



# 2016 Background & FAQ

## Who We Are

- Wreaths Across America™ (WAA) is a national nonprofit organization founded in 2007 to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery begun by Maine businessman Morrill Worcester, in 1992.
  - 1992: First wreaths (5,000) donated by Morrill Worcester and Worcester Wreath Co.
  - 2005: Iconic photo of wreaths in snow became a viral sensation
  - 2007: Wreaths Across America formed as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization
    - Organization governed by board of directors. Day-to-day operations managed by Executive Director Karen Worcester.
  - 2012: 1millionth wreath placed at Arlington National Cemetery
  - 2014: For the first time, every headstone at Arlington National Cemetery received a wreath — 227,000 in total.
  - 2016: 25th year that wreaths will be placed at Arlington National Cemetery
- WAA's mission — **Remember, Honor, Teach** — is carried out in part by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington, as well as at veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond.
- The organization has since expanded to include more than 1,500 local fundraising groups in all 50 states, representing more than 1,000 participating locations, along with our nation's cemetery at Arlington.
- Since 2008, Congress has issued a proclamation officially recognizing "National Wreaths Across America Day" each December. This year, it will be held on **Sat., December 17, 2016.**

## 2015 Numbers

- 901,000 remembrance wreaths were placed in total across the country, 240,815 of which were at Arlington National Cemetery.
- Nearly 70,000 volunteers at Arlington National Cemetery, with close to a million volunteers participating at 1,108 locations nationwide.
- 168 trucking companies and professional drivers helped deliver the wreaths.

## What We Do

### **REMEMBER.**

- WAA's annual pilgrimage from Harrington, Maine, to Arlington National Cemetery has become known as the world's largest veterans' parade, stopping at schools, monuments, veterans' homes and communities all along the way to remind people how important it is to remember, honor and teach.
- Special memorials are held at Pearl Harbor, the Pentagon and Shanksville, Pennsylvania.
- The HART Ceremony (Honoring Allies and Remembering Together) is conducted each year to honor veterans of our nation's allies in ceremonies on international border-crossing bridges between Calais, Maine, and St. Stephen, New Brunswick; Detroit, Michigan, and Windsor, Ontario; and Sweetwater, Montana, and the Alaskan/Canadian border.
- WAA hosts statehouse ceremonies in nearly all 50 states.

## **HONOR.**

- WAA conducts several programs to honor our veterans, including our popular “Thanks-A-Million” campaign, which distributes FREE thank-you cards to people all over the country to share with veterans as a simple thank-you for their service.
- The group participates in veterans’ events throughout the year and has a veteran liaison on staff to work with local veterans’ organizations, as well as public outreach through Veterans Day and Memorial Day programs, public service announcements, press coverage and the WAA website.

## **TEACH.**

- WAA is committed to teaching younger generations about the value of their freedoms and the importance of honoring those who sacrificed so much to protect those freedoms. We offer learning tools, interactive media projects and opportunities for schools, 4-H, scouts and other youth groups to participate in our efforts.
- A downloadable curriculum and books are available to help schoolchildren appreciate the roles our veterans played in preserving their freedoms. These materials are designed to encourage the direct involvement of local veterans.

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## **Why do you do what you do?**

We understand we have Veterans Day in the fall and Memorial Day in the spring, but our servicemen and -women sacrifice their time and safety every single day of the year, to preserve our freedoms.

In many homes, there is an empty seat for one who is serving, or one who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. There is no better time to express our appreciation than during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. We hope you will join us at any of our more than 1,000 participating locations, to show our veterans and their families that we will not forget. We will **never** forget.

## **Why does WAA make so many stops on its way to deliver the wreaths to Arlington?**

In 2006, it was decided that instead of a quick trip to Arlington, the Patriot Guard Riders would escort the wreath trucks down the East Coast and take several days to make the trip. This would allow stops at schools, monuments, veterans’ homes and communities, and give the group an opportunity to promote its mission: Remember, Honor, Teach.

## **Why do you use live wreaths?**

Wreaths Across America does not “decorate” headstones. We are honoring all veterans and active military members by placing live wreaths on the headstones of veterans. The fresh evergreens are a symbol used for centuries to recognize honor, and a living tribute renewed annually. We want people to see the tradition as a living memorial to veterans and their families.

## **What are the sources of funding for WAA?**

We receive no government funding. National Wreaths Across America Day and other events are made possible by thousands of volunteers who organize local ceremonies, raise funds to sponsor wreaths and participate in the events. Morrill Worcester of Worcester Wreath Co. — the founder of WAA — continues to be a major donor of wreaths each year, but the majority of the cost for the program is paid for by individual wreath sponsors, corporate donors and volunteer truck drivers and companies.

## Does WAA have a religious or political affiliation?

Wreaths Across America is not affiliated with any religion or political party. It is our mission to remember and honor every fallen military service member during the holiday season, no matter what is happening in the nation or overseas.

## How can I get involved?

There are a number of ways for volunteers to get involved. Please keep in mind that there is **NO COST** to attend or participate in a Wreaths Across America event.

- National Wreaths Across America Day
- Escort of wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery (or any of the other locations featuring wreath escorts)
- Statehouse Ceremony — in nearly all 50 states and at our nation’s capital
- HART Ceremony (Honoring Allies and Remembering Together)
- “Thanks-A-Million” handout card program, to thank our veterans and active military members
- WAA Education Program — work with our downloadable materials in your local schools

You can also volunteer to have another location in your state participate in the national remembrance ceremony, or you can start or work with a local group to raise funds for the wreaths, for your local ceremony or for Arlington.

For more information about this year’s events, to sign up to be a volunteer or to sponsor a wreath, please visit [www.wreathscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org).

Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/WAAHQ](http://www.facebook.com/WAAHQ) and follow us on Twitter @WreathsAcross.

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