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GOVERNOR'S COLUMN

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EDITORS/NEWS DIRECTORS: Please consider the following column from Gov. Dennis Daugaard. For an audio recording of the Governor's weekly column, visit news.sd.gov/media.aspx and click on "Audio" under "Governor Dennis Daugaard."

Helping South Dakotans Get Back To Work

A column by Gov. Dennis Daugaard:

My parents took pride in self-reliance and taught me the value of hard work. They worked hard on our family farm, and when the farm went upside-down financially, they both took jobs as janitors at Augustana College to make ends meet.

Mom and Dad were also born deaf, but their inability to hear did not prevent them from working to support my sisters and me. They taught us that all work has dignity and that idleness is not an option.

In South Dakota we have the fourth lowest unemployment rate in the nation at 2.8 percent. That's very low compared to the national rate of 4.4 percent, and about half of the rates recorded in Alaska and New Mexico.

South Dakota's low unemployment number is in part thanks to the work ethic of our people. South Dakotans understand the value of work because working hard has been instilled in us by our ancestors.

Our low unemployment rate also has to do with responsible governance. In South Dakota we help those who stumble, but we don't carry those who choose to lie down. Unlike some states that allowed a person to receive unemployment payments for almost two years following the recession, South Dakota has kept unemployment insurance as a more temporary assistance program – a program in which claimants are required to work hard to find employment.

In May of 2012, the South Dakota Department of Labor and Regulation implemented a program for the unemployed called Re-Employment Intensive Services (RIS). Those unemployed who have received payments for more than 10 weeks must engage with dedicated labor specialists for one-on-one assistance in the job hunt. The program helps them identify in-demand careers, evaluate their skills and find training options.

RIS is working. Over the past five years, 4,022 people who participated in RIS have obtained employment. Only 6.2 percent of those who participated in the program exhausted their UI benefits.

Putting more than 4,000 people back to work is no small thing. Through RIS and their own resiliency, these individuals can now provide for themselves and their families. Perhaps more importantly, they can experience the self-respect and sense of accomplishment that come from a job well done.

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For photos, audio and video from the Governor's Office, go to news.sd.gov/media.aspx.

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