**FOR PRINT, ON-LINE, BLOG, OR INTERVIEW PREP:**

Article detailing the history of Wreaths Across America

1700 words (links and pictures are included for insertion and research.)

**The American Dream is Not Lost…It Is Remembered!  
By WAA Staff Sean Sullivan and Amber Caron**

Pierre Claeyssens, who was rescued by U.S. Forces in Belgium said, “To be killed in war is not the worst that can happen. To be lost is not the worst that can happen…to be forgotten is the worst.”

[Wreaths Across America](https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/) (WAA) is a national non-profit organization best known for remembering fallen veterans with wreaths placed each December at [Arlington National Cemetery](https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/pages/14720/Overview/?relatedId=0). However, the organization is much more. As of 2019, the nonprofit placed more than 2 million sponsored veterans’ wreaths at over [2,100 participating locations nationwide](https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/pages/search?searchType=location) while offering various year-long programs. These programs help live a mission to remember, honor and teach.

In the beginning, founder, Morrill Worcester, a 12-year-old paper boy for the *Bangor Daily News*, won a trip to Washington D.C., where Arlington National Cemetery became an inspirational location. His pilgrimage served as a consistent reminder, through career and life, that opportunities stemmed from the values and freedom afforded to us by our nation’s veterans.

After years of hard work, Morrill founded [Worcester Wreath Company](http://www.worcesterwreath.com/) in Harrington, Maine. In 1992, Worcester Wreath had a surplus. Morrill saw this as his opportunity to honor our veterans with hopes of returning to Arlington. With the aid of Maine Senator Olympia Snowe (ret.), the first 5,000 wreaths were placed that year at Arlington National Cemetery. As plans were underway, other individuals and organizations shared Morrill’s spirit and working together built an annual mission that went unnoticed for many years.

In 2005, a photo surfaced of Arlington covered in snow, adorned with wreaths. This picture became a viral internet sensation before there was even such a marketing term. After, thousands of requests poured in, from people wanting to help emulate the Arlington success on the local level, prompting the official formation of Wreaths Across America the national nonprofit in 2007.

The newly formed 501c3 began its national effort by sending seven ceremonial wreaths to every state (one for each branch of the military, and for POW/MIAs). The ceremonies took place in nearly all of the 50 states and Washington, D.C., with a focus on family during the holidays. As the organization grew from volunteer support, a network of local groups and cemetery locations began to emerge.

Simultaneously, groups began to escort the wreaths to Arlington. This started an annual tradition called “The Veterans Honor Parade” which travels the east coast in early December. This part of the mission grew into a multi-mile long convoy which acts as an ambassador by stopping at schools, monuments, veterans’ homes and local communities as the mission of the organization is shared.

In 2008, over 60,000 volunteers helped move the mission, placing 100,000 wreaths on veterans’ headstones. Recognizing the organizations impact, the United States Congress unanimously voted to declare “National Wreaths Across America Day” to be held annually, on the second or third Saturday of December.

British street artist Bansky once wrote, “They say you die twice. One time when you stop breathing and a second time, when somebody says your name for the last time.” So, it wasn’t enough to say “we covered Arlington” because that’s a mission half completed. When a volunteer places a wreath on a veteran's headstone, WAA encourages them to speak that veteran's name aloud, thank them for their service and sacrifice, reflect on their life as person and member of a loving family and never let that service member die a second time, including all 226,525 at Arlington starting in 2014, and millions more at cemeteries nationwide.

Presently a small, but dedicated staff and more than 7,000 core volunteers across the country, work tirelessly on year-long programs that help accomplish this ongoing mission. That number grows to more than 2 million, a third of whom are children, who participate in the annual wreath laying events nationwide! These programs are designed to help highlight the awe-inspiring work of our volunteer groups and locations, civic groups, supporters, donors, and others that enable this mission to flourish regardless of challenges and changes.

<https://wreathsacrossamerica.org/>

Some of these programs include the following…

**Group Sponsorship Program**

In 2007, when Wreaths Across Americaexpanded its annual wreath placement event to enable groups and organizations to support Arlington National Cemetery and other local, participating cemeteries across the country. The organization established the Group Sponsorship Program to benefit other like-minded charities, community programs and civic groups through the sale of wreath sponsorships for participating locations. Through this, WAA invites other group or organizations to help in remembering and honoring our American heroes and teaching the next generation, through raising funds to sponsor veterans’ wreaths. As a Wreaths Across America Group Sponsorship partner, your organization will receive $5-of-each-$15 wreath sponsorship to support your important work while sponsoring a veterans’ wreath. **Since its start, WAA has given back more than $12.4M to other groups.**  
  
<https://wreathsacrossamerica.org/fundraising>

**Wreaths Across America Museum**   
Located in the WAA National Headquarters at 4 Point Street in Columbia Falls, Maine, the Museum is an 1,800-square-foot facility showcasing hundreds of items that have been donated to Wreaths Across America by its volunteers, including personal photos, awards, uniforms, helmets and other military memorabilia. The Museum is open year-round with visiting hours Monday through Friday, from 9AM to 4PM.

<https://www.centralmaine.com/2020/10/19/lindbergh-crate-moves-from-canaan-to-wreaths-across-america-museum-in-columbia-falls/>

**Mobile Education Exhibit**In addition to the Maine museum, Chevy dealers of New England donated the Wreaths Across America Mobile Education Exhibit, a 48’exhibit is equipped with a 24-person screening room, interactive computers, and history exhibit. This traveling exhibit extends the mission to by traveling to local communities, schools and events.

<https://wreathsacrossamerica.org/mee>

<https://www.gastongazette.com/news/20201026/exhibit-for-wreaths-across-america-hits-gaston-county>

Photo  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/3rtt7tpaxhmrlsi/et-with-flag_alj2xJzZ.jpg?dl=0>

**The Remembrance Tree Program**   
Throughout the year, Gold Star Families are invited to the “tip-land,” where balsam tips are harvested to be made into veterans’ wreaths. These family members are invited to claim a tree in the name of their loved one with military-style replica dog-tag creating a living memorial for that service member. These dog tags and tree locations are recorded and geo-tracked so the families sponsored wreaths can be made from those trees and revisited by loved ones over the years. WAA Executive director Karen Worcester once said, “There are few things more moving than hearing the sound of thousands of these tags chiming in unison from a gentle breeze on a quiet evening in Maine.”

<https://wreathsacrossamerica.org/remembrance-tree-program>

Photo  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/spwc3oqt6qsk9je/dogtagtightmcmahon_FjoFEKbf.jpg?dl=0>

**Stem to Stone 5k Races**As the Mobile Education exhibit travels the country, so too does our series of 5K races that we call “Stem to Stone” Races. The Stem to Stone name refers to the balsam bouquets trimmed from trees that make up the wreaths laid at cemeteries all across America, and Stone refers to the actual headstones of the soldiers. The 5k is reminiscent of basic training runs and allows participants to get a small taste of what our heroes have endured as they train

<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/pages/16072/News/392/?relatedId=0>

<https://runsignup.com/Race/ME/ColumbiaFalls/WreathsAcrossAmericaStemtoStone2020RaceTourMAINE>

<https://wblm.com/join-wreaths-across-america-stem-to-stone-livevirtual-race-july-18th/>

Photo

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/bjdanvmgtc8fm4d/stem-to-stone_dE4Xhbmm.jpg?dl=0>

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/8kkfpkmobkhmqw3/stemtostone-socialcontent_Yq6BpfqM.jpg?dl=0>

PSA

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/sb8le1o5ysxm5zy/S2SVirtualRace2020.mp3?dl>=0

**July Concert (Virtual Concert)**  
In addition to the remembrance tree program, visiting the museum, and a 5K race, veterans and active service members are treated to a free concert each July (this year this event was held virtually). Some of today’s biggest musical acts have performed here over the years including:

[Craig Morgan](https://www.craigmorgan.com/), [Chris Roberts](https://www.facebook.com/chrisrobertsfans/?ref=page_internal), [Lindsay Lawler](https://www.facebook.com/LindsayLawlerFans/), [Mark Wills](https://markwills.com/), [The Bellamy Brothers](https://bellamybrothers.com/), [The Don Campbell Band](https://doncampbellmusic.com/), [Darryl Worley](https://www.darrylworley.com/), Unites States Army Field Band’s Six-String [Soldiers](https://www.armyfieldband.com/about/ensembles/six-string-soldiers), [Sawyer Brown](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sawyer_Brown), [and the late great Charlie Daniels](https://www.charliedaniels.com/) (whose signed guitar is in the Wreaths Across America Museum).

<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/pages/17129/News/432/?relatedId=0>

<https://www.wvlt.tv/2020/07/19/wreaths-across-america-presenting-virtual-concert-july-19/>

Photo

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/4tjf7nkmp47b1c2/showcase-now-wreaths-pic_aDLZIZzG.png?dl=0>

**Wreaths Across America Radio**  
This 24/7 internet radio station has a unique format that mixes country, rock, bluegrass, Americana, information and inspiring content about members of the U.S. armed forces, their families, military veterans, and volunteers who support the mission.Special segments and programs include:   
<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/radio>  
Photo  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/wwlm8ypoatp6npz/small-png-radio_u08MQEvI.png?dl=0>

***Mission Matters* -** Wreaths Across America’s Executive Director, Karen Worcester, interviews families who have impacted the mission, members of the military community, and Gold Star Families. She shares those discussions with the public Wednesdays at 10 AM, and again at 7:00 PM EST.  
Photo  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/kwanhh3b31qy2x5/soldiersalutepplstones_cwzIlRqL.jpg?dl=0>  
***Cup of Joe Radio*** - The purpose of this broadcast is to support military veterans worldwide. Show hosts Mike Spotswood (USMC) along with his wife Irene and weekly contributors Doug Bradley (U.S. Army-retired) and Jerry Lamerton (U.S.Army-retired) are passionate about the mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach while entertaining with music. The program airs twice on Fridays, from 4-6 PM EDT, and again Friday night from 9-11PM EDT.

<https://www.adirondackdailyenterprise.com/news/local-news/2020/09/goooood-morning-tupper-lake-and-beyond/>  
Photo  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/gc0c96fdo6wjcny/radio-1_0abHvssA.jpg?dl=0>  
***Trucking Tributes* -** Is a radio feature highlighting the support Wreaths Across America receives from the trucking industry.  
<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/pages/19520/News/481/?relatedId=0>  
Photo  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/echxfis1igdy105/thank-you-to-our-trucking-partners-2_xXrz5mmP.jpg?dl=0>  
***Kid's Corner* -** Wreaths Across America is recognizes youth volunteers monthly who do their part to make sure no hometown hero is forgotten.  
Photo  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/z6dz7xns3lwdyc1/cap-guardingchristmansgrave_SZ7dQlVr.jpg?dl=0>  
***The 100-Day Countdown to National Wreaths Across America Day* -** A daily segment on the morning show with Michael W. Hale counting down 100 days until Wreath Day 2020, featuring interviews with group and location volunteers who are making the mission happen in their communities!   
<https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/pages/16643/News/465/?relatedId=0>  
<https://soundcloud.com/wreathsacrossamericaradio/wreaths-radio-countdown-to-wreaths-day-2020-nm>  
<https://www.paulsvalleydailydemocrat.com/community/wynnewood-group-joins-national-salute/article_aab08c2b-85d6-5c08-8931-e4a78bc506fc.html>

***Holiday Greetings*****–** From Thanksgiving to the end of December, families and military from overseas can leave a message for their loved ones for broadcast on Wreaths Radio  
<https://www.newsbreak.com/news/2078720777349/wreaths-across-america-radio-airs-holiday-greetings-from-deployed-troops>  
  
<https://www.foresthillmessenger.com/news/wreaths-across-america-radio-to-air-holiday-greetings/article_65ae8210-13d6-11eb-931a-33ceca6066da.html>  
Photos  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/4cc9rp2za0osi0i/radiotroops3_CJvplNiT.png?dl=0>  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/hqwrr78apbozyde/holidaymessages2019graphic_OdgUu3cG.png?dl=0>  
Demo  
<https://soundcloud.com/wreathsacrossamericaradio/holiday-messages-to-and-from-troops-maine-turner>

All these year-long programs and participating locations across the country of this young organization would not be possible, or successful, without the help of volunteers, active supporters and donors, and the generosity of the trucking industry, which offer invaluable support to WAA's mission to remember the men and women who served our country, honor our military and their families, and teach our children about our freedom and those who protect it.

If you want to help honor our veterans, please support the mission by sponsoring a wreath or registering to volunteering to place wreaths at [**www.wreathscarossamerica.org/AFSA**](https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/) **or find up a participating Location near you to support at www.wreathsacrossamerica.org.** Each sponsorship goes toward a fresh balsam veteran’s wreath that will be placed on the headstone of an American hero as we endeavor to honor all fallen veterans on **Saturday, December 19, 2020**, as part of National Wreaths Across America Day.

National Wreaths Across America Day 2020 is happening, and we will honor veterans in all 50 states again this year. WAA has been working with local, state and national officials, as well as health professionals, to develop plans for the safety of all involved with the mission.

**IN ADDITION FOR PRINT:**

**Interviews are available with Wreaths Across America** executives and local volunteers in your area via Skype, Zoom, and phone.

Please contact us to set up your interview today.

Additional Photos and b-roll available in All Media section

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