



REMEMBER  HONOR  TEACH

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

SATURDAY, DEC. 12, 2009



Dec. 2, 2009

16,000 wreaths heading to Arlington for national ceremony

Wreaths Across America convoy one of nation's longest annual veterans' celebrations

HARRINGTON, Maine – Sixteen thousand balsam fir remembrance wreaths will get a proper escort to Arlington National Cemetery, courtesy of as many as 700 motorcyclists with the Patriot Guard Riders.

Beginning with a grand sendoff on Dec. 6, the Patriot Guard Riders will escort a convoy of between 50 to 300 vehicles (depending on the weather), transporting wreaths donated by Morrill and Karen Worcester of Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine, the USO, Wal-Mart and other corporate sponsors to Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va. Traveling U.S. Route 1 for most of the 750-mile journey, the caravan will include 30 tractor-trailer rigs loaded with the red-ribboned wreaths to decorate the white marble gravesites at Arlington on Dec. 12.

“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, the national nonprofit organization responsible for the annual remembrance day at Arlington, as well as more than 400 other veterans' cemeteries and memorials nationwide and 24 more abroad. In all, more than 100,000 wreaths are expected to be placed on gravestones and monuments on Dec. 12 in stirring, solemn tributes to the 25 million men and women who have served in the U.S. armed forces and guarded and preserved America's freedom throughout history.

The Wreaths Across America convoy to Arlington is one of the nation's longest annual veterans' celebrations. Members of the Patriot Guard Riders, Civil Air Patrol, national veterans groups and patriotic Americans will participate, showing their support with parades and ceremonies at more than 20 stops along the way.

Civil Air Patrol's Maine Wing is actively involved in the convoys to Arlington, supplying senior officers and cadets to help decorate the donated wreaths with handmade red ribbons and load and unload the wreaths as well as helping lay them on gravestones at Arlington. “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 CAP is involved in this patriotic cause.

Since its inception in 2006, Wreaths Across America has become a national phenomenon – growing rapidly from 240 ceremonies at national and state veterans' cemeteries in its first year to the more than 400 expected in all 50 states and 24 national cemeteries 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. “Thousands of Civil Air Patrol members participated last year,” said Karen Worcester, “and this year's Wreaths Across America promises to take this worthwhile endeavor to even greater heights.”

Before the convoy to Arlington begins on Dec. 6, Wreaths Across America will acknowledge other countries involved in this year's observances with a parade and wreath exchange ceremony on Dec. 5 on the Ferry Point Bridge, which spans the St. Croix River and links the U.S. and Canada. Cadets from the Civil Air Patrol will escort America's Gold Star Mothers and Cadets Canada will escort Canada's Silver

Cross Mothers to the center of the bridge for the exchange. The Gold Star Mothers will present a Worcester wreath to the Silver Cross Mothers for placement nearby at the Centatoph Memorial Monument in St. Stephen in honor of the service and sacrifice of all veterans, including young men and women from Canada who are serving or served in the U.S. military.

In addition to the bridge wreath, the Worcesters are donating 50 wreaths for Dec. 5 and Dec. 7 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 Worcester wreath.

The 2009 Wreaths Across America observances on the bridge, at Arlington, the nation's Capitol and across America carry a heightened significance for Wreaths Across America and the Civil Air Patrol. "This year's ceremonies honor the memory of 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, was a regular participant in the Worcester Wreath Co. convoys to Arlington and is credited with helping link Civil Air Patrol with the Worcesters and Wreaths Across America three years ago. "That partnership has grown exponentially and CAP has become a major partner," said Courter.

The convoy carrying the Worcester wreaths to Arlington are scheduled to arrive by 7:15 a.m. EST on Dec. 12. The national Wreaths Across America ceremony and moment of silence attended by the Worcesters and other dignitaries from CAP, the Patriot Guard Riders, the Maine State Society, the Gold Star Mothers, the American Legion and other veterans' groups will commence at 8:30 a.m. At that time, Wreaths Across America participants nationwide will adorn veterans' graves with remembrance wreaths concurrently with the Arlington celebration.

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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