



LOCATIONS AND FUNDRAISING GROUP
2016 HANDBOOK



REMEMBER



HONOR



TEACH

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WELCOME FROM CHAIRMAN

To all the devoted volunteers of Wreaths Across America:

First, let me thank you for your continued support and commitment in helping Wreaths Across America to expand its mission to Remember, Honor and Teach. Because of each of your efforts in 2015, in excess of 600,000 volunteers placed more than 900,000 wreaths on the final resting places of American soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and their family members in more than 1,000 locations around the world, including such historic locations at Pearl Harbor, Valley Forge, the Pentagon and The Statue of Liberty.

Each day, in cemeteries throughout this country, family members of our veterans and active duty military members who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, listen to the sorrowful sound of TAPS played as their loved ones' caskets are lowered into the ground and American flags are folded and presented in remembrance of their service and sacrifices.

It is our commitment and that of Wreaths Across America to not only honor those currently being buried, but also to remember those who have gone long before and who might not have family members to visit their grave sites and thank them for their service.

I have personally been the Location Coordinator for Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia, since 2005. I have had the privilege to meet thousands of some of the incredible and inspiring volunteers who willingly give their time and effort to ensure that all those buried at Arlington are not forgotten. It is these volunteers, and those from all of your local communities, including school and church groups; scout groups; trucking companies; veterans associations; law enforcement agencies; corporate sponsors; devoted individuals, et al., that serve as the backbone of Wreaths Across America's mission.

Relying on the participation of volunteers is key to the success of Wreaths Across America—today and in the future. While we encourage individual creativity and initiative, we must have established standards and guidelines to insure that the mission to Remember, Honor and Teach is paramount. Therefore, I ask that you please review the following materials and use the information provided as a basis for your future work in promoting the mission of Wreaths Across America.

Thank you for all you do. *We will never forget!*

Sincerely,

Wayne G. Hanson

Wayne G. Hanson
Chairman, Board of Directors
WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA STORY

“Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction.

We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream.

*It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same,
or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children
what it was once like in the United States where men were free.”*

—Ronald Reagan, 40th United States President (1911 – 2004)



Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine, was a 12 year old paper boy for the *Bangor Daily News* when he won a trip to Washington D.C. His first trip to our nation’s capital was one he would never forget, and Arlington National Cemetery made an especially indelible impression on him. This experience followed him throughout his life and successful career in business, reminding him that his good fortune was due, in large part, to the values of this nation and the Veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

In 1992, Morrill found himself with a surplus of wreaths nearing the end of the holiday season. Remembering his boyhood experience at Arlington, Worcester realized he had an opportunity to honor our county’s Veterans. With the help of Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, arrangements were made for the wreaths to be placed at Arlington in one of the older sections of the cemetery, a section which had been receiving fewer visitors with each passing year.

As plans were underway, a number of other individuals and organizations stepped up to help. James Prout, owner of local trucking company Blue Bird Ranch, Inc., generously provided transportation all the way to Virginia. Volunteers from the local American Legion and VFW Posts gathered with members of the community to decorate each wreath with traditional red, hand-tied bows. Members of the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C., helped to organize the wreath-laying, which included a special ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

This act of generosity became an annual tribute that went on quietly for several years each December, led by Morrill and his family until 2005, when a photo of the stones at Arlington, adorned with wreaths and covered in snow, circulated around the internet. Suddenly, the project received national attention. Thousands of requests poured in from all over the country from people wanting to help – to emulate the Arlington wreath project at their National and State cemeteries, or to simply share their stories and thank Morrill Worcester for honoring our nation’s heroes.

Unable to donate thousands of wreaths to each state, Worcester began sending seven wreaths to every state, one for each branch of the military, and for POW/MIAs.

In 2006, with the help of the Civil Air Patrol and other civic organizations, simultaneous wreath laying ceremonies were held at over 150 locations around the country. The Patriot Guard Riders volunteered as escort for the wreaths going to Arlington. This began the annual “Veterans Honor Parade” that travels the east coast in early December.

The annual trip to Arlington and the groups of volunteers eager to participate in Worcester’s simple wreath-laying event grew each year until it became clear the desire to remember and honor our country’s fallen heroes was bigger than Arlington, and bigger than this one company.

In 2007, the Worcester family, along with veterans, and other groups and individuals who had helped with their annual remembrance wreath ceremony in Arlington, formed Wreaths Across America (WAA), a nonprofit 501-c3 organization, to continue and expand this effort, and support other groups around the country who wanted to do the same. The mission of the group is simple: Remember. Honor. Teach.

In 2008, over 300 locations held wreath laying ceremonies in every state, Puerto Rico and 24 overseas cemeteries. More than 100,000 wreaths were placed on veterans’ graves. Over 60,000 volunteers participated, including members of national veterans’ organization and the American Gold Star Mothers.

December 13, 2008, was unanimously voted by the United States Congress as “National Wreaths Across America Day.”

In 2011, WAA and its national network of volunteers laid 325,000 remembrance wreaths at 750 locations in the United States and beyond. WAA was able to include ceremonies at the Pearl Harbor Memorial, as well as Bunker Hill, Valley Forge and the sites of the September 11 tragedies. WAA accomplished this with help from 902 fundraising groups, corporate contributions, and donations of trucking, shipping, and thousands of helping hands.

The wreath laying is still held annually on a Saturday, each December, and has expanded to include more than 1,000 locations and nearly one million wreaths. The annual pilgrimage from Harrington, Maine, to Arlington National Cemetery has become known as the world’s largest veteran’s parade, stopping at schools, monuments, veteran’s homes and communities all along the way to remind people how important it is to Remember, Honor and Teach.



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: 1 millionth wreath placed at Arlington National Cemetery
- ★ 2014: For the first time, every headstone at Arlington National Cemetery received a wreath – 227,000 in total.
- ★ 2015: For the first time, every headstone at Arlington National Cemetery, plus every column in the Columbarium and along the Niche Wall received a wreath – some 240,815.
- ★ 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.

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.

Why do we spend money on the fallen when living veterans have so many needs?

This is a good question and we know when we are asked that people's hearts are in the right place to reach out to our veterans in their time of need.

We have found throughout experience over the years, that the wreath-laying tradition is NOT only for the fallen and those who have passed on, but for living veterans, our active military, and for their families - all of whom have sacrificed to provide for our freedoms. If you ask a Gold Star Mother about the loss of her son or daughter, their biggest fear is their memory will be forgotten. That is why we believe it is so important to take the time amid the hustle and bustle of the holidays, to stop and remember our blessings that have come at such a great cost.

We recognize that there are a lot of needs out there, and one of those needs is that we stop and take the time in a symbolic way to show our appreciation to those families for our freedoms. There is a famous quote that says "One is never truly dead until they are forgotten." And we have made it our mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach those memories.

Are sponsorships tax deductible?

Yes, contributions made to WAA and sponsorships are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowable. You should always consult a tax professional.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

WAYNE HANSON, CHAIRMAN

*Army Veteran
Maine State Society*

KAREN WORCESTER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Wreaths Across America
(non-voting)*

LT. COL. WAYNE MERRITT, VICE CHAIRMAN

Civil Air Patrol

RENEE WORCESTER, SECRETARY

JOSEPH TIBBETTS, TREASURER

*Army Veteran, Retired Maine State Trooper
Washington County Sherriff and Maine Legislature*

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*Veteran
Retired ME State Adjutant American Legion*

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Veteran

PATRICK SIMMONS

*Veteran
Wal-Mart*

JAMES FARRELL

Wal-Mart

MARK DAVIS, PRESIDENT/CEO

Veterans & Family Memorial Care

RUTH STONESIFER

American Gold Star Mother

BARRY POTTLE

Owner Pottle's Transportation

LORNA HARRIS

American Gold Star Mother

KATHRYN CONDON

*Former Executive Director
Army National Cemeteries Program*

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Portland Maine Police Department

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MICHAEL EDGECOMB

Maine State Road Captain, Patriot Guard Riders

SCOTT DEMASI

Former Location Coordinator TXHNCH

DUANE BELANGER

DAN MEAD

Irish Charities of Maryland

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

GENERAL KICKLIGHTER

WAA LOCATION RESOURCES

What is a Wreaths Across America Location?

In 2007, Wreaths Across America expanded its program to enable cemeteries all over the country to place wreaths on individual graves to emulate the Arlington Wreath Program by establishing official Wreaths Across America Locations. These Locations are registered groups of volunteers who partner with veteran cemeteries all over the world, and coordinate wreath laying ceremonies on National Wreaths Across America Day. Today, WAA has more than 1,000 locations throughout the country and internationally.

Registered locations are supported by WAA headquarters and are covered by WAA event insurance.

A full list of locations is available on our website at www.wreathscrossamerica.org.

Location Coordinators

WAA volunteer Location Coordinators are the backbone of our organization. As a coordinator, you're responsible for organizing and conducting all aspects of your community's ceremony in December. This includes recruiting and organizing volunteers, reaching out to the community including veterans' organizations and others with WAA experience, working with fundraising groups, communicating with local press, receiving the delivery of wreaths, facilitating the ceremony, removing wreaths after an appropriate amount of time, and staying in close contact with WAA support staff. The following pages contain helpful information to plan and execute a successful ceremony on Wreaths Across America day in December. Additional information and resources are available on our website.

Planning checklist

- ★ Register your location with us by completing the **Location Registration Forms** found on our website at <http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/#locations>. As a location coordinator, your contact information will be listed as the primary contact for your cemetery location on the WAA website. You will have access to your customized location page and can manage donations through there.
- ★ Reserve your location, and make sure parking is easy to find, close to the location and free (or at least validated).
- ★ Line up speakers for your event on Wreaths Across America Day.
- ★ Begin compiling a list of individuals and groups to invite. Involve as many people in your community as possible. Not sure where to start? Reach out to local veterans' groups for suggestions. Some organizations may want to plan flyovers, processions with Patriot Guard Riders, color guards, etc. Reach out to schools and other organizations in your community. Don't be afraid to think big; you can make the ceremony as large as you wish. All we ask is that your ceremony be open to everyone and remain non-political.

One Month Before the Event:

- ★ Send out e-vites to general invitees, stakeholders, and local community organizations. Websites like evite!, Paperless Post, Punchbowl, and Smilebox all offer user-friendly options for this. Make sure your invitations include all the details:
 - Featured speakers
 - Location
 - Time
 - Whether refreshments will be provided
 - Mail, email, or hand-deliver formal letters of invitation to elected officials

Develop a list of media contacts, and find out how they like to receive information (most prefer email these days, but some use online forms and others prefer fax or mail).

One Week Before the Event:

- ★ Prepare a media advisory to invite press to the event.
- ★ Prepare a pre-event press release.
- ★ Collect bios of public figures who plan to attend, to include in your press kits.
- ★ Finalize your ceremony format and script. You may use our sample ceremony, or modify it to fit your location. We only ask that it remain non-political and open to everyone.

One Day Before the Event:

- ★ Follow up via phone or email with journalists you sent the media advisory to, to remind them of the event.
- ★ If you expect TV coverage, arrange for special parking for satellite trucks.

Wreaths Across America Day:

- ★ Arrive at least an hour before the event begins.
- ★ Have a dedicated person look for and direct journalists to the area in which the ceremony will be held.
- ★ Try to start the event on time. This shows respect for your guests' time and their other commitments that day. It also promotes solidarity among the hundreds of groups nationwide holding simultaneous ceremonies. The ceremony at Arlington starts at 12:00 p.m. Eastern.
- ★ Hand press kits (available at <http://www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org/media-center-home>) out to journalists who attend. Each press kit should include:
 - Names and bios of important people in attendance, such as political or military figures

- A Wreaths Across America fact sheet
- National Press Release (will be distributed to locations in early December)
- Contact information for follow ups and interview requests

After the event:

Did someone in your community go above and beyond to make your ceremony special? Contact the WAA office - we'd love to hear your story and help you recognize their efforts.

- ★ Did something newsworthy happen? Issue a press release using the template provided in this guide and contact our PR team with questions.
- ★ Send in photos, video or other stories from your event to the WAA office at PR@wreathsacrossamerica.org

**MEDIA ADVISORY
PHOTO/VIDEO OPPORTUNITY**

[Cemetery] to Host Ceremony on National Wreaths Across America™ Day

- WHAT:** [Cemetery name], an official Wreaths Across America (WAA) location, will host a wreath-laying ceremony, joining more than 1,000 other locations across the country for National Wreaths Across America Day. Coordinated and led by local volunteers, the [cemetery] location has raised [\$XXX] to place [#] wreaths on the headstones of our fallen service members. This annual event seeks to further the WAA mission of Remember, Honor, Teach, ensuring that the memory of those who served our country endures.
- WHEN:** Saturday, Dec. 17, 2016
[Time] a.m.: [Add any pre-ceremony notable opportunities, like a parade or truck arrival]
12:00 p.m.: Ceremony begins
- WHERE:** [Cemetery name and specific location of ceremony]
[Address]
- WHO:** Military dignitaries/officers]
[Local dignitaries (e.g., state representative, governor, city councilors)]
Veterans, active service members and families

About Wreaths Across America

Wreaths Across America is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, begun by Maine businessman Morrill Worcester in 1992. The organization's mission – Remember, Honor, Teach – is carried out in part each year by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies in December at Arlington, as well as at more than 1,000 veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond.

Location Contact:

[Coordinator name][Cellphone]
[Email address]

Press Release Template

[Cemetery] to Host Ceremony on National Wreaths Across America™ Day

The cemetery will join the more than 1,000 participating locations across the country on Saturday, Dec. 17, 2016, in an effort to “Say Their Names”

Columbia Falls, MAINE, and [City, STATE] – [Date], 2016 – National nonprofit Wreaths Across America (WAA) announced today that [LOCATION] in [City, State] has once again joined in the effort to support the mission to Remember, Honor, Teach, as an official location for 2016. This is the [SECOND, THIRD, etc.,] year that the cemetery will be participating in this national event.

Since 1992, WAA founder Morrill Worcester has always asked volunteers placing remembrance wreaths to take time to read the name on the headstone aloud. During the escort of wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery last December, WAA Executive Director Karen Worcester stated, “A person dies twice: the first time, when they stop breathing, and a second time, when someone says their name for the last time.” It is with this in mind that this year’s theme for National Wreaths Across America Day, Saturday, Dec. 17, 2016, is “Say Their Names.”

The goal for [LOCATION] is to raise enough funds to place [insert total number] remembrance wreaths on the headstones and say the names of all the local heroes laid to rest there, to ensure that the individuals who served to protect the freedoms of our country are not, and never will be, forgotten.

“Without the thousands of local volunteers across the country who give their time and energy to support the mission, Wreaths Across America would not exist,” said Karen Worcester. “All our supporters understand the value of remembering the fallen, honoring those who currently serve, and the need to teach the next generation about the sacrifices made for our freedom.”

Those interested in volunteering for Wreaths Across America, either locally or at Arlington National Cemetery, are invited to visit the WAA website to learn more. National Wreaths Across America Day is a free community event open to all people.

About Wreaths Across America

Wreaths Across America is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, begun by Maine businessman Morrill Worcester 25 years ago. The organization’s mission, Remember, Honor, Teach, is carried out in part each year by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies each December at Arlington, as well as at thousands of veterans’ cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond. For more information, to sponsor wreaths or to sign up to volunteer, please visit www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org.

Follow Wreaths Across America on Facebook at <http://Facebook.com/WAAHQ> and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/WreathsAcross>.

Media Contacts:

Amber Caron
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[NAME OF LOCAL CONTACT]
[LOCAL PHONE NUMBER]
[EMAIL]

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Sample Wreaths Across America™ Ceremony

As coordinators, you are in charge of everything that takes place at this memorial event. How your Color Guard is placed and/or Honor Guard is placed is entirely up to you. Memorials throughout the country are all different and we empower our leaders to develop a ceremony that is unique and meaningful to them and their location. We will support you with ideas, if asked to provide them, to you or your other leaders in your group.

The following is a sample ceremony. You may work a program to suit your location. Deviations must abide by the mission and principles of Wreaths Across America™. They must be non-political and non-discriminatory.

Opening at 12:00 noon Eastern Standard Time (Sharp).

Good afternoon. Ladies and Gentlemen please join with me in a moment of silence to remember the fallen, the prisoners of war, the missing in action and honor those who have served and are serving this great nation's armed services.

:30 - :60 seconds of silence recommended

Color Guard

Please stand while we post the colors.

“Color Guard, post the Colors.”

(Where Honor Guards are present and participating, they too will come forward and place themselves on both sides of the memorial to be decorated). **Location Coordinator to set this up in advance.**

Opening Remarks:

We Thank you all for joining us here today. Right now, across the country at more than 1,100 memorial sites like this one we are gathered as one nation to Remember, Honor and Teach. We are all proud to be Americans that live in a free society made up of many people, from many walks of life. The freedoms we enjoy today have not come without a price. Lying here before us and in cemeteries throughout this nation are men and women who gave their lives so that we can live in freedom and without fear. We can worship as we see fit. We can raise our children to believe as we do. We can travel from one end of this great nation to the other and not have to ask permission to go. We are free to vote for whomever we feel should be in government office, with no explanation needed. We have the right to succeed and we have the right to fail at whatever endeavor we wish to pursue.

The United States of America was founded on the ideals of Freedom, Justice and Equality. Our Nation stands as a shining beacon of liberty and freedom to the world. We thank those who gave their lives to keep us free and we shall not forget you. We shall remember. (Short Pause)

Today, many of you here, are Veterans of wars and conflicts that America has had to fight to protect the innocent and oppressed. This nation has always been the first to stand up for the freedom of people from around the world. Many of you here today have answered that call and served your country well. We are here today to say “Thank you” and we are honored to know you.

There are many men and women serving today in all branches of the military, here at home and in places far away that most of us have never heard of. These men and women are part of the best-trained, best-equipped force in the world. We honor them and their families for the sacrifices they make each day to keep our country safe from terrorism, hatred and injustice.

Quoting our 40th United States President Ronald Reagan. Quote “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We didn’t pass it to our children in the bloodstream. It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.” End Quote.

Today, we show a united front of gratitude and respect across the United States of America as we REMEMBER the Fallen, HONOR those who serve and TEACH our children the value of freedom.

Wreath Laying: Color Guard and if present Honor Guard will present arms at the laying of each wreath.

Now (Person’s Name) will lay a holiday wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Army.

Now (Person’s Name) will lay a holiday wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Marine Corps.

Now (Person’s Name) will lay a holiday wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Navy.

Now (Person’s Name) will lay a holiday wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Air force.

Now (Person’s Name) will lay a holiday wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Coast Guard.

Now (Person’s Name) will lay a holiday wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States Merchant Marines.

Now (Person’s Name) will lay a remembrance wreath in honor of the 93,129 United States Servicemen from all branches of the service who last know status was either Prisoners of War or Missing in Action. These individuals have never returned to their families and homes. We shall not forget you

Note: If at all possible, an active duty service person should lay the wreath of the armed services they represent. After the last wreath is laid the Color Guard and Honor Guard will Order Arms.

Closing Remarks:

We encourage every volunteer here today who places a wreath on a veteran’s grave to say that veteran’s name aloud and take a moment to thank them for their service to our country. It’s a small act that goes a long way toward keeping the memory of our veterans alive.

Remember, we are not here today to “decorate graves.” We are here to remember not their deaths, but their lives. Each wreath is a gift of appreciation, from a grateful America.

These live balsam wreaths symbolize our honor to those who have served and are serving in the armed forces of our great nation and to their families who endure sacrifices everyday on our behalf. To our children, we want you to understand the freedoms you enjoy today have not been free but have come with a cost that someday, you may have to pay yourself.

As a nation standing together, we can defeat terrorism, hatred and injustice. Thanks to our Veterans, we have the freedom to do just that.

This is where the scripted ceremony ends and the Leader or other designated person turns it over to the Veterans Groups.

Tips: Where there are high-ranking officials present (Governor, State Elected Officials, etc) and who wish to make a statement (short) this is a good time to let them speak

Veterans' Groups: Leaders, make sure you accommodate all groups that want to participate in the ceremony after the scripted ceremony. Try to lead them to keep it short and to the point.

Ending: At the conclusion, where possible, Have TAPS Played. Retire the Colors and thank everyone for coming.

Location Coordinators: As Coordinators, you are in charge of everything else that takes place at this memorial event. How your Color Guard is placed and/or Honor Guard is placed is entirely up to you. Memorials through out the country are all different and we cannot script nor do we want to script the entire ceremony. You are capable and a better judge of your command than we are. We will support you with ideas, if asked to provide them, to you or your other leaders in your group. Have fun with this project.

Additional Ideas: Before the beginning of the ceremony some groups have the participants recite the Pledge of Allegiance and play the National Anthem. This is your choice to do if desired.

If you have families there that want to place wreaths on their loved one's grave you can either flag the grave ahead of time or have some of the local groups get involved by standing by the headstone to make sure no one else places the wreath other than the family member. (All this would need to be coordinated prior to the service and they would need to pre-register with whoever is organizing.)

You should also encourage people to only take one wreath or two depending on the number sponsored for your location so that everyone has a chance to lay a wreath.

If for any reason you need to skip a grave please encourage people to take a moment and stop at the grave to pay respects and honor that veteran.

Please make sure that if you have multiple groups that you recognize all of them so as to not discourage anyone from participation.

WAA FUNDRAISING RESOURCES

What is a Wreaths Across America Fundraising Group?

Our Fundraising Groups help us remember and honor veterans laid to rest all over the country by raising funds to sponsor wreaths at specified locations. Groups can be volunteers who fundraise solely for Wreaths Across America or groups from other nonprofit organizations working to raise funds for their causes.

Working with Fundraising Groups, WAA returns \$5 of every \$15 wreath sponsorship raised to support a groups' nonprofit organization and its ongoing work. If your group wishes to only sponsor wreaths and not receive any money back, WAA has a "3 for 2 program" that is a perfect fit (for every 2 wreaths sponsored a 3rd wreath will be placed at the location your group chooses to support). More information on our Fundraising Groups can be found on our website at <http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/fundraising>.

Fundraising Group Getting Started Checklist

- ★ Register as a fundraising group online.
- ★ Download Sponsorship Forms from the welcome email you receive after registering.
Remember to fill in your group number and designated location to get credit for your sponsorships!
- ★ Schedule a meeting with your group/club/organization to explain the program and set a goal for the group and individuals. For example:
 - Instruct each of your members to make list of family & friends for single (1 wreath) and family sponsorships (4 wreaths).
 - Research a list of local businesses (banks, stores, contractors, restaurants, funeral homes, insurance and real estate agencies, etc).
 - Divide up the list and assign group members several businesses each.
 - List larger businesses and major corporations for 25+ wreath sponsorships.
Identify select members and group leadership to approach the top prospects.
- ★ Set a start date and schedule a progress meeting to check in with everyone. Giving a group deadline for completion also creates a sense of urgency and action. We recommend a 30-day fundraising periods at a time, however fundraising is encouraged all year long.
- ★ Submit collected funds and tally sheet. Within 30 business days, a check for the fundraising portion will be remitted. For example:
 - 20 group members x 20 sponsorships each = 400 sponsorships
 - 400 sponsorships x \$5 per sponsorship = \$2,000.00
 - Think of all your group could do with an extra \$2,000.00!
- ★ Invite all your members (and sponsors!) to participate in the annual wreath-laying event in your area.

Fundraising Ideas & Services to Help Reach Your Goals

Here are some great fundraising ideas that some of our groups have used in recent seasons. As people see the rows of wreaths upon headstones, most of the fundraising work is about sharing what a profound experience it is for volunteers to be involved.

1. Every wreath counts: We have had a number of groups find great success with setting up a sponsorship table at local Wal-Mart, Kroger's, or other high traffic stores. Local festivals and events also provide an opportunity to inform the public about our mission, and share wreath sponsorship information. We provide acknowledgement cards and an attractive display for this purpose.
2. Every dollar counts: Not everyone will be in a position to do a full wreath sponsorship. But if you use a donation bucket or even a combat boot to collect dollars and change as people come and go in high traffic areas.
3. Every penny counts: We have had several classrooms that conducted penny drives to place wreaths for veterans in their own community. One classroom in Ohio raised funds for over 300 wreaths alone. The more people who are involved – even in the smallest ways – helps achieve our mission.
4. What A Difference A Day Makes: We are seeking groups and individuals who would like to participate in our 2016 campaign to cover Arlington National Cemetery called “What A Difference A Day Makes” in combination with our “Thanks-A-Million” Campaign.

Helping is as easy as 1 – 2 – 3:

1. Contact Wreaths Across America for more information and or to sign up as a “What A Difference A Day Makes” participant: call Marcy at 877-385-9507 or email marcy@wreathscrossamerica.org. You will be provided with a “kit” to get you started once you have registered.
2. Hand out the FREE Military Thank You Cards to veterans and active duty personnel during your “What A Difference A Day Makes” scheduled event (and all year long, seize the moment to show your appreciation by simply saying “Thank You”).
3. Collect donations at your scheduled event and turn them in to Wreaths Across America to help sponsor wreaths for Arlington National Cemetery or one of your states participating locations.

Wreath Sponsorship Forms

The following useful forms are available for download on our website at

<http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/fundraising>.

- Instructions for Fundraising
- Blank W-9 to be completed by Fundraising Groups
- 2016 Fundraising Tally Sheet
- 2016 Wreath Sponsorship Form
- 2016 Trifold Brochure
- Donation Receipt

Media Advisory Template

MEDIA ADVISORY PHOTO/VIDEO OPPORTUNITY

Local Wreaths Across America™ Group to Host [Event]

WHAT: [City/town name]’s local fundraising group for Wreaths Across America (WAA) will host a[n] [event type, e.g., bake sale, silent auction, dance, school activity] event to raise awareness and support efforts to cover each veteran’s headstone at [local cemetery affiliate] this December on National Wreaths Across America Day.

[Add a line or two about the specific event – such as what’s involved and if the public can attend – and try to note any interesting visuals for broadcast media]

WHEN: [Date]
[Time]

WHERE: [Location]
[Address]

WHO: [List anyone attending whom the media could interview or who might draw the media’s interest]

About Wreaths Across America

Wreaths Across America is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded to continue and expand the annual wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery, begun by Maine businessman Morrill Worcester in 1992. The organization’s mission – Remember, Honor, Teach – is carried out in part each year by coordinating wreath-laying ceremonies in December at Arlington, as well as at more than 1,000 veterans’ cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond.

Location Contact:

[Coordinator name]

[Cellphone]

[Email address]

###

Press Release Template

Media contacts:

Amber Caron

Industrum

207-773-0700

pr@wreathscrossamerica.org

[Name of local contact]

[Phone number]

[Email]

Local Effort Underway to Support Wreaths Across America™

Volunteers to host fundraising events to ensure that all veterans
at [XXX] Cemetery are honored

Columbia Falls, MAINE, and [City, STATE] – [DATE], 2016 – Local volunteers are working hard to ensure that all veterans laid to rest at [local cemetery] are honored this December on National Wreaths Across America Day. This year, the ceremony, held simultaneously across the country at more than 1,000 locations, will be on Saturday, Dec. 17, 2016. The goal: to place a live, balsam fir wreath at the headstone of every veteran buried there and say each person’s name, so their memory lives on.

From now until November, volunteers will be hosting various fundraisers to sponsor the [# of headstones] wreaths needed to honor every veteran at [cemetery]. [Each wreath sponsorship costs \$15, with \$5 going to the local fundraising group for [non-profit organization] OR [For every two-wreath sponsorships sold, three wreaths will be provided to [cemetery] as part of a special fundraising program developed by WAA.

[Bullet list of upcoming fundraising events: event, date and time.]

“Each and every wreath is a gift from an appreciative person or family who knows what it means to serve and sacrifice for the freedoms we all enjoy,” said Karen Worcester, executive director of Wreaths Across America. “We are so humbled that the community of [town/city] is participating in our mission to Remember, Honor and Teach.”

[OPTIONAL: INSERT LOCAL FUNDRAISING STORY. Why is the fundraising group doing this work? For example: a local veterans’ group will be coordinating the fundraising event to raise money for both WAA and a new roof for its own facility.]

National Wreaths Across America Day is a free event, open to all. For more information, to donate or to sign up to volunteer, please visit www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org.

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BRANDING GUIDELINES AND MEDIA RESOURCES

The Wreaths Across America brand elements help strengthen our organization’s recognition across many channels of outreach and communication.

Our organization brand guidelines have been designed to be easy to access and follow, and allow for a high degree of creative freedom and flexibility—all while maintaining a basic brand consistency. Wreaths Across America deeply understands and exists to support the strong emotional connection, love for America and appreciation for our military personnel and veterans that drive the efforts of many of our volunteers. Our volunteers are the core of our organization, and we strive to be as supportive, accessible, and helpful to them as we can.

Logo

The Wreaths Across America master logo is the our most iconic image and is very important to the WAA brand. The three wreathed gravestones above the logotype are inscribed with our mission to “Remember, Honor, Teach.” In one iconic image, our logo shows a quick visual of what our organization is all about.

The full-color Master Logo should be used whenever possible on WAA branded material. (Where color, space or proportional constraints make the use of the master logo impossible, other variations are discussed and available below.)

Do’s and Don’ts

- DO:**
- Use the full-color “Master Logo” whenever possible
 - Sparingly use the logo variations—only use if required by design or production constraints
 - Use the “centered horizontal” version only when it can be centered in a layout; otherwise, use the “horizontal” version
- DO NOT:**
- Use the logo on top of a busy, multi-colored background that would make it difficult to read

Download the Wreaths Across America full style guide, as well as approved photographic assets at <https://app.frontify.com/d/8X67kVj1gxiv/wreaths-across-america-style-guide>

Media Policy

Wreaths Across America’s mission to Remember, Honor and Teach has been taken up by eager groups and individuals all through the country and beyond. We are humbled and grateful for the response we have received, and at the rate of growth we have experienced as we help accommodate people’s willingness to help.

At the same time we have a responsibility to protect the principles and core values this organization was founded on, and we must ensure that our message is not distorted, corrupted, or used in any way that could unintentionally hurt our ability to achieve our mission. Failing to do this could put all our work at risk. We must remember that above all, our work is about veterans, men and women in the armed forces, and military families. Our work is not about religion, a political party or agenda, or any group or affiliation.

Our goal is a consistent and positive message that helps educate the public about the importance of honoring the memories of all who sacrificed their time, their family, their health, and often their lives, to protect the freedoms we enjoy.

Our policy, which relates to all Board Members, Groups and Location Coordinators, is the following:

1. The Executive Director of Wreaths Across America is the official spokesperson of the organization.
2. The use of the Wreaths Across America™ name or likeness on any printed or electronic form of communication by anyone other than a registered Group or Location Coordinator is prohibited.
3. Groups and Location Coordinators will use Press Release templates provided in the WAA Handbook. If WAA is mentioned in any other press releases, press kits, special articles, guest columns, etc., prepared in advance, they must be approved by WAA headquarters before they are distributed and/or published.
4. When working directly with the media, (such as in interviews) Groups and Locations Leaders may speak OF Wreaths Across America, but not speak FOR it. Comments, quotes and other official information will be provided for you or the media by WAA if requested.

No Board Member, Group or Location Coordinator may use the letterhead, logo, or name of Wreaths Across America to give an implicit or explicit impression that they are employed by or officially represent Wreaths Across America. Board members may represent Wreaths Across America with permission from the Executive Director.

WAA Contacts

Location Information

Julie Bright

877-385-9504 Ext. 305

julie@wreathscrossamerica.org

Public Relations or Media Questions

Amber Caron

207-773-0700 ext. 235

pr@wreathscrossamerica.org

Fundraising Group Information

Marcy Beardsley

877-385-9504 Ext. 304

Marcy@wreathscrossamerica.org

All other inquiries should be directed to info@wreathscrossamerica.org

2016 CAMPAIGNS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

2016 National Theme: "Say Their Names"

No one ever wants to be forgotten and when someone wears a military service uniform for this great nation they never should be.

Prisoners of war have told stories of how men would use whatever means possible to etch their names into the walls of their cell as a sign, to whoever might follow or discover the artifact, that they lived and were there at one point in history.

The Wreaths Across America organization and its supporters understand the value of remembering our fallen, honoring those who currently serve and the importance of teaching our youngsters the meaning of their sacrifices in the name of freedom.

Last December, during the escort to Arlington National Cemetery, Wreaths Across America Executive Director Karen Worcester stated, "a person dies twice; the first time when they stop breathing and a second time when someone mentions their name for the last time."

Wreaths Across America's founder, Morrill Worcester, has always asked volunteers who place veterans remembrance wreaths on the headstones of our fallen heroes to take a moment to read the name aloud.

In keeping with that request, the theme for National Wreaths Across America Day, Saturday December 17, 2016 is "Say Their Names."

Thanks-A-Million Campaign

In May of 2010, in honor of National Military Appreciation Month, Wreaths Across America™ set a goal of personally thanking 500,000 veterans, active duty service members and their families. We called on the Civil Air Patrol along with our many other active civic groups and volunteers to help distribute “Veteran Appreciation Thank-you Cards”. The idea was to encourage people to give a thank-you card to military personnel, veterans or their families. In a very short time over 400,000 cards were distributed.

The reaction was so great, we have established our “Thanks-A-Million” Campaign. The Card campaign has encouraged the simple yet powerful act of simply saying “Thank You” to a veteran. These cards can be ordered from our web site and are FREE.

To show you an example of how powerful this can be, we received the following note, which we have reprinted courtesy of Michael Pellerin of the CAP Maine Wing:



Regarding presenting a veteran with one of our Wreaths Across America™ cards I would like to share a special moment I experienced today with you. I went to the Winslow McDonald's this morning for a bite to eat. There sat this older gentleman that I have seen there many times before. He sits at a particular table, clearly is all by himself, and always follows a particular regimen as to what he orders and how much he orders. He is very quiet but a very well spoken gentleman with a resemblance to the actor Walter Brimley. He very proudly wears a Vietnam Veteran cap presented to him years ago by the local VFW. It has an assortment of well earned ribbons on it including the National Service, Distinguished Service, Purple Heart, and a few other awards.”

“I approached him and said excuse me sir, I am with the Civil Air Patrol however I am not in uniform today but rather in my gardening clothes. He chuckled and said hi. I presented him with a card and thanked him for his service to our country. He beamed with pride and thanked me. As I left he read the card a tear running down his cheek, kissed the card, and carefully put it in his pocket. I truly believe I made his day. That's what it is all about, right. It brought a tear to my eyes as well.”

It is not the card or the wreath that matters as much as the symbolic gesture of letting our veterans (and their families) know that: We honor your service, we remember your sacrifice, and we will teach others to never forget.

State House Ceremonies

Each year since 2007, location leaders and volunteers have also participated in wreath-laying ceremonies conducted on the Monday before Wreaths Across America™ day, at State Capitols in all 50 states and in Washington, D.C. The State House ceremonies promote a week-long celebration of America's veterans and their service to our Country, with a particular focus on family during the holidays.

At locations nationwide, Civil Air Patrol, veterans groups, funeral service practitioners and others who embrace the Wreaths Across America™ mission to, "Remember, Honor and Teach," will, in fact remember and honor our veterans during the holiday season, the traditional time of family get-togethers and gratitude.

Volunteers partner to conduct the WAA State House Ceremony each year where ceremonies begin at 11:30 A.M., with the actual Wreath Laying Ceremony taking place at 12:00 Noon EST. Dignitaries and special guests are invited to speak in honor of our veterans and active military. The wreath-laying ceremonies are non-political and non-denominational and that all groups are invited to attend.

For more information about your State House Ceremony, call the WAA Office.

World's Largest Veterans' Parade

In 2006 when the internet stories fueled attention for the WAA project, Morrill Worcester was contacted by the Patriot Guard Riders who generously offered their help with the project. It was decided that instead of a quick trip to Arlington, the PGR would escort the Wreath trucks down the East Coast and take several days to make the trip. This would allow stops at schools, monuments, veteran's homes and communities, and give the group an opportunity to promote their mission: Remember-Honor and Teach. This "parade" of truckers, supporters, and well-wishers has become an annual event and teaching opportunity for WAA, and a valued part of the Arlington Project.

The State of Maine assigns 2 State Troopers and Patrol Cars to join the escort all the way to Arlington. Each community that we travel through turns out with emergency vehicles that join us as we go through their vicinity. The amount of support shown for the heroes we journey to honor is truly inspiring.

It has become an important and powerful annual experience, and many towns request to become "stops" along the parade each year. The caravan has grown to include veterans. Patriot Guard Riders, other motorcycle groups, Civil Air Patrol Members and veterans all making the pilgrimage to Arlington.

In 2009 the "Parade" was honored to be joined by a group of American Gold Star Mothers and a Dad who raised awareness of our important work by sharing their stories.

The convoy is now emulated all over the country as communities usher wreaths to their ceremonies.

We post our Arlington Project schedule on our web site, and you can track the parade's status live on Facebook.

We are only able to include a few parade stops during the trip to Arlington. We require that events at the stops abide by our Public Relations Policy, have no political agenda, and conduct programs that are consistent with our mission and values. Any use of the WAA name without permission is prohibited.

Hart Ceremony (Honoring Allies And Remembering Together)

Held on the first Saturday of December

The HART (Honoring Allies and Remembering Together) Ceremony was organized to recognize the service of all veterans, including young men and women from Canada who are serving or served in the U.S. Military.

Members of several national organizations gather on the Ferry Point Bridge between Calais, ME and St. Stephen, NB, and the Ambassador Bridge between Detroit Michigan and Windsor Ontario, to place wreaths in honor of the service and sacrifice of veterans between the allied nations.

The wreath-laying ceremony is sponsored by Wreaths Across America with a mission to Remember, Honor and Teach about the sacrifice of our veterans and their families. The U.S. based organization and partners also provide wreaths to our Canadian allies for placement at the Centatoph Memorial Monument in St. Stephen.

Ceremony participants include Civil Air Patrol (auxiliary of the United States Air Force), the Cadets Canada (the Department of Defense), The American Gold Star Mothers, the Canadian Mothers of the Memorial Cross and Silver Cross, and dignitaries on behalf of both nations.

The border wreath-laying event kicks off a full week of Wreaths Across America events around the Country, culminating with the wreath-laying ceremonies to honor veterans at over 400 participating locations nationwide, including 24 overseas veterans' cemeteries.

With the help of the Civil Air Patrol we hope to expand the HART to include a border crossing in Michigan in 2010.

For more information on the HART Program please contact the Wreaths Across America Office at 207-483-2039.

STAY CONNECTED

Social Media

Wreaths Across America is active on the following social channels and we encourage all of our volunteers connect with us online to share photos, stories, fundraising ideas and more!

- Facebook: Our primary Facebook page can be found at www.facebook.com/WAAHQ. We share stories and information relevant to the organization and spreading our mission daily and regularly host contests for our audience members. Registered Fundraising Groups and Locations also have closed Facebook groups managed by WAA staff members to provide a forum for sharing ideas and information.
- Twitter: Follow us at @WreathsAcross for the latest WAA news and information in support of our mission
- Pinterest: Follow our boards at www.pinterest.com/WAAHQ for photo inspiration and to support your Location and Fundraising efforts, as well as images to honor our nations' service members
- YouTube: Subscribe to our WreathsAcrossAmerica channel for videos from past events, interviews and more
- LinkedIn: Connect professionally with WAA by following our company page for organizational updates and information

The WAA Blog

Keep up on all things Wreaths Across America and read inspiring stories from our Gold Star Families, founders, volunteers and donors on the Wreaths Across America Blog, <http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org/waa-blog>.

E-Newsletter

Our biweekly newsletter features a roundup of recent blog posts, news articles and top social posts to keep you updated on all things WAA. Sign up to receive the newsletter on our website.

Magazine

The 2nd edition of wreaths Across America Magazine will be available this winter.

Wreaths Across America Radio

Listen to a compilation of patriotic music and original interviews and audio content on WAA's very own online radio station at www.waaradio.org, in partnership with Maine Internet Radio. You can also use your mobile device to listen in via the TuneIn App.

“WE ARE NOT HERE TO
‘DECORATE GRAVES.’ WE ARE HERE
TO REMEMBER NOT THEIR DEATHS,
BUT THEIR LIVES.”

—KAREN WORCESTER,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA