



LOCATIONS & SPONSORSHIP GROUP 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 expand its mission to Remember, Honor and Teach. Because of each of your efforts in 2019, over two million volunteers, a third of which were children, placed 2.2 million veterans wreaths on the final resting places of American soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, Coast Guardsmen and their family members at more than 2,100 locations around the world.

Each day, in cemeteries throughout this country, family members of our veterans and active duty military members 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 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 gravesites 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 ensure 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 paperboy 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 country’s veterans. With the help of former 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 participate – 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 POWs/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 the annual veterans wreath ceremony in Arlington, formed Wreaths Across America (WAA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) 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’ organizations 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 veterans' 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, 2001 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 2,100 locations and 2.2 million wreaths. And for the first time in 2018, our mission expanded overseas with the placement of 9,387 veterans’ wreaths at Normandy-American Cemetery in France. Each wreath is placed by a volunteer and the names of our fallen said out loud to keep their memory alive.



BACKGROUND & FAQ 2020

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: Millionth wreath placed at Arlington National Cemetery
- ★ 2014: For the first time, every headstone at Arlington National Cemetery received a wreath.
- ★ 2016: 25th year that veterans' wreaths were placed at Arlington National Cemetery.
- ★ 2018: Mission advances overseas with the first placement of 9,387 veterans' wreaths at Normandy-American Cemetery in France.

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.

Since its founding, the organization has expanded to include nearly 3,000 local fundraising groups in all 50 states, representing more than 2,150 participating locations, in addition to Arlington National Cemetery.

Every year since 2008, Congress proclaims a Saturday in December as National Wreaths Across America Day. This year, it will be held on **Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020**.

2019 Numbers

- ★ 2.2 million veterans' wreaths were placed in total across the country – 254,000 of them at Arlington National Cemetery.
- ★ More than two million volunteers participated at 2,158 locations nationwide, with 38,500 volunteers laying wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery. More than a third of the volunteers across the country were children.
- ★ Nearly 600 truckloads of wreaths were delivered across the country by hundreds of volunteer professional truck drivers using donated equipment and fuel from approximately 250 carriers.

2020 Theme: Be an American Worth Fighting For

Inspired by Staff Sgt. Daniel Strong and his keynote address during the 2018 escort to Arlington at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School (Monty Tech), located in Fitchburg, Mass. As an infantryman in the Marine Corps, he lost 18 Marines during his service, three were his friends when he was a Lance Corporal, six as their Squad Leader, and the remaining nine as their Platoon Sergeant.

SSgt. Strong's raw emotion was felt by all on that cold December day, as he spoke about his strong conviction to teach his JROTC students to exemplify, on a daily basis, the Wreaths Across America mission. "Be an American worth the sacrifice. In your daily operations, and in how you deal with one another and how you live your life. Those young men and women who are in Arlington National Cemetery and other cemeteries, they earned the right for you to be an American worth fighting for."

What We Do

REMEMBER

- ★ WAA's annual pilgrimage from Columbia Falls, Maine, to Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia 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.
- ★ The Remembrance Tree Program provides a living memorial to loved ones lost. A replica dog tag is made in honor of your loved one and it is attached to the trunk of a evergreen tree on the tip land in Maine where the brush is harvested every third year to make veterans' wreaths.
- ★ 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, Canada; Detroit, Michigan and Windsor, Ontario, Canada; and Sweetwater, Montana and the Alaskan/Canadian border.
- ★ WAA hosts statehouse ceremonies in nearly 50 states.

HONOR

- ★ Through WAA's national group fundraising program, it has helped other nonprofits and civic groups such as Civil Air Patrol, Scouts, 4- H Clubs, local VFWs and American Legions raise funds for their own community needs. Since 2007, Wreaths Across America has given back more than \$11 million to local groups through this fundraising structure.
- ★ WAA conducts several programs to honor our veterans, including our popular Thanks-A-Million campaign, which distributes free "I Owe You" cards to people all over the country to share with veterans as a simple thank-you for their service and a promise to give back.
- ★ The organization participates in veterans' events throughout the year as well as public outreach through Veterans Day and Memorial Day programs, Wreaths Across America Radio, in our monthly newsletters, in press coverage and on the website.
- ★ The Wreaths Across America Museum located at the National Headquarters in Columbia Falls, Maine, showcases thousands of items that have been donated to Wreaths Across America over the decades. All donations help to provide insight and tell the greater story of the experiences of U.S. military personnel.
- ★ Wreaths Across America has a veteran liaison on staff to work with local veterans' organizations in Maine.

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 clubs, Scouts and other youth groups to participate in our efforts.
- ★ The Mobile Education Exhibit is a traveling classroom on wheels designed to inspire and educate all about the mission and those who lives have been impacted by it. The goal of the Wreaths Across America Education Exhibit is to bring local communities and our military together with education, stories and interactive connections.

Frequently Asked Questions

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 have been used for centuries as a symbol recognizing honor and as 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?

WAA receives 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. Individual wreath sponsors and corporate donors, pay for the majority of the cost for the program and volunteer truck drivers and trucking companies make it possible for WAA to transport wreaths all over the country.

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.

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.*

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.

- ★ Help place wreaths on National Wreaths Across America Day in your local community.
- ★ Sponsor a \$15 wreath for a local veteran.
- ★ Statehouse ceremony – in nearly all 50 states and at our nation’s capital
- ★ Sign up as a sponsorship group and help place wreaths at a local or national cemetery of your choice while raising funds for your own group or program.
- ★ You can also volunteer to coordinate a new location in your state to participate in the national remembrance ceremony.

For more information about this year’s events, to sign up to be a volunteer or to sponsor a wreath, please visit www.wreathsassamerica.org. Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WAAHQ, follow us on Twitter and Instagram [@WreathsAcross](https://twitter.com/WreathsAcross) and listen to [Wreaths Across America Radio](#) 24/7.

Contact WAA

Toll Free: (877) 385-9504

info@wreathsassamerica.org

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

DAVID “MEL” RUSSEN, JR., TREASURER

JOSEPH TIBBETTS

*Army veteran, retired Maine State Trooper
Washington County Sherriff and Maine Legislature*

RON SAILOR

*Veteran
Retired Maine State Adjutant American Legion*

SARAH WORCESTER

DR. PAMELA W. SLAVEN-LEE, DNP, FNP-C

COL. DAN LECLAIR

Veteran

PATRICK SIMMONS

*Veteran
Wal-Mart*

JAMES FARRELL

Wal-Mart

BARRY POTTLE

Owner, Pottle's Transportation

LORNA HARRIS

American Gold Star Mother

ANN HANSON

KEVIN HALEY

Portland (Maine) Police Department

DAN MEAD

Irish Charities of Maryland

MICHAEL EDGECOMB

Maine State Road Captain, Patriot Guard Riders

RANDY LEWER

Veteran, Location Coordinator

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS

MICHAEL CALENDIA

Ponaganset Middle School history teacher

SCOTT DEMASI

Former location coordinator TXHNCH

DUANE BELANGER

HONORARY BOARD MEMBERS

RETIRED ARMY GEN. CLAUDE 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 2,100 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.wreathsassamerica.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 National 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 www.wreathsassamerica.org/add-location. 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. Make sure parking is easy to find, close to the location and free (or at least validated).
- ★ Line up speakers for your event.
- ★ 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 to whom you sent the media advisory 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 wreath placement ceremony at The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier begins at 12 pm EST at Arlington National Cemetery.
- ★ Hand press kits 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 2,100 other locations across the country for National Wreaths Across America Day. Coordinated and led by local volunteers, fundraising groups have raised [\$XXX] to place [#] wreaths on the headstones of our fallen service members at [cemetery]. 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, December 19, 2020
[Time] a.m.: [Add any pre-ceremony notable opportunities, like a parade or truck arrival]
12 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 2,100 veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and overseas.

###

Location Contact:

[Coordinator name]
[Cell phone]
[Email address]

Wreaths Across America Media Contact

Amber Caron
207-513-6457 (cell)
pr@wreathsassamerica.org



[CEMETERY] Announced as an Official Location for the 2020 National Wreaths Across America Day

The cemetery will join the more than 2,100 participating locations across the country to Remember, Honor and Teach on Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020

Columbia Falls, MAINE, and [City, STATE] – [Date], 2020 – National nonprofit Wreaths Across America (WAA) announced today that [LOCATION] in [City, State] has once again joined OR will be joining in the effort to support the mission to Remember, Honor, Teach, as an official location for 2020. This is the [FIRST, SECOND, THIRD, etc.,] year that the cemetery will participate in this national event.

Wreaths Across America started as a simple gesture of thanks that has grown into a national movement of dedicated volunteers and communities coming together to not only remember the nation's fallen and honor their service, but to teach the next generation about the sacrifices made for us to live freely. This year, there will be more than 2,100 participating locations placing wreaths on National Wreaths Across America Day – Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020 – with more than two million volunteers coming together.

The goal for [LOCATION] is to raise enough funds to place [insert total number] veterans' wreaths on the headstones of all the local heroes laid to rest there, to ensure that the individuals who served to protect the freedoms of our country never be forgotten and to bring the community together in patriotic commemoration.

"We are forever grateful for the thousands of supporters who dedicate their time and effort to fulfilling our mission on a local level," said Karen Worcester, executive director, Wreaths Across America. "These individuals and their communities know the value of remembering the fallen, honoring those who currently serve and teaching the next generation about the sacrifices made for our freedom every day, and without their continued support, Wreaths Across America would not exist."

Those interested in volunteering for Wreaths Across America, or sponsoring a wreath for [insert cemetery name], are invited to visit [insert direct link to your page] to learn more. National Wreaths Across America Day is a free, non-political, community event open to all people.

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Media Contacts:

Amber Caron
207-513-6457
acaron@wreathsassamerica.org

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

Sample Wreaths Across America™ Ceremony

Official National Wreaths Across America Day Ceremony *Optional Script*

Opening at 12 noon Eastern Standard Time

Good afternoon. Ladies and Gentlemen please join with me in a moment of silence to remember the fallen, prisoners of war, those 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*). **Location Coordinator to set this up in advance.**

Opening Remarks:

Thank you all for joining us here today. Right now, across the country at more than 1,700 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. **At this time, you may ask all the veterans in attendance to stand for a round of applause.**

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 their families, and TEACH the next generation the value of freedom.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now (Person's Name) will lay a veteran's wreath in honor of the 93,129 United States Servicemen from all branches of the service whose last known 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.

At this time, we would also like to honor all of the uniformed service members who serve in The United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps (USPHS) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Commissioned Officer Corps.

NOTE: If you would like to include another group in this part of the ceremony, such as Gold Star or Blue Star Families, First Responders, etc., now is the time to recognize these groups who may be in attendance. You may use wreaths that have been sponsored to add to this piece of the ceremony as you deem appropriate.

ADDITIONAL 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 fir 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: Coordinators, please 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 ceremonial event. How your Color Guard is placed and/or Honor Guard is placed is entirely up to you. Ceremonies throughout 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 whomever 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.

Sample Wreaths Across America™ Ceremony

Official Wreaths Across America Statehouse Ceremony

Opening at 12 noon Eastern Standard Time

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:

Ladies and gentlemen, 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*). **Leaders will set this up in advance.**

Opening Remarks:

We are gathered here today at [this location] along with every other state across the country as one nation to Remember, Honor and Teach. We are all proud to be Americans living 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. 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 president, Ronald Reagan, "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."

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 the wreath.

Now (person's name) will lay a live balsam wreath in memory of those who served and are serving in the United States armed forces.

Closing Remarks:

The wreath before you represents our commitment as a united America to remember the fallen. We also want this wreath to 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.

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.) who wish to make a short statement, 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 throughout 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. 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.

WAA FUNDRAISING RESOURCES

What is a Wreaths Across America Sponsorship Group?

Our sponsorship 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 sponsorship groups, WAA returns \$5 of every \$15 wreath sponsorship raised to support a group's nonprofit organization and its ongoing work. If your group wishes to only sponsor wreaths and not receive any money back, WAA has a three-for-two program that is a perfect fit (for every two wreaths sponsored a third wreath will be placed at the location your group chooses to support). More information on our sponsorship groups can be found on our website at www.wreathscrossamerica.org/fundraising.

Sponsorship Group Getting Started Checklist

- ★ Register as a sponsorship 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 a list of family and friends for single (one wreath) and family sponsorships (four wreaths).
 - Research a list of local businesses (banks, stores, contractors, restaurants, funeral homes, insurance and real estate agencies, etc.).
 - Divide 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 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. Think of all your group could do with an extra \$2,000!
- ★ Invite all your members (and sponsors) to participate in the annual wreath-laying event in your area.

Fundraising Ideas and 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 acknowledgment 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 you can 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 involved – even in the smallest ways – helps achieve our mission.

Helping is as easy as 1-2-3:

1. Contact your Wreaths Across America Regional Liaison for more information about purchasing a fundraising kit, or ideas to help generate awareness and sponsorships in your community.
2. Hand out the free I OWE YOU cards to veterans and active duty personnel 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 the participating location you are supporting.

Wreath Sponsorship Forms

The following useful forms are available for download on our website at www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/fundraising:

- Instructions for fundraising
- Blank W-9 to be completed by fundraising groups
- Fundraising tally sheet
- Wreath sponsorship form
- Brochure
- Donation receipt

Group Sponsorship Program

In 2007, **Wreaths Across America** expanded its annual wreath placement event to enable groups and organizations to support Arlington National Cemetery and other local, participating cemeteries across the country. We established the Group Sponsorship Program to benefit other like-minded charities, community programs and civic groups through the sale of wreath sponsorships for participating locations.

We invite your group or organization to help us remember and honor our American heroes and teach the next generation, through raising funds to sponsor veterans' wreaths. As a Wreaths Across America Group Sponsorship partner, your organization will receive \$5-of-each-\$15 wreath sponsorship to support your important work while sponsoring a veterans' wreath.

NO APPLICATION NEEDED. FOLLOW THESE STEPS TO START FUNDRAISING TODAY!

1. **Select a participating cemetery you will raise funds for.** It could be Arlington National Cemetery, or a cemetery in your state or local community. You can find if a cemetery is participating by visiting www.wreathsassamerica.org and clicking "Search Locations/Groups" from the Menu. If the cemetery you are looking to support is not yet participating, you can choose to register it and become a Location Coordinator.
2. **Register your group online.** Follow the steps found at www.wreathsassamerica.org/fundraising. You will be assigned a group ID number, it will be important to include this on all donations remitted to us to ensure your group is credited.
3. **Create your custom Fundraising Page.** Once registered, a fundraising page will be created for you which you can then sign in to customize and manage for your group through www.wreathsassamerica.org. Select "Sign In" at the bottom of the Menu and click "Manage Locations/Group Pages." There you will be instructed to create a log in and password and can then begin following instructions to customize your page.
4. **Promote your web page.** Once complete you can share your page with friends, family and contacts to start raising funds. All sponsorships made through this site will be credited to your group.
6. **Fundraising can be done year round!** For every \$15 wreath sponsorship sold, \$5 comes back to you for your own programs.



**Have more questions? Contact
Wreaths Across America Headquarters to speak
to a member of our team (877) 385-9504.**



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] to raise awareness and support efforts to cover each veteran's headstone at [local cemetery] 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 who 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 2,100 veterans' cemeteries and other locations in all 50 states and overseas.

###

Location Contact:
[Coordinator name]
[Cell phone]
[Email address]

Wreaths Across America Media Contact
Amber Caron
207-513-6457 (cell)
pr@wreathsacrossamerica.org



Local Effort Underway to Support Wreaths Across America™

Volunteers to host fundraising events to ensure that all veterans at
[PARTICIPATING LOCATION] are honored this December

Columbia Falls, MAINE, and [City, STATE] – [Date], 2020 – 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 2,100 participating locations, will be on Saturday, Dec. 19, 2020.

The goal: to place a live, balsam fir veteran's wreath at the headstone of every veteran buried there and spread patriotism and ensure no one is forgotten.

Locally, volunteers will host 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 (nonprofit organization)] OR [For every two-wreath sponsorship sold, three wreaths will be provided to [cemetery] as part of a special fundraising program developed by Wreaths Across America.

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

"Every donation and wreath sponsorship is a meaningful gift from a grateful American 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 grateful to the community of [town/city] for participating in our mission to Remember, Honor and Teach."

[OPTIONAL: INSERT LOCAL FUNDRAISING STORY e.g., 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, non-political event, open to all people. For more information, to donate or to sign up to volunteer, please visit www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org/YOURID

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Media Contacts:

Amber Caron
(207) 513-6457
pr@wreathsassamerica.org

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

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 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 Wreaths Across America's 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 media 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 this 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 location 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

Public Relations or Media Questions

Amber Caron

(207) 513-6457 (cell)

acaron@wreathsacrossamerica.org

LOCATION AND FUNDRAISING GROUP INFORMATION

Director of Locations and Groups

Julie Bright

(207) 618-5078

jbright@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Rachel Worcester - Region 1 Liaison

207-470-0965

rmworcester@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Trish Gardner - Region 2 Liaison

207-618-5074 EXT 609

tgardner@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Richelle Bergeson - Region 3 Liaison

(207) 618-5348

rbergeson@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Meagan Erickson - Region 4 Liaison

(207) 470-0970

merickson@wreathsacrossamerica.org

All other inquiries should be directed to

info@wreathsacrossamerica.org

STAY CONNECTED

Social Media

Wreaths Across America is active on the following social channels and we encourage all of our volunteers to 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 @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 nation's 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.
- Instagram: Follow us at [@wreathsasscross](https://www.instagram.com/wreathsasscross) for and stories pictures from across the country and links to the newest merchandise!

Newsletter

Our monthly e-newsletter titled Mission Matters features stories about the people and groups across the country helping to share the mission to Remember, Honor and Teach in their own communities. To receive, sign up on our website. As a Location Coordinator or Sponsorship Group Leader you are also automatically added to the monthly Location Connection e-newsletter with great information to help you stay informed and have access to resources and ideas!

Wreaths Across America Radio

Listen to a compilation of patriotic music and stories from veterans and volunteers across the country on WAA's very own online radio station at www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org/radio. You can listen anywhere, anytime using the TuneIn or Simple Radio apps, or download it at the App Store or Google!

“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