**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Wreaths Across America Advances its Mission to Normandy**

*Nonprofit to place 9,387 veterans’ wreaths honoring all U.S. service members laid to rest at*

*Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial*

**COLUMBIA FALLS, Maine, and NORMANDY, France —** Nov. 8, 2018 **—** Today, [Wreaths Across America](https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/) (WAA) announces that it has been granted permission by the French authorities, on the basis of phytosanitary guarantees provided by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to place 9,387 Maine-made, balsam veterans’ wreaths on Saturday, Dec. 1, 2018, on the headstones of all U.S. service members laid to rest at [Normandy American Cemetery](https://www.abmc.gov/cemeteries-memorials/europe/normandy-american-cemetery) and Memorial, located in Colleville-sur-Mer, France. The cemetery is one of 14 permanent American World War II military cemeteries on foreign soil. The government of France granted use of the land, in perpetuity. United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower and French President René Coty dedicated the cemetery on July 18, 1956.

This is the first time WAA – whose mission it to **Remember** the fallen, **Honor** those that served, and **Teach** the next generation the value of Freedom – has sent U.S.-made balsam wreaths to be placed on foreign soil. The December wreath-laying event is a joint collaboration between the Normandy American Cemetery and [American Battle Monuments Commission](https://www.abmc.gov/) (ABMC) and will include ceremonial wreath placements on each of the five D-Day invasion beaches, at Pointe Du Hoc, and include a Canadian Wreath presentation.

“The mission of the American Battle Monuments Commission is to honor the service, achievements and sacrifices of our U.S armed forces in two World Wars. It closely parallels the mission of the Wreaths Across America organization — to Remember, Honor and Teach,” said Scott Desjardins, Superintendent, Normandy American Cemetery. “The Normandy American Cemetery is proud and pleased to be the first ABMC cemetery to have been chosen to attempt this important endeavor. As we approach the 75th Anniversary of the D-Day landings, conducted to establish a foothold in Western Europe to free it from tyranny, the Wreaths Across America organization storms the beaches of Normandy to establish a foothold and commemorate the sacrifice made by the men and women who never returned home and are now memorialized in our sites.”

The veterans’ wreaths are being gifted to WAA as a donation from its Founder, Morrill Worcester. It has long been a dream of his to one day place a wreath in honor of every U.S. veteran laid to rest, worldwide. “When I began placing wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery in 1992, I could never have imagined that this idea would impact people around the world the way it has,” said Worcester. “To know that WAA will be able to place a wreath for each of those veterans and say their names out loud is truly incredible, and I am so honored to be able to help this effort however I can.”

The transportation of nearly 9,500 fresh balsam veterans’ wreaths from Maine to Normandy requires a massive and coordinated effort, and this complex transport would not be possible without the generous in-kind support of global supply chain management company [CEVA Logistics](https://www.cevalogistics.com/), the transatlantic cargo capacity of [United Airlines](https://www.united.com/en/us/), and the over-the-road transport provided by [Metropolitan Trucking](https://www.mtrk.com/).

“Our goal at Wreaths Across America is to honor and remember all those who served and sacrificed for the freedoms we as Americans enjoy every day,” said Wayne Hanson, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Wreaths Across America. “To be given the opportunity and support needed to advance our mission to Normandy is truly a gift and we intend to continue to move forward until one day, all U.S veterans laid to rest are honored.”

In 1992 in Harrington, Maine, wreath maker Morrill Worcester sought to turn a surplus of 5,000 holiday wreaths into an opportunity to pay tribute to our country’s veterans. With the help of then Maine Senator Olympia Snowe, Worcester arranged for the wreaths to be placed at Arlington National Cemetery. The tradition continued on for more than a decade before national attention spurred the start of the 501c3 Wreaths Across America in 2007. Since then, the program has grown in scope, touching the lives of thousands of veterans’ families and volunteers in every state across the country. In 2017 alone, Wreaths Across America and its national network of volunteers laid over 1.5 million veterans' wreaths at 1,433 locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea, and abroad.

This year, **National Wreaths Across America Day is Saturday, Dec. 15, 2018** – at least 1,500 participating locations across the country will host wreath-laying ceremonies, all run by dedicated volunteers. To learn more about how to sponsor wreaths or volunteer in your own community, please visit [www.wreathsacrossamerica.org.](http://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org.)

**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 hundreds of veterans’ cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond.

**About Normandy American Cemetery**

Normandy American Cemetery honors American loss from World War II. It sits on a cliff overlooking Omaha Beach and the English Channel. It was dedicated on July 18, 1956. Normandy American Cemetery covers 172.5 acres and includes more than 9,300 burials. It includes one soldier from World War I. More than 1,500 Americans who were missing in action, or lost or buried at sea are honored by name in the Garden of the Missing. Most of the Americans who rest at Normandy American Cemetery lost their lives in the D-Day landings and the subsequent hedgerow fighting.

**About American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC)**

ABMC is an agency of the executive branch of the federal government, honoring the service, achievements and sacrifices of the U.S. armed forces abroad since April 6th, 1917. ABMC manages and maintains 26 cemeteries and 29 federal memorials, monuments, and commemorative plaques throughout the world. The commission also maintains three memorials in the United States.

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