**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**2016 National Wreaths Across America Day Sees the Placement of 1.2 Million Remembrance Wreaths at 1,228 Cemeteries Across the Country**

*At Arlington National Cemetery - in spite of low temperatures, sleet and freezing rain - more than 44,000 volunteers came out to place 245,000 wreaths*

**ARLINGTON, Va. — December 17, 2016 —** Twenty-five years ago this December, 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.

What started as 5,000 wreaths at Arlington has this year grown to **1.2 MM** wreaths at **1,228** locations nationwide. At Arlington National Cemetery specifically, **245,000** wreaths were placed by more than **44,000** – one for each marker in the cemetery. More than **400** 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.

“To see all these people come together, from all walks of life, with different opinions and politics and religions, in the cold and freezing rain, to join us here and across the country to say thank you to our veterans, proves, we aren’t all that different,” said Karen Worcester, executive director, Wreaths Across America. “We’re all grateful Americans.”

Though the opening remarks were cancelled due to weather at Arlington National Cemetery, volunteers were asked to take their time when placing wreaths and say each name aloud. As Karen stated, “We are not here to decorate graves. We’re here to remember and honor not their deaths, but their lives.”

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.

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 Families and supporters. The convoy began in Maine and was tasked with transporting the wreaths for Arlington after participating in a journey down the East Coast to spread Wreaths Across America’s mission to Remember, Honor, Teach. The group stopped at schools, memorials and other locations in Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Maryland, before arriving at Arlington this morning.

**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](http://www.WreathsAcrossAmerica.org).

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