



## System Worth Saving Site Visit Report

- **Date:** June 22, 2021
- **Location:** Duluth MDVA Cemetery
- **Attendees:**
  - Rehab Committee Members*- Chairman Wilson Spence, Gary Munkholm, Dan Tengwall, Jim Finley and Carol Gilbertson.
  - Department Service Officer*- Jeremy Wolfsteller.
  - Duluth MVDA Cemetery* - Director Cory Johnson.

- **Purpose**

The American Legion Dept. Rehabilitation Committee is tasked with staying engaged with agencies that aid Minnesota veterans. The committee does this by conducting System Worth Saving Site Visits throughout the year. These locations include Sioux Falls, Fargo, St. Cloud and Minneapolis VA Health Care Systems, St. Paul Regional Offices, Minneapolis, Hastings, Luverne, Fergus Falls and Silver Bay Veterans Homes. Additional Site Visits are conducted at VA CBOC's, Vets Centers, and Minnesota nonprofits that serve veterans when the budget allows.

### Duluth MDVA Cemetery System Overview

The Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery - Duluth is the third State Veterans Cemetery, after Little Falls and Preston. The first Veteran was laid to rest in Duluth's newly opened State Veterans cemetery on Veterans Day, November 11, 2018. The cemetery provides the gravesite or columbarium niche, pre-placed grave liner, headstone/niche cover and perpetual care. There is no cost for eligible veterans but there is a \$745 spouse and dependent fee.





## Duluth State Veterans Cemetery FY21 System Worth Saving Site Visit

### **Registration Process:**

- Pre-registration ensures eligibility in advance and eliminates delays in providing military documentation to the cemetery. Pre-registration applications are accessible at the cemetery or at every county veteran service office.

### **Burial Arrangements:**

- The funeral director or the next of kin makes burial arrangements for an eligible Veteran, spouse or dependent at the time of need by contacting the Minnesota State Veterans Cemetery.
- To establish the Veteran's eligibility, a copy of the Veteran's military discharge document or a DD214 must be provided. If these documents are not available, the cemetery must be provided with sufficient military information to allow the cemetery to access federal U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and/or military records to establish eligibility.
- The cemetery staff will set a tentative date for the committal service pending verification of service and character of discharge and will notify the applicant when the committal service is scheduled. The proposed date and time will be approved only when the cemetery verifies eligibility and confirms the arrangements.

### **Committal Services:**

- The cemetery can do seven committal services per day, Monday - Friday, on a first come first served basis, every hour from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. (3 p.m. is cremation only).
- Committal services are limited to 20 minutes. All committal services should be brief and need to start on the hour at the scheduled time. Families who extend their services can greatly affect others who have reserved the following time.
- All committal services are held in the committal service building rather than at the actual gravesite because of burial rates and operational considerations. This ensures the family's safety and provides a fitting location for military honors and the ability of our staff to continue cemetery operations.
- The remains are removed from the committal service building for burial following the family's departure and are never left unattended by cemetery staff. Clergy services and other arrangements are the responsibility of the family or family representative. These arrangements are normally coordinated through the chosen funeral director.

### **Cemetery Demographics:**

- The cemetery has 104 acres with phase one development of the first 18 acres and 3,000 gravesites complete.
- 12,000+ gravesites in total for future phases.
- Since the first burial on November 11, 2018, there has been 429 total interred which includes veterans, spouses, and dependents. There has been 15 disinterment's.
- The cemetery uses all marble markers for its gravesites.





### **Cemetery Demographics Continued:**

- Spouses or dependents are interred in the same gravesite as the veteran, sharing a headstone or niche cover.
- If both spouses are eligible veterans, they are entitled to their own gravesite and government marker. Cemetery staff will ensure both spouses are interred in adjacent gravesites.
- 90% of internments are cremation internments which means families work directly with the cemetery not the funeral home.
- Veterans can be interred that live outside Minnesota.

#### **Eligibility:** *(Based off the National Cemetery Administration Standard)*

- Veterans discharged from active military service under conditions other than dishonorable.
- Members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces, the National Guard, and the Reserve Officer Training Corps who have 20 years of service and are creditable for retired pay, or who die while on active duty for training or performing service.
- Eligible Veteran's spouses, minor children and, under certain conditions, unmarried adult children.
- Veterans who do not otherwise qualify, but have a compensable service-connected disability.
- Veterans with a capital crime, sex offenders or subversion activities are not eligible.
- Veterans with an "other than honorable discharge" are determined at the NCA level.

#### **Cemetery Budget:**

- State appropriations \$557,000 (staff wages etc.)
- Federal VA plot allowance \$807.00 per veteran interred.
- Dependent fee's \$745.00.
- Federal VA and Dependent funds become a savings account for future projects. Currently are \$30,000.

#### **Staffing:**

- Two administrative staff
- 6 grounds crew staff (2 are seasonal)

#### **Funeral Honors:**

- Upon request the cemetery staff coordinate to have a full military honor provided at the veteran's committal service.
- Active Military partners with local Veteran Service Organizations to provide full military honors.
- VSO' provide a 3-volley raffle salute and playing of Taps. At the conclusion of Taps a burial flag is folded and presented to the Next of Kin to the veteran's parent service branch.

Department Rehabilitation Chairman: Wilson Spence III

Department Service Officer & Committee Secretary: Jeremy Wolfsteller

