

BACKGROUND & FAQ 2022



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
- 2005: Iconic photo of wreaths in snow became a viral sensation
- 2007: Wreaths Across America formed as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit.

Organization governed by board of directors. Day-to-day operations managed by volunteer 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.
- 2021: Marked the 30th year that veterans' wreaths have been placed at Arlington National Cemetery, a tradition started by Maine wreathmaker Morrill Worcester as a gift of thanks.

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.

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. 17, 2022**.

2021 RECAP

- 2.4 million veterans' wreaths were placed in total across the country – at Arlington National Cemetery specifically, the Wreaths Across America program saw 66 tractor trailers deliver over 250,000 veterans' wreaths that were placed by nearly 38,000 volunteers.
- More than two million volunteers participated at 3,137 locations nationwide. More than a third of the volunteers were children.
- Over 525 truckloads of wreaths were delivered across the country by hundreds of volunteer professional truck drivers driving donated equipment and fuel from approximately 390 carriers.

2022 Theme: Find a Way to Serve

The inspiration for this year's theme came from a few different places and seemed to be a recurring conversation throughout the last year. Notably, the [American Rosie Movement™](#) which highlights the stories of the World War II-era women known as Rosie the Riveters, or simply "Rosies." These women pulled together to do the work that needed to be done for our freedom. The movement encourages youth to get involved in their own communities to serve in small ways that can make a big impact. As part of this new theme, Wreaths Across America is revamping its educational curriculum working with like-minded organizations to develop action plans to inspire young people across the country to **find a way to serve** in 2022 and beyond.

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 an 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 sponsorship 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 \$17 million** to local groups.
- 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 veterans’ wreaths on the headstones of our nation’s servicemembers. 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.

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. These are not Christmas wreaths, they are veterans’ wreaths or remembrance wreaths.

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 most 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.

How can I get involved?

There are several 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.