



REMEMBER  HONOR  TEACH

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

SATURDAY, DEC. 12, 2009



Dec. 3, 2009

Tradition of honor through remembrance continues at Arlington

Full day of Wreaths Across America ceremonies scheduled for Dec. 12

ARLINGTON, Va. – As is customary during each holiday season, thousands of bright white marble gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery will be adorned with red-ribboned balsam fir remembrance wreaths on Dec. 12, courtesy of Worcester Wreath Co. of Harrington, Maine.

Started as the Arlington Wreaths Project in 1992 and now known simply as Wreaths Across America, this annual decoration day at Arlington is a time-honored tradition for Morrill and Karen Worcester, owners of Worcester Wreath Co. and co-founders of the nonprofit organization.

“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. More than 100,000 wreaths have been placed on Arlington gravestones since the project began 17 years ago. This year, the Worcesters, the USO, Wal-Mart and other corporate sponsors are donating 16,000 wreaths for the Arlington ceremonies.

Since its inception in 2006 as a nonprofit organization, Wreaths Across America has become a national phenomenon, 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 ceremonies at Arlington and across America. Wreaths Across America has experienced tremendous growth during that three-year period, with more than 105,000 wreaths placed nationwide at veteran memorials and gravesites in 2008.

The Worcesters’ goal of remembering the fallen, honoring those who serve and teaching our children continues in 2009, with Wreaths Across America’s many partners again pitching in to help. “Thousands of Civil Air Patrol members participated last year and helped us to do just that,” said Karen Worcester, “and this year’s Wreaths Across America promises to take this worthwhile endeavor to even greater heights.”

Participating in Wreaths Across America has become a holiday tradition for the 58,000 citizen volunteers of the Civil Air Patrol. “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.

Civil Air Patrol squadrons 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 Wreaths Across America ceremonies on the hallowed grounds of Arlington begin early, with the Civil Air Patrol Honor Guard assembling at the cemetery’s entrance at 5:30 a.m. EST on Dec. 12. At 7:15 a.m., the Honor Guard will welcome a convoy of tractor-trailer trucks from Worcester Wreath Co. escorted by motorcyclists from the Patriot Guard Riders, whose primary mission is to attend the funerals of fallen heroes nationwide.

After the convoy arrives, the ceremonies at Arlington will commence, starting with a wreath-laying at 8 a.m. at the Civil Air Patrol Memorial (located in Section 33 on Roosevelt Drive, just past Weeks Drive on the left). CAP National Commander Maj. Gen. Amy S. Courter, accompanied by the Honor Guard, will lay a wreath at the memorial, which honors the memory of the hundreds of thousands of CAP volunteers who have served America as members of the U.S. Air Force auxiliary.

At 8:30 a.m., Courter will join the Worcestersters and other dignitaries from Civil Air Patrol, the Patriot Guard Riders, the Maine State Society, the Gold Star Mothers, the American Legion and other veterans' groups for a national Wreaths Across America ceremony and moment of remembrance at the McClellan Arch near the entrance of Arlington. At 9 a.m., Wreaths Across America volunteers will place wreaths in Sections 2, 9, 31, 32 and 37 of the cemetery while USO volunteers will place 1,000 wreaths in Section 60. At the same time, Wreaths Across America participants around the nation will hold similar events, marking veterans' gravesites with remembrance wreaths.

Other wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington on Dec. 12 are planned at the Shuttle Memorial in Section 46, beginning at 11 a.m. EST, and at the Tomb of the Unknowns, beginning 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.

Follow the progress of the wreaths from Maine to Virginia with live feeds from Twitter at <http://twitter.com/WreathsAcross>. 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, in its Air Force auxiliary role, 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 72 lives in fiscal year 2009. 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.

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