

Volunteer needed to give all veterans their final honors

Veterans are fortunate in Solano County because they have a great federal Veterans Administration national cemetery located in Dixon.

At the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery veterans are given a final resting place in a beautiful and very respectful environment. Unfortunately, this great asset has only been available to veterans since 2006. Even more unfortunate is not all veterans in Solano County have had this type of respectful burial even after this opportunity was there for them.

Solano County veterans are also fortunate that they have a supportive Board of Supervisors and County administration. The Board recently authorized my office to move forward on a project called Missing in America. The purpose of the MIA Project is to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed cremated remains of American veterans through the joint efforts of private, state and federal organizations. Our goal is to provide honor and respect to those who have served this country by securing them a proper final resting place.

The initial focus of the MIA Project will be a massive, countywide effort to locate, identify and inter the unclaimed remains of veterans at our National Cemetery. This task will be executed through the combined, cooperative efforts of members of the American Legion, other volunteer service and veteran organizations, local funeral homes, state funeral commissions, state and national Veterans Administration agencies, and the National Veterans Cemetery Administrations.

Sonoma County recently had a collective procession and service at the Sacramento Valley National Cemetery for 35 veterans who were discovered in their county. The service was very well attended and serves as a good example of what Solano County can do to pay proper tribute to its veterans.

This will be a lengthy undertaking and will require many work-hours to ensure we have done our utmost to discover every cremated veteran we can help procure a dignified resting place. This will also be a labor of love, a task of redemption for a debt of service that can never be repaid.

The second phase of the MIA Project will be the creation of a network of individuals working with local funeral homes, state, and national agencies to ensure that, from now on, the cremated remains of any unclaimed veteran will be identified, claimed and interred in a timely manner. This will be an ongoing project and will most likely be a cooperative effort between many voluntary service organizations.

We need a dedicated veteran volunteer to take on this massive, yet heart-warming task. This will take a very detailed person because there are a myriad of local, state and national laws that must be followed in the identification, claiming process and proper interment of the unclaimed remains of forgotten veterans.

The person selected will work out of the Solano County Veteran Services Office and be tasked to locate the remains of veterans who are not properly buried with the dignity and respect that they deserve. There will be absolutely no compensation for this job other than the feeling that you have made a difference for the veterans and their families in this county.

To apply for the position, send me your resume and include a cover letter describing why you want to do this job. For clarity purposes, I need you to acknowledge in the letter that you understand this labor of love is purely a volunteer job. I look forward to hearing from you.

Ted Puntillo is director of Veteran Services for Solano County. Reach him at 784-6590 or TEPuntillo@SolanoCounty.com. The Solano County Veteran Services Office, 675 Texas St. in Fairfield, is open from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.