



REMEMBER  HONOR  TEACH

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA
SATURDAY, DEC. 12, 2009



Dec. 2, 2009

Civil Air Patrol Honor Guard to stand watch over U.S. Capitol wreath

Similar ceremonies planned in all 50 states, part of Wreaths Across America observances

WASHINGTON, D.C. – At 11:30 a.m. EST on Dec. 7, the Civil Air Patrol Honor Guard will assemble to help place a holiday remembrance wreath in front of the U.S. Capitol. Over the next six hours, the honor guard – as is military tradition – will stand watch over the wreath, which honors the 25 million men and women who have served in the U.S. armed forces and guarded and preserved America’s freedom throughout history.

“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 behind the event.

The symbolic ceremony on the West Front Fountain Plaza Level of the U.S. Capitol, facing the National Mall, will be lead by members of the Maine State Society of Washington, D.C. “The Maine State Society encourages all who are interested in supporting our veterans to participate in this tribute,” said Wayne G. Hanson, coordinator for the society’s U.S. Capitol Wreath Project. “In conjunction with similar ceremonies at state capitols across the nation, the society will place a special ceremonial holiday Maine balsam fir wreath at the Capitol to honor and remember all American veterans and their families in appreciation of the sacrifices they have made to preserve our freedoms.”

Worcester and her husband, Morrill, owners of Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine, are donating the Capitol remembrance wreath as well as 50 others for similar observances at state capitols throughout the U.S.

Maine State Society President Charles V. Stanhope will lead the ceremony at the U.S. Capitol and William C. Wappner, president of the National Funeral Directors Association, will be the guest speaker. Invitations to the ceremony have also been extended to members of Maine’s congressional legislation and their staff members.

Civil Air Patrol, one of the major partners of Wreaths Across America, is providing the honor guard for the wreath-laying at the U.S. Capitol, and will help officiate at most of the other state capitol observances.

Following the ceremony in front of the Capitol, about 15 CAP cadets ranging in age from 12 to 19 will stand guard for the rest of the day, regardless of the weather, ensuring that the wreath remains upright and unharmed. Similar to the path taken by the Old Guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, cadets will march back and forth in front of the wreath, taking 21 steps on each pass, and pausing 21 seconds before turning to begin the next. In the military tradition, the 21 steps and 21 seconds symbolize the 21-gun salute used to honor fallen heroes.

“For each CAP cadet, it is an honor – the highest privilege – to be able to pay tribute to America’s soldiers in this fashion,” said Lt. Col. Jett Mayhew, the CAP senior officer in charge of the cadets. “The men and

women of the armed forces who fought and died, did so to protect the freedom of all Americans. Remembering and honoring these military heroes is what the Civil Air Patrol Honor Guard is all about.”

The Capitol wreath-laying officially kicks off a number of Wreaths Across America observances in the nation’s capital in December. On Dec. 12, the hallowed grounds of Arlington National Cemetery will be adorned with 16,000 Worcester wreaths as part of a nationwide ceremony and moment of silence originating at 8:30 a.m. EST at the McClellan Arch near Arlington’s entrance. Afterward, volunteers will place wreaths in Sections 2, 9, 31, 32 and 37 of the cemetery. This stirring, solemn tribute will be repeated simultaneously at more than 400 veterans’ cemeteries and memorials across America and 24 other national cemeteries abroad.

Civil Air Patrol will lead almost half of the Wreaths Across America observances and will participate with other color and honor guards at many additional cemeteries and memorials. “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.

Wreaths Across America began in 2006 as an offshoot of the Arlington National Cemetery wreath project, which was started in 1992 with the annual placement of wreaths donated by Worcester Wreath Co. Today, it is a monumental initiative, with partners like Civil Air Patrol, the Maine State Society and other veterans’ groups participating, not to mention the tens of thousands of private citizens who sponsor wreaths for the wreath-laying ceremonies.

The wreath-laying ceremonies at Arlington on Dec. 12 are scheduled to commence at 8 a.m. EST on Dec. 12 at the Civil Air Patrol Memorial, followed by the national observance beginning at 8:30 a.m. Other wreath-laying ceremonies are planned at the Shuttle Memorial at 11 a.m. and at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at noon. The Arlington observances will conclude at 1 p.m. with Courter and the Civil Air Patrol Honor Guard 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.

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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