

Pattonville offers honorary diplomas to veterans

When members of Pattonville High School's graduating Class of 2008 walk across the stage to receive their diplomas this year, they will be joined by a distinguished class of veterans. For the seventh year in a row, the Pattonville School District will set aside time during its graduation ceremonies to award honorary high school diplomas to veterans who left high school before graduation to serve in the United States military during foreign conflicts.

Pattonville is participating in a state program, called "Operation Recognition," that is sponsored by the Missouri Veterans Commission and Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. House Bill 441 provides official state high school diplomas to veterans who served in foreign wars. Local boards of education award the diplomas, which are issued by the state. Pattonville will award diplomas to veterans during its Pattonville High School graduation ceremonies at 7 p.m., May 29. Honorary graduates who participate in the ceremony will also receive a medal and an American flag from the school district in appreciation for service to their country.

The program is open to any resident or former resident of Missouri. Veterans can qualify regardless of whether they attended public or private schools and regardless of whether the school still exists or not. Family members may apply on behalf of a deceased veteran. Applications to receive a diploma may be obtained by calling (314) 213-8025 or by visiting the Pattonville Learning Center, Room 303, at 11097 St. Charles Rock Road in St. Ann. Deadline to return applications to the Pattonville School District in order to participate in this year's graduation ceremony is Monday, Feb. 25, 2008. Diplomas may also be sent directly to the veteran if the person chooses not to participate in the graduation ceremonies.

A copy of the veteran's honorable discharge papers or DD-214 is required to be submitted along with the application. The Missouri Veterans Commission will verify that an applicant is eligible to receive the diploma.