

# Opinion

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## OUR OPINION

### A final salute to veterans

**T**hanks to the vision of one man, the generosity of area businesses and the cooperation of county officials, homeless and indigent military veterans in St. Joseph County will receive proper burials that include recognition for their service.

As reported last week in The Tribune, "The Last Salute" will include full military honors and a performance by Miller's Vets, the drill team of homeless veterans in South Bend organized by retired county judge Robert Miller Sr.



Miller

It was Miller, a World War II and Korean War veteran, who pulled the project together. Three area funeral homes will donate their services and St. Joseph County officials have agreed to lease land at Portage Manor Cemetery — for \$1 per year — for a veterans burial site.

This local project fills a critical need that reverberates across the country, with estimates of more than 100,000 homeless veterans nationally. The individual stories are haunting: Last fall, a U.S. Army veteran found dead behind a Dumpster was laid to rest in Dallas Fort Worth National Cemetery with military honors thanks to the Dignity Memorial Homeless Veterans Burial Program; that same program helped honor five veterans in California this month whose remains were unclaimed at the time of their deaths.

Miller, who has proposed expanding on local programs for veterans in collaboration with the Center for the Homeless, clearly has found a mission in establishing Miller's Vets. That mission involves helping homeless veterans restore dignity and pride to their lives, and the effort continues with The Last Salute.

The retired county judge said that he "can't bear the thought of a veteran not getting a proper burial." Many would echo that sentiment, but it was Miller who took action. For making sure that individuals oft-forgotten in life receive recognition in death for their service, Miller and those involved in "The Last Salute" deserve the community's gratitude and its support.