



Santa Barbara County Education Office

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Veterans will receive long overdue high school diplomas

By Dr. Susan Salcido, Santa Barbara County Superintendent of Schools

As our nation draws closer to Veterans Day, the Santa Barbara County Education Office is proud to present its inaugural Operation Recognition [high school diploma project](#), which will award high school diplomas to two deserving groups of people: U.S. veterans who were unable to continue high school due to their service in World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam War, and also to those who were unable to complete high school because of their internment in World War II relocation camps.

The first group includes men and women who left high school to serve in our armed forces during times of war, far from the comforts of home and under tremendously difficult circumstances.

The second group includes the American men and women who, in the aftermath of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, were sent to internment camps and were denied many basic liberties, including public education.

Several veterans have shared with me the decades-long emotions they felt over what they have missed by not obtaining their diplomas. They have also shared their relief and joy in knowing they will finally be realizing that dream.

It is an honor for us to be able to complete this piece of their story and have our country's veterans join the ranks of those with a high school diploma.

Operation Recognition was born from an understanding of the true sense of pride and accomplishment that comes with earning a high school diploma. There are many factors that culminate in local graduation ceremonies, including the hard work and dedication of students and families, and the intentional efforts by educators to offer meaningful learning opportunities, improve equity, and provide access for all students. These efforts come together to support students as they pursue the honor of earning a high school diploma, an accomplishment that signifies successful preparation for college and the workforce. Without question, high school graduation and the

receiving of a diploma is a milestone event in the lives of students and their families, and deserves to be publicly celebrated.

That is why California Education Code provides the County Offices of Education with the very important discretionary authority to confer these diplomas. And why we will be using that authority to elevate and honor this special group of Santa Barbara County residents, the veterans and former internees who, with their hard work, dignity, and poise, have proven themselves so deserving.

The men and women who will be honored through Operation Recognition endured so much and sacrificed so greatly. It will be our honor to bestow upon these graduates a high school diploma at a formal ceremony at the County Education Office next March, and to proudly say to them, "Congratulations to the Class of 2019."

As I think of the respect and gratitude we collectively owe these men and women—not just on Veterans Day, but every day—I'm reminded of the words of John F. Kennedy: "As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them."

These remarkable individuals, who will be honored in Operation Recognition, enable us to show through words and actions how much we value their sacrifice and service.

To learn more about Operation Recognition, and to download an application, visit SBCEO.org.

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