

2017 National Wreaths Across America Day Sees the Placement of More than 1,565,000 Remembrance Wreaths at 1,422 Participating Cemeteries Across the Country

At Arlington National Cemetery, more than 75,000 volunteers placed 246,700 wreaths

ARLINGTON, Va. — December 16, 2017 — In 1992, a wreath-maker from Maine had 5,000 extra wreaths. Rather than letting them go to waste, he gave the wreaths as a gift of thanks for the service and sacrifice made by our nation's military so he could live freely to work and raise his family. Morrill Worcester could never have foreseen then how this simple gesture would ignite a passion in the hearts and souls of millions of Americans many years later.

On Saturday, at **1,422** participating locations nationwide, grateful Americans in every state placed more than **1,565,000** remembrance wreaths. At Arlington National Cemetery specifically, **244,700** wreaths (one for each marker there) were placed by more than **75,000** volunteers, the largest crowd to ever participate there. Nearly **500** truckloads of wreaths were transported across the country through a network of hundreds of volunteer drivers, donated trucking and diesel, and countless hours of dedicated volunteers committed to the mission to **Remember, Honor and Teach**.

"Today, we honor the freedom fighters, and it our responsibility to be the freedom caretakers," said Karen Worcester, executive director, Wreaths Across America, during her opening remarks. "It is important to teach our children from patriotism, not politics, so they'll carry on the caring for freedom."

Events at Arlington began with the arrival of a mile-long convoy of ceremonial vehicles, including tractor-trailers, buses, and cars carrying wreaths, veterans, Gold Star and Blue Star Families and supporters. The escort Grand Marshals – Vietnam Medal of Honor Recipient, Colonel Roger Donlon, U.S. Army Special Forces (Retired) and his wife, Norma, a Vietnam-era Gold Star wife – spoke to the crowd about their incredible experience with the caravan as it traveled down the East Coast last week stopping at schools, memorials and other locations along the way to spread the mission.

Each live, balsam remembrance wreath is a gift of respect and appreciation, donated by a private citizen or organization and placed on the graves by volunteers as a small gesture of gratitude for the freedoms Americans enjoy. For centuries, fresh evergreens have been used as a symbol of honor and have served as a living tribute renewed annually. Wreaths Across America believes the tradition represents a living memorial that honors veterans, active duty military and their families. When each wreath is placed, volunteers are asked to say the name of the veteran out loud to ensure their memory lives on.

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 1,200 veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and beyond. For more information or to sponsor a wreath please visit www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org.

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