



Backgrounder & FAQs

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: 1 millionth wreath placed at Arlington National Cemetery
 - 2014: For the first time, every headstone at Arlington National Cemetery received a wreath – 227,000 in total.
 - 2016: 25th year that wreaths were placed at Arlington National Cemetery
- 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 and beyond.
- Since its founding, the organization has expanded to include more than 1,500 local fundraising groups in all 50 states, representing more than 1,400 participating locations, along with our nation's cemetery at Arlington.
- 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. 15, 2018.**

2017 Numbers

- 1,560,000 veterans' wreaths were placed in total across the country – 246,700 of them at Arlington National Cemetery.
- More than a million volunteers participated at 1,433 locations nationwide, with nearly 80,000 volunteers laying wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery. More than a third of the volunteers across the country were children.
- 500 truckloads of wreaths were delivered across the country by hundreds of volunteer professional truck drivers using donated equipment and fuel.

2018 Theme “Be Their Witness.”

- The inspiration for this year's theme stems from the 2009 drama “Taking Chance,” which was based on the experiences of U.S. Marine Lt. Colonel [Michael Strobl](#), who escorted the body of a fallen Marine, PFC [Chance Phelps](#) back to his hometown in Wyoming from the [Iraq War](#).
- Through the Wreaths Across America program, we are ensuring that the lives of our men and women in uniform are remembered, not their deaths. It is our responsibility as Americans, to be their witness and to share their stories of service and sacrifice with the next generation.

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

- WAA conducts several programs to honor our veterans, including our popular Thanks-A-Million campaign, which distributes free thank-you cards to people all over the country to share with veterans as a simple thank-you for their service.
- 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.
- Through WAA's fundraising program, it has helped other nonprofits 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 nearly \$8 million to local groups through this fundraising structure.
- 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.
- A downloadable curriculum and books are available to help schoolchildren appreciate the roles our veterans played in preserving their freedoms. These materials are designed to encourage the direct involvement of local veterans.

Why do you do what you do?

We understand we have Veterans Day in the fall and Memorial Day in the spring, but our service members sacrifice their time and safety every single day of the year to preserve our freedoms.

In many homes, there is an empty seat for one who is serving or one who made the ultimate sacrifice for our country. There is no better time to express our appreciation than during the hustle and bustle of the holiday season. We hope you will join us at any of our more than 1,400 participating locations to show our veterans and their families that we will not forget. We will **never** forget.

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?

We receive 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
- Statehouse ceremony – in nearly all 50 states and at our nation’s capital
- HART ceremony (Honoring Allies and Remembering Together)
- “Thanks-A-Million” card program to thank our veterans and active military members
- WAA education program – work with our downloadable materials in your local schools
- Sign up as a fundraising group and help place wreaths at a local or national cemetery of your choice
- 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.wreathscrossamerica.org. Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/WAAHQ, follow us on Twitter and Instagram [@WreathsAcross](https://www.instagram.com/WreathsAcross) and listen to [Wreaths Across America Radio 24/7](#).

Contact WAA

Toll Free: (877) 385-9504

info@wreathscrossamerica.org