



November 1, 2021

To Whom it may concern,

The South Dakota American Legion (SDAL) and the South Dakota Highway Patrol (SDHP) partnered up in 2014 and created the South Dakota Youth Trooper Academy (SDYTA).

The annual program exposes twenty-four youth to the rigorous demands of law enforcement training and provides a brief look into life as a law enforcement officer. Each year, South Dakota American Legion members and Highway Patrol Troopers conduct board interviews in each of the eight SDAL districts. The district boards focus on choosing candidates that are best suited for the rigor and commitment of this training.

While serving as State Commander of the South Dakota American Legion from 2019 through 2021, I had the opportunity to witness the successful program in action personally. In one week, they learn about values such as discipline, integrity, collaboration, loyalty, respect, and courtesy from mentors. Spending time with the young cadets made it apparent that they were excited about and appreciative of this program. I spoke with one cadet who expressed her gratitude and indicated that she would one day be a Trooper. I continued following her accomplishments after graduation from the SDYTA and can report that she is currently working for the SDHP. Since 2014, several cadets from the program have gone on to become SD State Troopers or joined other law enforcement agencies.

There are several benefits of the SDYTA, including the following:

- The positive impact and excellent training received by the South Dakota youth each year.
- The ongoing contact with high schools and communities throughout South Dakota.
- The chance for our youth to connect on a personal level with law enforcement professionals.
- The opportunity for mentors from the SDHP and the SDAL to positively impact youth in South Dakota.
- The SDYTA graduates share their experiences and what they learned with their friends and communities.
- The excellent ongoing working relationship between the SDAL and the SDHP.

The SDYTA is a program that has been proven successful with the graduation of approximately 192 very excited youth.

Thank you,

Fred Nelson  
Past Department Commander 2019-2021  
South Dakota American Legion