



BACKGROUND & FAQ 2023

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*
- 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.
- 2022: Expand to include more than 3,700 participating locations, every state and U.S. territory participates in National Wreaths Across America Day

WAA's yearlong mission is to **Remember** the fallen, **Honor** those that serve, and **Teach** the next generation the value of freedom.

Since 2008, Congress proclaims a Saturday in December as National Wreaths Across America Day. This year, it will be held on **Saturday, Dec. 16, 2023**.

**Organization governed by board of directors. Day-to-day operations managed by volunteer Executive Director Karen Worcester.*

2022 RECAP

- 2.7 million veterans' wreaths were placed in total across the country.
- More than two million volunteers participated at 3,702 locations nationwide. More than a third of the volunteers were children.
- At Arlington National Cemetery specifically, 68 tractor trailers delivered over 257,000 veterans' wreaths that were placed by nearly 28,000 volunteers.
- 644 loads of wreaths were delivered across the country by hundreds of volunteer, professional truck drivers driving donated equipment and fuel from approximately 296 transportation partners.



2023 Theme: Serve & Succeed

The inspiration for this year's theme came while discussing the significance of 2022's theme, which was "Find a Way to Serve," and the need to continue to stress the importance of service and the positive ways it can impact lives. Wreaths Across America plans to focus on the storylines of veterans and military families who have found success through their own service, while also highlighting local volunteers across the country and the success that comes from serving their communities. The organization will continue its commitment to supporting and bringing attention to the needs of our veteran community while also showcasing the continued contributions of those who serve.

Our Mission

REMEMBER the fallen.

- 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 those that serve.

- 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 \$20 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 the next generation the value of freedom.

- 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 lesson plans that are centered around character-based, service learning for grades Kindergarten through 12th. Download these plans for free at www.wreathscrossamerica.org/TEACH.
- The Mobile Education Exhibit (MEE) is a traveling classroom on wheels designed to inspire and educate all about the mission and those whose lives have been impacted by it. The goal of the exhibit is to bring local communities and our military together with education, stories, and interactive connections. To request the MEE come to your area, visit www.wreathscrossamerica.org/MEE.
- In 2022, WAA hosted the grand opening of its latest education project, the Gold Star Family History & Hospitality House. The historic home, which has been under renovations over the last five years, is located next door to the nonprofit’s national headquarters and National Museum in Maine. Each room has been decorated to represent a period in U.S. history associated with a military conflict. Stepping back in time in this beautiful home, while experiencing the lifestyle of the era and further learning personal stories of those who served in that time will be a history lesson to remember.



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, balsam 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. Our goal as an organization is to Teach younger generations about the diversity of our American heritage, and the freedoms for which so much was sacrificed.

What are the sources of funding for WAA?

WAA receives no government funding. National Wreaths Across America Day is 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 WAA event. Learn more at www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org.

- Help place wreaths on National Wreaths Across America Day in your local community.
- Sponsor a \$17 wreath for a local veteran.
- 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.