

Nearly 400 Honorary High School Diplomas Awarded To Montana Veterans

Tuesday, November 10, 2015

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HELENA – Fifty-five years ago Walter Whitfield dropped out of high school to join the U.S. Army. He was just 17-years-old, but Whitfield said his childhood home wasn't stable, and the Army seemed like the best place for him to go.

"One of the holes in my gut I carried all my life is that I never had a high school diploma," Whitfield said. "I got a GED when I joined the Army, but it wasn't the same as a diploma."

Earlier this year, Whitfield applied for and received an Honorary High School Diploma from the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Whitfield was 10 days shy of his 72nd birthday when he requested his honorary diploma.

"It really means a lot to me," Whitfield said, "it's a sense of accomplishment."

Whitfield is one of 388 Montanans who've received an honorary diploma from the Office of Public Instruction. The program was established in 2003, and allows honorably discharged veterans who served from 1939-1947, 1950-1953, or 1961-1975 to apply for the diploma.

"Providing honorary diplomas for the men and women who served our country is the least we can do to recognize the sacrifice each of them have made," Superintendent of Public Instruction Denise Juneau said. "I've signed 28 honorary diplomas since 2009 and it is a privilege to do so."

To learn more about the honorary diploma program, or to download an application, [click here](#).

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