Excellence-level award, the highest level in the program, awarded for the first time since 2018,” said **Amy Czechowicz, President and CEO of the Performance Excellence Network**. “The South Dakota Department of Transportation has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to continuous process improvement and performance excellence throughout its journey and is very deserving of earning the Excellence Award honor.”



Craig Smith, Director of Operations, led a panel entitled Resilience: Building and Sustaining Excellence. Each panelist explored their organization's Baldrige journey.

Consultant **Paul Grizzell (on left)** has helped to guide SDDOT through the PEN journey.



Representing SDDOT at the PEN Excellence Award presentation were **Julie Stevenson, Strategic Communications Coordinator; Jason Humphrey, Pierre Region Engineer; Craig Smith, Director of Operations; and SDDOT Secretary Joel Jundt.**



Safety Matters

Recognition vs. Incentive

By: **Chuck Layton, Safety Manager**

In our continuation of our safety goals, there is and always has been an on-going debate about whether incentive awards should or should not be used in a safety program. My approach addresses “quality-of-life” issues and how an injury may adversely affect that quality for an employee.

If an employee does not want to be safe for his own quality of life, a few bucks or a prize is not going to get his or her attention, either. Safety awards can get very expensive and soon are viewed as “entitlements” by some. It doesn’t necessarily change behavior or improve performance; it simply rewards the attainment of a goal that could have as easily been attained by being lucky versus doing the task correctly.

Rewarding an employee through recognition of good performance, however, is different. I believe this is a more productive way **to promote pro-active performance and supports an on-going review of all processes, procedures, and practices. By showing appreciation for a job well done this allows recognition to occur on measurable improvements rather than luck. It keeps the focus on safe performance rather than “not getting hurt.”**

Recognition can occur in a variety of ways, so a manager stays away from the “entitlement” rut. It also encourages optimal performance in doing the task correctly rather than on maximum performance that could inherently promote shortcuts or other risk-taking. I believe we currently have a good pathway with recognition at this point; with some adjustments it can be improved and sustained and not be pushed aside when it becomes stale.

STOP-LOOK-ANALYZE-MANAGE (SLAM)

With that said; great job team with our **SLAMs** this month team! We are building a folder in the safety page where we will house these hazard analysis for reference and use.

Our **Safety Values** must align with: *“Better Lives through Better Transportation”*



Finance Corner FY2026 YEAR-END

FY2026 year-end is right around the corner.

Please try to get any outstanding invoices paid:

- Employee Travel Vouchers
- Direct Vouchers
- Negotiated Contract Payments
- CMP Payments
- Pcard Statements
- Etc.

Please reach out to the Central Finance Office (**Brandy Hansen or Patricia Devitt**) with any questions.

A year-end memo will be emailed out soon with all the deadline dates & times. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Central Finance office. Contact information can be found on the DOT intranet at: <https://intranetdot.sd.gov/docs/fin/FinanceContacts.pdf>



May Mentoring Minute: Make Time for Mentoring!

By: Brad Norrid and Matt Dorfschmidt

Mentoring Still Going Strong . . . 20 Years

Believe it or not, our Mentoring Program has been running for nearly 20 years! Every year it gets better, and that's because of YOU. Thank you for helping make this program such a success.

A New Season Is Beginning!

It's that time of year again! The days are getting longer, the weather is getting warmer, and the bright orange cones are popping up along our state highways and Interstates. That can only mean one thing: our Mentoring Program is kicking off another great season.

Last month, we held an amazing speed mentoring event. **More than 50 mentors and 50 mentees signed up — the largest group we've ever had.** Thank you to the team who organized it. The event ran smoothly and set a great tone for the rest of the year.

After Speed Mentoring, the mentoring committee matched up a total of 48 mentoring pairs. This is officially the largest group we have had in the Mentoring program. Kudos to the committee and the kick-off team for a great event to get things started.

Not in the Program? You Still Matter!

Even if you or your team members aren't enrolled this year, you still play an important role. Everyone in the Department helps others in some way — officially or not. That's one of our greatest strengths at SDDOT.

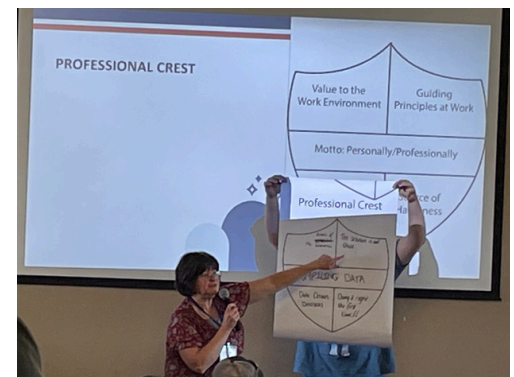
People across the department often share tips on how tasks work in different regions, help coworkers understand the system better, or simply answer questions about who to contact. All of this is a form of mentoring.

Our mentors and mentees will be using the entire SDDOT as a resource. Some mentees want to learn new skills. Others want to meet people, build relationships, and see how their work fits into the bigger picture.

Whether you think of yourself as a tiny gear in a huge machine or not, your help keeps everything running smoothly. When someone asks for guidance — what we call "situational mentoring" — jump in if you can. Your support keeps our program strong.

Upcoming Events:

The committee is finalizing plans for our first events in July, which will include several construction tours across the state. Because we have a record number of participants this year, we're adding a third tour location so everyone can experience the SDDOT's construction work. We will send out the exact dates soon for the tours in Rapid City, Pierre, and Sioux Falls. Please keep an eye on your email over the next few weeks for more details.



Howard Aviation and the Heart of Winner Regional Airport

By: Brock Antijunti (Airport Construction Specialist, Pierre)

A story highlighting Dave and Tessa Howard and their passion, partnership, and a growing aviation community in south-central South Dakota.

Howard Aviation, L.L.C. has become one of the most influential aviation service providers in south-central South Dakota, but its roots trace back to 1997, when Dave Howard first began flight instructing. What started as one pilot sharing his passion for aviation has grown into a thriving business, a community anchor, and a key part of the Winner Regional Airport's success.



A Partnership Built Through Aviation

Aviation didn't just shape Dave's career — it shaped his life. In 2008, a shared love of flying brought him together with Tessa. From 2008 to 2010, Dave and Tessa attended Lake Area Technical Institute – Watertown, SD, where they earned their Airframe and Powerplant (A&P) certificates. This technical training laid the groundwork for the business they would soon build together.

Howard Aviation expanded in 2011 with the purchase of a repair station from Vermillion Flying Service, allowing them to offer transponder certifications and full aircraft maintenance. In 2014, both earned their Inspection Authorizations, married that July, and by December had moved to Winner to manage the Winner Regional Airport while growing their business.

Leadership Beyond the Airport

Today, Dave and Tessa's influence extends across the state. While Dave serves as a South Dakota Aeronautics Commissioner, Tessa is the Chief Aircraft Inspector for Howard Aviation and the current Airport Manager. Their leadership reflects their commitment to strengthening aviation services for rural communities.

Winner Regional Airport: A Growing Hub

Under their management, Winner Regional Airport has become an active, diverse facility supporting agriculture, business, emergency medical services, and military operations. Projected 2025 activity includes:

- Over 4,500 total operations
- 300+ agricultural flights
- 600+ hunting-related flights
- 333 UPS flights
- 485 medevac flights, with Guardian Flight based onsite
- 62 flights bringing specialty doctors to the community
- Multiple military operations, often Blackhawk helicopters

These numbers underscore the airport's importance as a lifeline for the region — connecting residents to medical care, supporting local businesses, and providing critical services year-round.

A Lasting Impact

Nearly three decades after Dave first began instructing, Howard Aviation continues to grow. Through aircraft maintenance, airport management, and statewide aviation leadership, Dave and Tessa have built more than a business — they've strengthened aviation infrastructure for an entire region and their impact will be felt for many years to come.

Newsletter throwback - March 1972

In March 1972, South Dakota state employees, including the Highway Department, were gearing up for a major shift from monthly to bi-weekly paychecks, a move aimed at creating steadier budgeting and smoother payroll processing.

That same year, highway employees across the state took part in extensive first-aid training, strengthening on-the-job and off-the-job emergency response skills. A quick snapshot of how our workforce was evolving more than five decades ago!

Two-Week Paychecks Start in July

Half as much twice as often may be what is in store for State employees if plans for revolutionizing the payroll system are implemented this year.

The 1972 Legislature, by changing the pay laws, granted authority to the Board of Finance to change the frequency of paydays if it desires. It does. The Board approved two-week pay periods March 30.

If that plan is followed, a payroll computer will deal out paychecks for alternating Fridays, beginning July 28. The amounts will be only half as large as your once-a-month check, but you will get two checks -- and sometimes three -- during a month.

Here's how the system would work, assuming it goes into effect on July 1. Your first paycheck -- for two weeks' work -- would reach you on July 28. Afterwards, you would be paid on alternating Fridays, regardless of the date. This year paychecks would arrive on July 28, Aug. 11 and 25, Sept. 8 and 22, Oct. 6 and 20, Nov. 3 and 17, Dec. 1, 15 and 29. During a full year, there would be two months in which you would have three paydays.

Regular deductions for withholding tax, Social Security, health insurance and retirement would be deducted equally from the paychecks you receive each month. There is also talk of a special plan which would automatically deposit your check for you (if you desire) at any participating bank.

Both advantages and disadvantages are evident in the plan. Listed are some of the cons:

*Possible stress on the pocketbook when the program is initiated because of the timing. Let's say Jerry has a batch of heavy payments due on the 5th of the month. If he hasn't planned ahead, he could be in trouble because his only income for the entire month of July

would be his half-size check on the 28th.

*Because the system is geared to Fridays rather than dates, paydays can drift to almost any day of the month.

*Lag in payments. Due to the lead time for processing the payroll, you will have 10 days "on the books" every payday. Your Aug. 25 paycheck, for instance, would pay you for work accomplished between July 31 and Aug. 11.

Those who formulated the biweekly pay plan say any drawbacks will be short-term. As soon as employees become accustomed to receiving two checks per month, they claim,

no one will be able to talk them into going back to the check-a-month system. The two-week plan does offer the employee these advantages:

*The plan would spread pay throughout the month more evenly, giving employees more money to work with on any given day. This averaging would help eliminate the cycles of fat billfolds at the beginning of the month and skinny ones at the end.

*Biweekly paydays would speed up the first check to many new employees who now wait 30-45 days without pay. Employees leaving the State service similarly would have less

time to wait for their money. *Another spin-off would be relieved shopping pressure in cities like Pierre where municipal dollar draughts and dollar floods occur during each government pay cycle.

State Payroll Director Dale Bisson sees big administrative advantages in paying every two weeks. He said uniform 80 hour pay periods, combined regular and supplemental payrolls, and fewer computer updates would streamline payroll processing. He said the cumulative affect would be a system which is cheaper to operate -- even though it would be cranking out twice as many paychecks per month.

Employees Learn First Aid Techniques For Emergencies

A program that could prevent or help reduce death and injury due to severe auto accidents in South Dakota is underway in the Department.

Cam Kuehl, training director, said 266 employees from Pierre, Mitchell and Rapid City have completed the 22-hour first aid program. The training stresses emergency medical aid, immediate assistance to injured personnel and preparation in

reporting from the scene. Kuehl said the course leaves Highway employees as well trained as the state's ambulance drivers.

"The frequency and severity of accidents has decreased considerably since personnel in the Rapid City district were trained in the emergency medical course a year ago," said Highway Director Jack Allmon. "People there have used their

training both on and off the job for every type of accident," he continued. "They have removed foreign substances from eyes, splinted legs and applied lifesaving measures to auto accident victims."

Personnel are trained to extract victims from automobiles, mouth to mouth resuscitation, heart massage, control of bleeding and restoring victim's breathing.

COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Department of Highways
Pierre, South Dakota 57501

RETURN REQUESTED

BULK RATE PERMIT NO. 165 Pierre, S. Dak.



VOLUME V SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS NUMBER 3

Bison Update

The timeline for "go live" has been re-baselined with a new date of July 2027.

Updated Project Schedule:

- Finalization of BISON Design Elements: Now through June
- System Integration Testing (SIT): Begins mid-July
- User Acceptance Testing (UAT): Tentatively scheduled for January–March 2027
- End User Training (EUT): Tentatively scheduled for May–June 2027
- Go-Live: July 2027

Current efforts are focused on refining the BISON solution in key areas such as Project Portfolio Management (PPM), Chart of Accounts / General Ledger / Budgetary Control, and Accounts Receivable.



BISON KDSR (Know, Do, Share, Report Back)

The monthly KDSR is your go-to resource to stay informed about BISON. We encourage you to review it, share it, and post it around the office.

April 2026 KDSR

If you have questions or feedback, reach out to the BISON team at BISON@state.sd.us.

2026 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Meeting

By: Levi Briggs, STIP Coordinator

The SDDOT conducted its annual Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) programming meeting for the **Tentative 2027–2030 STIP** on April 28–29, 2026.

The meeting brought together program managers, region staff, and central office personnel to review proposed project updates, discuss programming priorities, and confirm schedules for inclusion in the upcoming four-year program (Construction STIP) in addition to years 5 through 8 (Developmental STIP). Discussion focused on maintaining program balance, addressing emerging needs, and preparing for subsequent public involvement and approval milestones.

Funding levels for the **Tentative 2027–2030 STIP** were developed based on allocations provided under the current federal surface transportation authorization, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

IIJA remains in effect through Sept. 30, 2026, and continues to guide expected funding availability for federal-aid highway programs. During the meeting, staff reviewed program assumptions, confirmed anticipated apportionment levels, and evaluated potential adjustments needed to maintain fiscal constraint through the full four-year STIP window.



Save the Dates:

SDDOT will provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about statewide project information for the **Tentative 2027-2030 STIP**.

SDDOT will offer various engagement options once again this year. The interactive STIP virtual room has proven to be a great resource for the public to easily access data at their convenience.

Meetings are scheduled for the following dates . . .

- **Tuesday, July 14, 2026, at 2 p.m. CT / 1 p.m. MT**
- **Thursday, July 16, 2026, at 7 p.m. CT / 6 p.m. MT**

The public may participate in the meetings via Zoom or join SDDOT staff at a physical location for the virtual STIP presentation. The presentation will be hosted at four locations: the three SDDOT region offices in Rapid City, Aberdeen, and Mitchell, as well as at the Becker Hansen Building in the Pierre.

Time to Move to ARC GIS Pro 3.7

ArcMap has officially reached the end of its life. Esri has retired it, which means no more updates or support, and BIT will be shutting down ArcMap servers in June. So, it's a great time to move to ArcGIS Pro 3.7.



ArcGIS Pro is faster, more modern, and plays much better with the rest of the ArcGIS ecosystem. The big change you need to know about: Pro now uses **named user licenses**.

If you currently use GIS on an iPad collecting signs or culverts in Field Maps, nothing is changing for you. ArcGIS Pro is a desktop application and is separate from Field Maps, so your mobile workflows will remain the same.

If you are a current ArcGIS Pro user, or you're moving from ArcMap, please fill out the survey below to get a named user license assigned to you. You won't be able to sign in without one, so don't hesitate to reach out to the DOT GIS Team with questions. Thanks for helping make this a smooth transition!

[Click here for the survey.](#)



May Watercooler

Your Monthly Update in Under Three Minutes!

State of South Dakota
BUREAU OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION

May Watercooler

This month's topics:

1. Open Enrollment Ends Friday, May 15th. Log in Now!
2. It's CPC Check-In Time!
3. Lyra Health Webinar: Suicide Prevention in the Workplace

Click here to watch! ↓

May topics include:

1. Open Enrollment
2. It's CPC Check-In Time!
3. Lyra Health Webinar: Suicide Prevention in the Workplace

Click the graphic to watch on [YouTube!](#)

Helpful Links:

- LiveWellSD Portal: <https://livewellsd.sd.gov/>
- Preventive Care Resources: https://www.sd.gov/bhra?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0044565
- WEX: <https://wexinc.com/>
- Employee Space: <https://bfm.sd.gov/hr/es.aspx>
- Register for Power Up: <https://sdlearn.csod.com/ui/lms-learn...>

Hall of Honor Nomination Information

The Hall of Honor nomination deadline is Friday, May 22, 2026, at 5 p.m. (CT).

Below are direct links to the nomination form and the complete list of inductees.

[2026 Transportation Hall of Honor Nomination Form](#)

[Hall of Honor Inductee List](#)



**SOUTH DAKOTA TRANSPORTATION
HALL OF HONOR COMMITTEE
ACCEPTING 2026 NOMINATIONS**



Contributions to consider when submitting a nomination are technological innovations, political activity, legislative accomplishments, creativity, time and cost saving initiatives, and economic impact on behalf of public transportation efforts within the state.

Anyone is welcome to submit a Transportation Hall of Honor nomination.

Nomination forms are available on the South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT) website at <https://dot.sd.gov> or by contacting Kari Kroll at 605-773-5105 or kari.kroll@state.sd.us.



Picture the SDDOT
Photo Contest

 **SCAN ME!** 

SD DOT

2nd Annual "Picture the SDDOT" Photo Contest

Picture the SDDOT submission deadline is Friday, Nov. 13, 2026. The contest features photos submitted by and voted upon by SDDOT staff. Submit photos [here](#) or scan the QR Code! Contest information is also available on the Intranet at ["Picture the SDDOT"](#).



Click on the graphic to access the nomination form. The [Impact Award Informational Flyer](#) provides additional details too.

Please take the time to recognize the hard work of your co-workers!



2026 IMPACT AWARDS

Submit a nomination for a team or an individual who has gone above and beyond in demonstrating the Department's mission and vision!



Reminder: We encourage continued recognition of individual and team efforts through the SDDOT KUDOS Board! It's a great way to highlight and appreciate the contributions of individual employees all year long! The Kudos Board can be found on the homepage of the Intranet.

Submit your nominations by Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2026 for consideration!

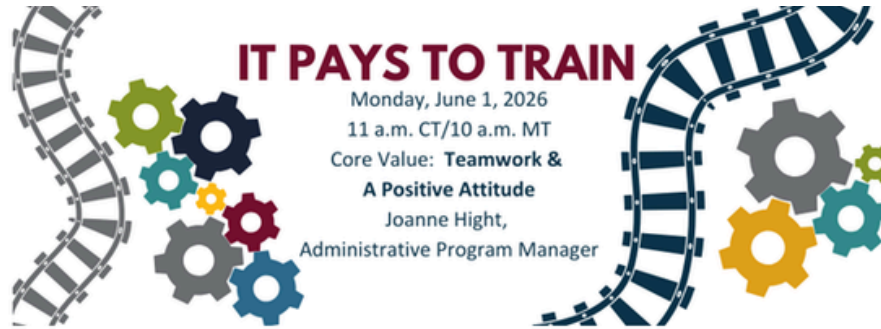


Training & Development Opportunities

Learn ~ Engage ~ Improve

Simplified coding is available for ALL training courses!

Use function 1175; no AFE needed!



Put us on your calendar! Ask DOTLMS@state.sd.us for a meeting invite!

(All trainings below are CT)

Tuesday, June 2, 2026 2 p.m. – 3 p.m.

TLN: Advanced Air Mobility to Enhance Rural Logistics - Zoom

Tuesday, Sept. 22, 2026 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

NHI 135048 Countermeasure Design for Bridge Scour & Stream Instability - Pierre

SDDOT Project Management Series NEW! at SDLearn

SDDOT Change Management

SDDOT Construction Manual Overview

Online SDLearn

Parson's iNET ATMS

Online SDLearn

Primavera Training Playlist at SDLearn:

- Oracle Primavera Cloud Training Manual
- Primavera Cloud – My Activities
- Getting Started in Oracle Primavera Cloud
- Navigating in Oracle Primavera Cloud
- Primavera Cloud – Working with Projects
- Primavera Cloud – Working with Activities
- Primavera Cloud – Working with Programs

June is Safety Awareness Month!

Find classes online at SDLearn:

- Go Sun Smart at Work
- Heat Stress Safety
- Slips, Trips, and Falls in Office Environment
- Spotter Safety in the Workplace
- How to Use a Chainsaw Safely

Click here to [Join the Microsoft Teams Meeting](#). Learn more at <https://sdlearn.csod.com/ui/lms-learner-playlist/PlaylistDetails?playlistId=fb2c37eb-0fa8-43f8-9812-4d74a73c1d40>.



Click on the SDLearn graphic or use this link to sign in: [SDLearn](#)

Search by the **complete course name** listed.

SDDOT 2026 Aeronautics Art Contest Winners

The 2026 South Dakota Aviation Art Contest winners have been selected and celebrated this spring. Students across the state created artwork inspired by this year’s theme, **“Fly to Save Lives,”** highlighting the many ways aviation supports and protects communities. Top entries are recognized at the SD Airports Conference, featured in the South Dakota Pilots Association newsletter, and showcased online. Thank you to all the students and educators who helped make this year’s contest take flight.

Group 1 - Ages 6-9 (24 entries)

1st Place - Madysen, age 6 – Ft. Pierre



2nd Place – Thea, age 9 – Ft. Pierre



3rd place – Matias, age 7 – Pierre



Group 2 - Ages 10-13 (48 entries)

1st Place - Brielle, age 12 – Murdo



2nd Place – Reagan, age 12 – Murdo



3rd Place – Sage, age 13 – New Underwood



Group 3 - Ages 14-17 (20 entries)

1st Place - Anastelle, age 14 –
New Underwood



2nd Place - Jesse, age 15 – Murdo



3rd Place - Brook, age 14 – New Underwood



SDDOT 2026 Aeronautics Art Contest Winners - Continued

Honorable Mentions

Lilith, age 7 – Ft. Pierre



Breck, age 13 – New Underwood



Alexander, age 15 – New Underwood



Taycee, age 13 – New Underwood



Winners with their prizes!



Left to right: Brielle Schoon, Jesse Schoon, and Raegan Schoon



Lilith Rageth



Thea Brooks



Matias Antijuuti



Madysen Maskovich

Brave the Shave for Kids with Cancer!

On April 18, 2026, **Arlen Halverson, McIntosh Lead Highway Maintenance Worker**, shaved his head for a truly meaningful reason! He participated in the "Brave the Shave for Kids with Cancer Event" held in Bismark, North Dakota.

The great thing about Arlen . . . he has participated in this fundraising "shave" several times in the past in support of kids and their families enduring the hardships of a cancer diagnosis. In fact, this is his 9th year!

One important thing to note, with this shave Arlen kept his beard. When he isn't plowing snow in his newly named truck **Whiteout Warrior**, he has doubled as Santa Claus for the past five years in the community!

At the April 2026 event, Arlen raised a total of \$750 for the children's cancer fund.



SDDOT Employee News and Updates

SDDOT 101

In April, newly hired employees took part in SDDOT 101, a two-day introduction to the Department and the resources available to staff. The sessions covered SDDOT culture and expectations, BHRA benefits, SDRS retirement planning, and training opportunities for career growth.

Participants also had the opportunity to meet Secretary Joel Jundt and division directors (Mike Behm, Craig Smith, and Kellie Beck), to gain a clearer understanding of how SDDOT operates and how each division contributes to the SDDOT mission.



Internal Striping Conference

By Hannah E. Bolton

Pierre Region Traffic Engineer

On April 15 and 16, 2026, the four region striping crews met in Pierre for an impromptu striping conference. This was entirely crew lead, discussions were lead by Lead Highway Maintenance Workers and Highway Maintenance Workers.

Jesse Nelson, Rapid City Region Traffic Engineer developed an agenda and the crews ran with it! Rapid City Region brought their striping truck to compare with the Pierre Region truck. The Pierre Region crew also brought out their sign truck and Elliott boom truck. The four regions hope to make this a regular occurrence to talk safety, efficiency, maintenance, and lessons learned.



Employee Appreciation Potluck



Aberdeen Region hosted a potluck in the Region Repair Shop for Employee Appreciation Week on May 7, 2026. Lots of food and laughter were present!

SDDOT Employee News and Updates

May New Hires:

Benjamin Alberts, Construction Technician, Aberdeen
Brandon Burggraff, Engineer I (Highway Construction Project Engineer), Mitchell
Andrew Cowden, Construction Technician, Sioux Falls
James Goodwin, Construction Technician (Driller), Pierre
Bryce Kopfmann, Transportation Project Manager II, Aberdeen
Lincoln Kippes, Construction Technician, Yankton
Kobi Lutjens, Engineer I (Highway Construction Project Engineer), Mitchell
Jason Meek, Highway Maintenance Worker, Mission
Derek Moen, Highway Maintenance Worker, Clear Lake
Cole Nelson, Land Surveyor-in-Training, Pierre
Narria Neubert, Engineer I (Highway Construction Project Engineer), Mobridge
Dillon Walz, Construction Technician, Mitchell
Terrance Weickum, Highway Maintenance Worker, Deadwood
Bryan Wellman, Highway Maintenance Worker, Rapid City
Zachary Winter, Engineer I (Highway Construction Project Engineer), Huron



May Promotions/Lateral Position Updates:

Casey Elliot, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker, Deadwood
Jeff Gillam, Engineer II (Highway Construction Project Engineer), Rapid City



May Longevity:

Bryce Hemiller, Senior Construction Technician – 20 years (Watertown Area)
Dale Healey, Highway Safety Engineer – 20 years (Project Development)
Les Winsell, Highway Maintenance Supervisor – 20 years (Pierre Area)
Jan Flickema, Grading CAD Technician – 25 years (Road Design)
Steve Jacobs, Highway Construction Project Engineer – 25 years (Mobridge Area)
Darrel Henrichsen, Senior Construction Technician – 25 years (Rapid City Area)
Rick Brandner, Highway Construction Project Engineer – 35 years (Mitchell Area)
Randy Gossard, Road Design Engineer – 35 years (Road Design)



Employee Longevity



Tim Wicks, Custer Area Engineering Manager, (right) received his 35-year longevity pin from Bruce Schroeder, Custer Area Engineer.

Les Winsell, Pierre Area Highway Maintenance Supervisor, (right) received his 20-year longevity pin from Dean VanDeWiele, Pierre Area Engineer.



Bryce Hemiller, Watertown Senior Construction Technician, (left) received his 20-year longevity pin from Jeff Brink, Watertown Area Engineering Supervisor.

Scott Witlock, Aberdeen Region Equipment Coordinator, (left) received his 10-year longevity pin from Todd Hertel, Aberdeen Region Operations Engineer.



Touch a Truck Event at Wolsey-Wessington School

Students in kindergarten through second grade at Wolsey-Wessington School recently got a close-up look at the world of highway maintenance during a "Touch a Truck" event provided by Huron Area staff.

Pictured are **Travis Roberts** and **Cody Ulmer, Huron Area Highway Maintenance Workers**, who spent time showing students equipment, explaining how crews keep South Dakota roads safe, and answering lots of curious questions from young learners.



Welcome 2026 SDDOT Summer Interns!

Paige Oswald, Construction Transportation, Aberdeen
Chester Williamson, Construction Transportation, Aberdeen
Ally Bertram, Transportation/Construction, Armour
Micah Leonard, Transportation/Construction, Armour
Kenneth Czech, Transportation/Construction, Brookings
Connor Coleman, Transportation, Custer
Matthew Suomala, Transportation, Custer
Jackson Peck, Transportation, Huron
Jackson Reno, Transportation, Huron
Katelynn Laufman, Transportation/Construction, Mitchell
Maddi Gerlach, Transportation/Construction, Mitchell
Kenzie Unser, Pavement Management, Pierre
Emalee Larson, Transportation Planning, Pierre
Nolan Peterson, Transportation, Pierre
Alex McIntire, Transportation, Pierre
Jacob Mikkonen, Transportation, Pierre
Joseph Mikkonen, Transportation, Pierre
Colter Babcock, Traffic Analysis, Pierre
Braedon Cross, Pavement Condition, Pierre
Lucas Matzen, Pavement Condition, Pierre
Michelle Weiss, Pavement Condition, Pierre
Nathan Kist, Materials & Surfacing , Pierre
Kiera Briggs, Materials & Surfacing, Pierre
Adelynn Elgert, Geotechnical, Pierre
Ireland Templeton, Geotechnical, Pierre
Daron Bailey, Geotechnical, Pierre
Aaron McKinley, Transportation, Pierre
Austin Griffith, Bridge Design, Pierre
Weston Northrup, Transportation, Pierre
Nolan Rehorst, Transportation - Construction, Rapid City
Tate Cullers, Transportation - Construction, Rapid City
Tucker Wuertzer, Transportation - Construction, Rapid City
Nick Horan, Region Traffic, Rapid City
Reuben Nyangamoi, Guardrail Inspection Engineering, Sioux Falls
Ella Laverman, Guardrail Inspection Engineering, Sioux Falls
James Bame, Guardrail Inspection Engineering, Sioux Falls
Brennan Verhey, Transportation, Sioux Falls
Savannah Kloster, Transportation, Sioux Falls
Cian Smith, Transportation, Sioux Falls
Isaac McManigal, Transportation, Winner
Cameron Becker, Transportation, Yankton
Dakota Jackson, Transportation, Yankton
Cloey Deters, Transportation, Yankton

2026 High School and College Graduates

Thomas DuChene - Graduated from Lennox High School

He plans to attend Dakota State University and major in network and security administration.

Thomas is the son of Stacy DuChene, Senior Region Design Manager (Mitchell Region).



Kayleigh A. Dueis - Graduated from Northern State University (Aberdeen) with a degree in Elementary Education

She will be teaching 1st Grade at Saint Joseph School in Pierre.

Kayleigh is the step-daughter of Danny Varilek, Winter Maintenance Specialist, Operations (Central Office).



Carissa Ott - Graduated from the USD - School of Nursing (Vermillion).

She will be working at Avera Oncology in Sioux Falls.

Carissa is the daughter of Chris Ott, Internal Services/Audits Program Manager (Central Office).



Riley Berg - Graduated from T.F. Riggs High School

She plans to attend Augustana University to major in nursing.

Riley is the daughter of Nikki Berg, Chief Cartographer (Central Office).



Mia Schmidt - Graduated from Brandon Valley High School

She plans to attend South Dakota State University to major in nursing.

Mia is the daughter of Mike Schmidt, Project Engineer (Sioux Falls Area).



2026 High School and College Graduates



Ethan Schmidt - Graduated from Brandon Valley High School

He plans to enlist in the United States Marine Corps to pursue a military service career.

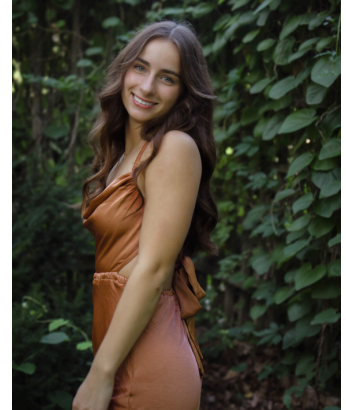
Ethan is the son of Mike Schmidt, Project Engineer (Sioux Falls Area).



Rachel Weisz - Graduated from Ethan High School

She plans to attend Southeast Technical College to major in nursing.

Rachel is the daughter of Steve Weisz, Mitchell Region Operations Engineer.



Ayden Behm - Graduated from T.F. Riggs High School

He plans to attend South Dakota State University to major in pre-med.

Ayden is the son of Mike Behm, Director Division of Planning & Engineering (Central Office).



Kade J. Dressen - Graduated from Brandon Valley High School

He plans to attend South Dakota State University to major in civil engineering.

Kade is the son of Travis Dressen, Mitchell Region Engineer.



Haley Fuerst - Graduated from Penn Foster High School

She is excited for this next chapter of her life and is currently undecided.

Haley is the daughter of Tracy Denise Fuerst, Secretary, (Central Office).



2026 High School and College Graduates

Jordyn Page - Graduated from Rapid City Central High School

She plans to attend the University of Wyoming to major in mechanical engineering.

Jordyn is the daughter of Chad Shull, Lead Highway Maintenance Worker, (Rapid City).



Michael Magee - Graduated from Southeast Technical College with an Associate of Applied Science in System and Network Security.

He already has a position with Advanced Tech Inc. in Sioux Falls.

Michael is the son of Mike Hauptman-Magee, Transportation Planning Engineer - Project Development, (Central Office).



Elizabeth Johnson - Graduated from the University of South Dakota

She plans to attend the University of South Dakota for Graduate School in Speech Communication Disorders.

Elizabeth is the daughter of Darin Johnson, Road Design Engineer (Sioux Falls Area).



Adam Johnson - Graduated from West Central High School

He plans to attend South Dakota State University to major in mechanical engineering.

Adam is the son of Darin Johnson, Road Design Engineer, (Sioux Falls Area).



Elise Henrichsen School - Graduated from Sturgis Brown High School

She plans to attend Western Dakota Technical College to pursue a career as a paramedic.

Elise is the daughter of Darrel Henrichsen, Senior Technician (Rapid City Area).

