



REMEMBER  HONOR  TEACH

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

SATURDAY, DEC. 12, 2009



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Wreaths Across America ceremonies to honor U.S. veterans

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, Ala. – In what is now a holiday tradition, Civil Air Patrol is proud to partner with Wreaths Across America, a nonprofit organization that recognizes the courage and sacrifices of U.S. veterans.

“Our mission is to remember the fallen, honor those who serve and teach our children the value of freedom,” said Karen Worcester, executive director of Wreaths Across America. “Thousands of CAP members participated last year and helped us to do just that, and this year’s Wreaths Across America promises to take this worthwhile endeavor to even greater heights.”

Through Wreaths Across America, veteran memorials and gravesites, including Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, D.C., will be adorned Dec. 12 with remembrance wreaths from Maine’s Worcester Wreath Co. The stirring, solemn tributes honor many of the 25 million men and women who have served in the U.S. armed forces and guarded and preserved America’s freedom throughout history.

“Laying the wreaths is an honor to our veterans, a service to our communities and a learning experience for our members,” said CAP National Commander Maj. Gen. Amy S. Courter, who is delighted that CAP is involved in this patriotic cause.

Since its inception in 2006, Wreaths Across America has experienced tremendous growth – from 240 ceremonies at national and state cemeteries in its first year to the 400 expected in all 50 states and 25 cemeteries and memorials abroad in 2009. CAP units will lead almost half of the Wreaths Across America observances this year and will participate with other color and honor guards at many additional locations. CAP cadets and officers will lay wreaths at Arlington as well.

The founders of Wreaths Across America, Worcester and her husband, Morrill, owners of Worcester Wreath Co., are donating 17,000 wreaths for this year’s Arlington ceremonies. The wreaths will be transported on a 750-mile journey from Harrington, Maine, after a sendoff ceremony on Dec. 6, and will arrive at Arlington on Dec. 12. The route is one the longest annual veterans’ celebrations as patriotic Americans, veterans groups and other local organizations like CAP show their support for the project with parades and ceremonies at more than 20 stops along the way.

Over the past 10 years, Maine Wing’s 75th and 76th composite squadrons have been actively involved in Worcester Wreath Co.’s convoys to Arlington, supplying senior officers and cadets to help load and unload the donated wreaths as well as helping lay them on the gravestones at Arlington. In addition, 600 to 700 motorcyclists from the Patriot Guard Riders – an organization of more than 122,000 whose primary mission is to attend the funerals of fallen heroes nationwide – accompany the trucks to Washington, D.C.

Before the convoy begins, Wreaths Across America and its partners will acknowledge other countries involved in this year’s observances with a parade and wreath-laying ceremony on Dec. 5 on the International Bridge, which links the U.S. and Canada. Royal Canadian Air Cadets with escort America’s Gold Star Mother and Civil Air Patrol cadets from America will escort Canada’s Silver Cross Mother to the center of the bridge, situated over the St. Croix River between Calais, Maine, and St. Stephen, New Brunswick. The Gold Star Mother will present a Worcester wreath to the Silver Cross Mother for placement at the Centatoph Memorial Monument in St. Stephen.

In addition to the International Bridge wreath, the Worcestersters are donating 50 wreaths for Dec. 5 ceremonies at each state capitol in the U.S. And, on Dec. 7, Civil Air Patrol's National Honor Guard will take part in a wreath-laying at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., which also will feature a wreath provided by Worcester Wreath Co.

The 2009 observances on the International Bridge, at Arlington, the nation's capitols and across America carry a heightened significance for Wreaths Across America and the Civil Air Patrol. "This year's ceremonies honor the memory of the Maine Wing's Maj. Dennis W. Murray, who passed away in September and whose devotion to the Wreaths Across America program is his legacy," said Courter. Murray, CAP's 2008 national Public Affairs Officer of the Year, is credited with helping link the organization with Worcester Wreath Co. and Wreaths Across America three years ago. "That partnership has grown exponentially and CAP has become a major partner," said Courter.

Wreaths Across America began in 2006 as an offshoot of the Arlington National Cemetery wreath project, which was started in 1992 with the annual placement of wreaths donated by Worcester Wreath Co. Today, it is a monumental initiative, with partners like Civil Air Patrol, the Patriot Guard Riders, the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C., and other veterans' groups participating, not to mention the tens of thousands of private citizens who sponsor wreaths for the wreath-laying ceremonies.

Wreaths Across America spokesperson Tobin Slaven applauds the relationship between CAP and Worcester Wreath Co. "It really has been phenomenal," he said. "Civil Air Patrol has been a driving force behind Wreaths Across America's growth."

The wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington are scheduled to commence at 8 a.m. EST on Dec. 12 at the CAP Memorial, culminating with a national Wreaths Across America ceremony and moment of remembrance at 9 a.m. attended by the Worcestersters and other dignitaries from CAP, the Patriot Guard Riders, the Maine State Society, the Gold Star Mothers, the American Legion and other veterans' groups. At that time, Wreaths Across America participants nationwide will adorn veterans' graves with remembrance wreaths concurrently with the Arlington celebration.

Other wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington on Dec. 12 are planned at the Shuttle Memorial at 11 a.m. and at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at noon. The Arlington observances will conclude at 1 p.m. with the CAP Honor Guard and Courter laying a wreath at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. Afterwards, Courter will host a distinguished visitors' reception in the memorial's Hall of Honor.

Visit www.wreathscrossamerica.org for more information about Wreaths Across America and participating locations.

Civil Air Patrol, the official auxiliary of the U.S. Air Force, is a nonprofit organization with 58,000 members nationwide. CAP performs 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and was credited by the AFRCC with saving 91 lives in fiscal year 2008. Its volunteers also perform homeland security, disaster relief and counter-drug missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. The members play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to more than 23,000 young people currently participating in CAP cadet programs. CAP has been performing missions for America for 68 years.