

Veteran residing at 270 on East receives his high school diploma 50 years later

By News10NBC

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Leroy S., shown with his family, recently received his high school diploma at the age of 69. (Photo provided by DePaul)

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — Surrounded by his siblings, cousins, and two of his daughters, Leroy S. was presented with his high school diploma at the age of 69.

A resident of 270 on East since March 2022, Leroy served in the Army from 1976 to 1978. During the time of desegregation, his father gave him a choice — work or go to school.

“I got a job and never went back to school,” Leroy said.

Leroy received his diploma through Operation Recognition — an initiative to recognize the dedication and sacrifice of veterans who left school before graduation by awarding them a high school diploma — with assistance from Veterans Upward Bound, a free service to prepare veterans and service members for colleges, universities and trade schools funded through the state Department of Education.

The high school Leroy attended was no longer open. Andrea Parker, director of Finger Lakes Regional Adult Education Network (FL RAEN), was able to expedite the request to get his diploma via Operation Recognition.

"I could not stop smiling. My cheeks hurt," his daughter Stephanie said.

It was Leroy's late father's dream to see all ten of his children graduate from high school.

"In essence, it's a sense of accomplishment, something I have always wanted to do," Leroy said. "Stephanie has asked me many times when I was going to get it and I want to make her proud."



Leroy S., 69, holds his high school diploma. With him are Amy Ortiz, director of Veterans Upward Bound; and Zach Fuller, DePaul's executive director/vice president of veterans services. (Photo provided by DePaul)