

# LifeFacts



A South Dakota Right to Life Publication | Winter 2026 | [www.sdRightToLife.org](http://www.sdRightToLife.org)



## One Life at a Time: How You Can Make a Real Difference in South Dakota

By: Jenn Lee, SDRTL Executive Director



One of the most common questions I'm asked about SDRTL is, "How can I volunteer or get more involved?" The best way to serve is by joining one of our nearly 40 SDRTL Chapters across the state. While each chapter varies in size and structure, they all share the same mission: to spread the pro-life message throughout South Dakota with love, compassion, and determination.

Our Chapters are essential to advancing our mission to protect human life through education and legislation. They mobilize volunteers for outreach at fairs, festivals, churches, campuses, and community events. They also help fund key initiatives, including the successful 2024 "No on G" campaign, which safeguarded our state from a measure allowing abortion up to birth and removing parental consent for minors. This winter, Chapters are helping launch South Dakota's first Safe Haven Baby Box—beginning in Rapid City. Great job, Rapid City Chapter!

In what many view as the defining human-rights issue of our time, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. That's why unity matters. People of faith, those without religious affiliation, and even atheists who acknowledge the science that life begins at conception all have a role. Together, we can counter the apathy and hostility that allow the anti-life message to spread.

People today are longing for hope — and that is exactly what we offer when we speak and educate about the sanctity of life. We believe every human being has God-given value and purpose, no matter their age, stage, or circumstance. That truth is powerful, and we can be proud to share it with all who are willing to listen. You've probably heard the starfish story, but just in case you haven't, I'd like to share it with you:

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, "What are you doing?" The boy replied, "Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them back, they'll die." "Son," the man said, "don't you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can't make a difference!" After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said..." I made a difference for that one."

The simple truth in this story always moves me. When we make a difference for one, how important is it, to that one who is saved? It matters to the mother whose child is spared. It matters to the father who will not become childless. Making a difference for one is never small.

Thank you for everything you do to bring a message of life and hope to the people around you. This is how we change the culture: one person, one bold action, one conversation at a time.

# Why Give to SDRTL?

By: Anne Hanson, SDRTL President



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*South Dakota Right to Life is a non-profit, non-denominational organization whose philosophy is that all innocent human life is inviolable and is to be guaranteed protection from conception until natural death.*

How often do you get asked to give to a non-profit organization, local charity, or individual's benefit? How do you choose where to give your hard-earned donations? What makes SDRTL a good choice for giving? You know that advocating for the unborn requires presence, persistence, and resources. Your support fuels:

- Education that highlights the beauty and value of every human life
- Outreach that changes minds and hearts through compassion and facts
- Policy efforts that defend the most vulnerable members of our human family

When you donate to SDRTL, your gift allows our team be your hands and feet in the pro-life movement. Without your gifts, we wouldn't be able to lobby, educate, and continue to fight for those most vulnerable.

Those who have already committed themselves to supporting SDRTL know that defending life is not a one-time action. It's a sustained, compassionate mission. Your support-whether financial, volunteer-based, or through advocacy, or prayers-continues to change hearts and minds, allowing us to work to protect the dignity of all human life.

So, if you are able, I humbly ask that you consider placing SDRTL on your list of charitable donation recipients. A monthly commitment is so appreciated as it allows us to budget for things such as fair supplies, updating billboards, and traveling to events across the state representing each of you: all of us working together to protect life from conception to natural death.

You are not simply donating. You are investing in hope, in community, and in the belief that every life has immeasurable worth.

If you'd like to save SDRTL postage and printing, you can sign up to receive LifeFacts electronically here:



## SDRTL 2026 Convention Sneak Peak!



We are blessed to announce that Sister Dede Byrne has agreed to be one of our Keynote speakers for our 2026 Convention, which will be held in Sioux Falls, September 18-19.

**Sister Deirdre Byrne**, known to many as Sister DeDe, is a missionary sister and the superior of the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts in Washington, DC. A native of the Washington area, she is one of eight siblings and graduated from Virginia Tech before earning her medical degree at Georgetown University. She is double board-certified in family medicine and general surgery and completed surgical residency before entering military service.

Sister DeDe served 29 years in the United States Army, retiring in 2009 with the rank of Colonel, including deployments to Afghanistan. Following a life of medical and military service, she was called to serve with the Little Workers of the Sacred Hearts, where she integrates her medical expertise, military experience, and vocation.

She currently serves as superior of the community's D.C. house near Catholic University, where the sisters operate pro-bono medical clinics, care for elderly sisters in a retirement home, and run a music preschool for children. Sister DeDe's other charitable medical/surgical service includes hands-on ministry in the rubble of the twin towers following the terrorist attack on 9-11, caring for the sick during the earthquake in Haiti in 2011 and annual medical missions to Haiti and Iraq.

# Together Let's Engage the 2026 SD Legislature

By: Dale Bartscher, SDRTL Associate Director

SDRTL is recognized as the state's flagship of the pro-life movement. We work through legislation and education to protect innocent human life from abortion, infanticide, assisted suicide, euthanasia and related issues. Thus, we will have 'boots-on-the-ground' during the 101st Legislative Session in Pierre, SD (January 13 – March 12, '26)

All the pro-life victories we have seen, and will continue to see, are possible because of God's Grace, your efforts and that of the great people of the past on whose shoulders we stand, all of whom understand that life at all stages is precious and deserving of protection. Realizing the value of **working together** Mother Teresa said: "*I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.*"



• **SDRTL LOBBYISTS:** Knowing this to be true both Jenn Lee, Executive Director, and I will once again serve as SDRTL's registered lobbyists at the State Capitol during this Legislative Session. We will work alongside our SDRTL Board Members and Representatives Jon Hansen, Leslie Heinemann, and Al Novstrup. Together we will represent SDRTL as we support, with your help, appropriate life legislation.

• **STAYING INFORMED:** Your SDRTL Legislative Committee are considering several pieces of Pro-Life Legislation. We will be utilizing social media (Facebook, Emails, Radio Interviews, etc.) and our website at [www.sdRightToLife.org](http://www.sdRightToLife.org) to keep you informed as to happenings during this Legislative Session.



• **FINDING MY LEGISLATORS:** If you aren't sure what district you live in, or if you'd like to find out who your current Legislators are, click on our website at [www.sdRightToLife.org](http://www.sdRightToLife.org) and then the 'Legislative Information' tab and follow the prompts. By adding your address and zip code you will find all the information you need!

• **CONTACTING THEM:** To leave your brief phone message of concern with your District's Legislators, you may call the Senate or House Switchboards by using the following numbers: Senate: 605-773-3821; House: 605-773-3851. To email your Senator and/or Representatives click on: [www.sdlegislature.gov](http://www.sdlegislature.gov).

• **SDRTL LEGISLATIVE STUDENT INTERNS:** We are now accepting 'Statements of Interest' for the 2026 Legislative Session. To apply please Email: [Dale.SDRTL@gmail.com](mailto:Dale.SDRTL@gmail.com). SDRTL Student Interns must be 9th grade through college age with high moral character and references. These Internships are a **3 or 4-day** legislative experience at the Capitol during the Legislative Session.

Be encouraged as our work continues through our Chapter affiliates, our State Convention and our Legislative efforts to mention a few of our LIFE endeavors.

Please **PRAY** for our SDRTL Staff, Volunteers and Board of Directors!

• **YOUR ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR'S NEXT PURSUIT:** Recently I received this **T-SHIRT** as a gift from my children and grandchildren ☺ You may have heard that I am running for a [SD Legislative House Seat in District 35](#). This I will accomplish **alongside** my responsibilities with SDRTL as I serve you in my **part-time** roll as Associate Director. My Campaign is up and running and you may follow it more closely by going to [www.DaleForSD.com](http://www.DaleForSD.com)



*To receive 'Weekly Capitol Email Updates' please go to our website at [www.sdRightToLife.org](http://www.sdRightToLife.org) and fill-in the SUBSCRIBE BOX. We would also appreciate your financial partnership. In doing so you are supporting our presence at the Capitol for the 38-Days of this coming SD Legislative Session. Thank You!*

# National Right to Life

By: Dr. Fred Deutsch, NRTL Delegate



## When One Nation Moves the Line on Life, the Whole World Feels It

Scotland is now weighing one of the most extreme abortion proposals in the Western world: allowing abortion up to birth for broad, non-medical “social” reasons. A government-commissioned review urged lawmakers to remove gestational limits and declined to recommend a ban on sex-selective abortion—meaning a child could be terminated simply for being the “wrong” sex. To be clear, nothing has passed into law. But this is the direction their policymakers are being pushed, and if adopted, it would mark a seismic shift. Why should Americans care what happens in Scotland?

Because ideas don’t stay put. Cultural norms cross borders. Legal theories migrate. What one country normalizes, another soon imitates. When the value of life becomes negotiable—based on convenience, circumstances, or sex—society loses its moral footing. It’s a moment that should make all of us stop, look closely, and recommit to the truth that every child, boy or girl, healthy or fragile, has inherent dignity from the moment life begins.

## A Look at Home: Encouraging Pro-Life Momentum

Here in the United States, we’re seeing signs of movement in the opposite direction—toward stronger protections for both unborn children and vulnerable mothers.

At the federal level, the U.S. has reinstated the Mexico City Policy and rejoined the Geneva Consensus Declaration, reaffirming that American foreign aid should not promote abortion overseas. In Congress, pro-life lawmakers are advancing measures to stop taxpayer-funded abortions, safeguard medical professionals who act on conscience, and place commonsense limits on abortion drugs that are often pushed without adequate medical oversight.

States are moving too. Several have cracked down on coerced chemical abortions and the trafficking of minors—practices that too often hide behind “choice.” Others are improving prenatal-development education so students understand how life grows before birth. Some states have even barred foreign money from influencing ballot campaigns, preventing outside interests from reshaping local laws. It’s a quiet but steady march toward valuing life, grounded in compassion and common sense.

## South Dakota: A Crucial Vote Ahead

Here at home, South Dakotans will soon be asked to decide whether our state constitution should require a 60% vote to pass future amendments. That threshold matters. It ensures out-of-state groups cannot rewrite our constitution with a simple 50% plus one—especially on issues like abortion on demand or removing parental protections. Other states are facing similar fights, and the message is the same: stay alert, stay informed, and stay engaged.

## What You Can Do

- Talk with your neighbors about the coming 60% amendment vote and why it matters for protecting life in South Dakota.
- Thank the legislators who stand for life, and encourage others to stay rooted in principle rather than pressure.
- Share credible information from the National Right to Life Committee so friends and neighbors can stay informed and ready to act.

When another country pushes abortion to the very edge of birth, it’s a reminder that the battle for life is global. But it’s also local—decided by citizens who show up, speak up, and hold the line. Thank you for all the work you do.

# Real-Life Community Engagement

By: Sarah DeCost, Rapid City Area Right to Life Chapter President

So many of us want to engage our community in a meaningful way but lack the imagination or resources to do so. The strength of joining together, in overcoming or utilizing our differences and uniting to create opportunity and hands-on help for others, is what our South Dakota Right to Life Chapters are all about doing.

The Rapid City Area Right to Life Chapter has been active over the past year in getting the word out to our community about the possibility of installing a Safe Haven Baby Box (i.e. Infant Safety Device) somewhere in our city. As word got out through our members to local churches and in public forums, the message spread about the cost and the need for a safe and central location for the Box. With the 100% support of our Mayor, Jason Salamun, and the Chief of the Rapid City Fire Department, Jason Culberson, the offer to place the Baby Box at the new Fire Station #1 was made to the Rapid City Area Right to Life Chapter. With this placement offer came news of a local business family, who wanted to contribute the amount needed to purchase the Box — \$15,000. Additionally, as the news of the impact of the Baby Box has spread throughout the business community of our City, the company that installs the alarm system for the Box has offered to provide the installation of it at Fire Station #1 free of charge.

The members of the RC Area Right to Life Chapter have personally fundraised to secure the additional necessary construction costs and maintenance fees. We are grateful to our city leaders and to the families and businesses who have made this life-changing mission a priority... and therefore, not just a possibility, but a reality.

## WHAT IS A SAFE HAVEN BABY BOX:

Safe Haven Baby Boxes offer a compassionate and secure option for mothers in crisis who are unable to care for their newborns. Designed with innovative safety features and installed on the exterior walls of fire stations and hospitals, each box ensures the safe and anonymous surrender of infants. The exterior door locks automatically when a newborn is placed inside, and an interior door allows medical personnel to promptly and securely retrieve the baby, ensuring immediate care and protection. Safe Haven Baby Boxes are a vital resource, providing a lifeline for mothers and a safe beginning for their newborns ([www.shbb.org](http://www.shbb.org)).



Future site of the Rapid City Safe Haven Baby Box with Mayor Jason Salamun, Fire Chief Jason Culberson and RCRTL's John Santana



# The 2025 Convention: Education & Inspiration!

By: Jenn Lee, SDRTL Executive Director

The 2025 SDRTL Annual Convention in Pierre, SD, was a remarkable event, graciously hosted by Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Pierre Area Right to Life Chapter. We were deeply impressed by the exceptional efforts of the Pierre Chapter, led by SDRTL Board member Doug Schuller and his wife, Joan, as well as the outstanding contributions of the Faith Evangelical team. It was a true blessing to collaborate with their Lead Pastor, Sam Handshke.



Around 250 pro-lifers gathered to hear from three keynote speakers: Actress, writer and tv host, Joelle Maryn; Unborn Child Advocate and Director of Communications from the Governor's Office, Ian Fury; and NRLC (National Right to Life Committee) Director for State Strategies, Peter Northcott. One of the most impactful parts of the convention includes the "Pregnancy Center Panel" and this year, the "Adoption and Fostering Panel," where attendees learn about the critical work of the pregnancy resource centers, adoption & foster care ministries from across the state.

This year, the Humanitarian Award was presented to two outstanding recipients: Valerie Johnson of Mitchell, a long-standing member of the SDRTL Board, former NRLC Delegate and VP of Mitchell RTL, and Dan Hargreaves of Stickney, who started a local SDRTL Chapter (Aurora-Douglas RTL) and also served as both President and Vice President on the SDRTL Board of Directors. We are deeply grateful for their dedicated service and their unwavering commitment to supporting mothers, fathers, children, and families.

We were grateful for the leadership of Olivia Hanson, daughter of SDRTL Board President, Anne Hanson, who gracefully led the Youth Breakout Session during the convention. Youth attendees were able to join the convention free of charge and enjoy mini-sessions with all three keynote speakers. We hope to see you at next year's Convention, September 18-19th in Sioux Falls at LifeChange Church.



## 2025 Youth Essay Winners

### Junior Division

- 1st Place- \$300.....Garret Hansen
- 2nd Place- \$250....Dean Hofer
- 3rd Place- \$200.....Gemma Daniel
- 4th Place- \$150.....Ella Buchholz
- 5th Place- \$100.....Hannah Ehrichs
- 6th.....Andrew Trumbauer
- 7th.....Lydia Underkofler
- 8th.....Tommy Skoog
- 9th.....Kaydence Kathman
- 10th.....Levi Hyzer

### Senior Division

- 1st Place- \$300.....Graeci Fields
- 2nd Place- \$250....Millie Edwards
- 3rd Place- \$200.....Hope Skoog
- 4th Place- \$150.....Grace Skoog
- 5th Place- \$100.....Abigail Lauck
- 6th.....Suri Jetto
- 7th.....Ellowyn Schutt
- 8th.....Sadie Dahlhoff
- 9th.....Katelyn Swarthout
- 10th.....Ryan McKeown

# SDRTL Remains a Faithful Steward of Dollars Donated

By: Spencer Cody, SDRTL Treasurer



As 2025 comes to an end and we begin a new year, let us take a look at how South Dakota Right to Life has worked to ensure that the most is made of every contribution that we have received this year and hope that you will partner or continue to partner with us as a sustaining member in 2026. So far in 2025 approximately

51.3% of your donations have gone toward providing staff in support of chapters, pro-life outreach, and coordinating exhibits and booths at fairs and other events including the convention. This expense includes two full-time staff that crisscross the entire state, tirelessly, advocating for LIFE. Lobbying for pro-life legislation each session in Pierre has taken up another 10.0% of our budget. The LifeFacts that you receive goes to more than 16,000 households and makes up 17.6% of this year's budget. Every dollar that you donate gets fully and meaningfully utilized in the most impactful way possible. Thank you so much for supporting South Dakota Right to Life throughout 2025, and we hope for your continued support in 2026!

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<https://sevenweekscoffee.com/?ref=sdright>





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*The Sanctity of Human Life*

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CAPITOL ROTUNDA**



JENN LEE  
SDRTL EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR - EMCEE



DALE BARTSCHER  
SDRTL ASSOCIATE  
DIRECTOR-  
LEGISLATIVE UPDATE



JENNA SPELLERBERG  
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KEYNOTE SPEAKER



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