2020 Governor’s Awards Ceremony

On September 15th, the 2020 Governor’s Awards Ceremony was held at the Capitol Rotunda in which Governor Kristi Noem recognized South Dakota businesses and other individuals who have made significant contributions to improving independent living and employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

Governor Noem presented awards to the following award recipients:

**Chris Peterson of Ft. Pierre** has been employed full-time with Beck Motors for 23 years. Chris exemplifies integrity, knowledge, and motivation; a work ethic that any
employer desires in his or her workforce. For these achievements, Peterson was awarded the **Outstanding Employee with a Disability**.

Kendra Gottsleben of Sioux Falls has been instrumental in promoting independent living for others with disabilities. She has made significant contributions to the community outside of her employment. She has become a state, national, and international advocate. Through her character, personality, and tenacity, Kendra received the **Outstanding Individual with a Disability Award**.

The Fox Stop of Yankton retains individuals with disabilities as part of their winning workforce, and they have been recognized as the **Outstanding Private Employer (Small Employer)**. Under the leadership of Tracey & James Grotenhuis, every employee is recognized for who he or she is as a person, and the skills and assets he or she brings to the company.
Boyds Gunstock Industries of Mitchell was the recipient of the Outstanding Private Employer (Large Employer). Boyds Gunstock has been a champion for all employees. Boyds surpassed their goal of having at least 10% of their workforce be employees with disabilities. Boyds management style has made a lasting impact on people’s lives by providing them with an opportunity to learn valuable work skills, increase their income, and experience an increased sense of accomplishment.

Mitchell School District, Food Service Department of Mitchell received the Outstanding Employer Award (Other). The Mitchell School District, Food Service Department capitalizes on the employee’s strength, celebrates diversity, and provides a stable and supportive work environment. Employees develop work skills that include food preparation and safety, appropriate dress code, and customer service skills. Furthermore, the department promotes a diverse workforce, offering equal employment opportunities for all.
Karen Schmeiser of Aberdeen has worked for the past 12 years teaching special education at Redfield High School. Karen has assisted and mentored 100 students with disabilities as they transition from high school to the adult world; ensuring each student had a transition plan in place. For that reason, Schmeiser has been selected as the recipient of the Outstanding Transition Services Award.

Eugene “Gene” Murphy of Sioux Falls has made it his life’s mission to help fellow veterans and individuals with disabilities. His attitude and personal example are major factors in the growth and recognition of veterans and disability related issues in South Dakota. His involvement and empathetic care for veterans experiencing wartime injuries was and continues to be invaluable to veterans returning home. For this, Murphy received the Distinguished Service Award.