

## CAP Kicks Off 2nd Annual 2007 Wreaths Across America Campaign

# 15,000 Wreaths Set To Be Donated



*By Russell Slater*

It was a breathtaking moment for the U.S. Civil Air Patrol, one that attracted some much-deserved national publicity.

In December 2006, veterans' gravesites in America — a total of 231 state and national cemeteries — were adorned with 10,000 lush green wreaths decorated with red ribbons donated by Morrill and Karen Worcester, owners of the Worcester Wreath Co. in Harrington, Maine.

In the end, every CAP wing took part in the inaugural Wreaths Across America ceremonies, which drew 2,000 people to the various events while thousands more watched them unfold on television. Sixty cadets participated behind the scenes by helping assemble the wreaths and 87 more participated in the wreath-laying ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va.

This year, CAP's salute to the nation's veterans includes a partner-

ship with American citizens who are sponsoring the purchase of 500,000 patriotic rings of evergreen. Also, Worcester Wreath Co. will donate an additional 15,000 wreaths. The increase in the number of wreaths stems from a groundswell of grassroots support for the program, said Karen Worcester.

“We’re just saying thank you, and other people want to experience that same feeling we have when we lay a wreath at Arlington National Cemetery,” said Karen Worcester. “It’s such an honor. Actually, it’s more than an honor. It’s a duty and a responsibility. It’s not about the wreaths. It’s about taking the time to pause and think that we live in the best country in the world because of our veterans.”

“Wreaths Across America provides a nationwide venue for our 55,000 volunteers to complement the innumerable ways in which CAP members have been serving their communities through emergency services, aerospace education and cadet programs for more than 66 years,” said Acting CAP National Commander Brig. Gen. Amy S. Courter. “The infinite possibilities that Wreaths Across America provides to honor American veterans in partnership with patriotic-minded citizens is an exciting addition to CAP’s mission. In the not-too-distant future, the Civil Air Patrol will be widely known for this worthwhile endeavor, just as the Marines are known for Toys for Tots.”

The success of last year’s Wreaths Across America campaign prompted numerous calls and e-mails from people around the country who wanted to express their

thanks to participants for honoring family members who had served and died, whether in recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan or in past conflicts. Some wanted to place orders for the wreaths to be laid at cemeteries around the country, so Wreaths Across America sought a patriotic partnership with Civil Air Patrol to sell and place these sponsored wreaths.

“This is an emotional issue; it’s sacred,” Karen Worcester said. “CAP was enthusiastic about the idea and has been bending over backward to help. We need-

ed the help of a group like CAP, because they already get it.”

“At times, it seems like the entire country wants to show its appreciation,” she added. “It’s a raw passion, a nonpolitical love of our country, from small towns and cities in Maine and all across America.”

In the future, Maj. Dennis Murray of the Maine Wing, CAP’s national co-director and coordinator for Wreaths Across America, said the campaign might become “Wreaths

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— Karen Worcester  
Worcester Wreath Co.

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Across the World,” as operations are expanded to include offshore veteran cemeteries.

“I hope we do this forever,” said Murray. “I’d like to see the numbers involved double every year.”

“The Wreaths Across America campaign is about much more than the wreaths, as the greenery is symbolic of selfless sacrifice and dedication to the country,” said Karen Worcester, adding, “Kids need to understand the value of freedom because if they don’t, they stand the risk of losing it. We hope everyone will come and participate in their local ceremonies on Dec. 15, 2007.” ▲



Photo by Susan Robertson, CAP National Headquarters

Helping unload wreaths in 2006 are Cadet Senior Airman Angela McDonald, Cadet Airman 1st Class Grace Young, Cadet Airman 1st Class Bethany Duhaime and Cadet Airman Lydie Worcester, all of CAP's Maine Wing.

## About Wreaths Across America

Morrill and Karen Worcester of Worcester Wreath Co. have been donating wreaths to Arlington National Cemetery for the past 15 years. They were initially supported by the Maine State Society, with two Maine Wing squadrons joining in to assist in 2000. The Arlington wreath project has grown ever since.

Wreaths Across America was launched in 2006. The program's mission is to remember the fallen, to honor those who have served and are serving and to teach America's youth the value of freedom.

In addition to the U.S. Civil Air Patrol, the program is supported by the Patriot Guard motorcycle riders, veterans and other patriotic organizations. The BlueBird Ranch truck, which hauls the wreaths to Arlington, will make several stops along the way at local schools this year to educate students and staff about the project.

In addition to the thousands of Worcester wreaths that will be placed on veterans' gravesites across the U.S., the Worcesters also plan to donate 36-inch wreaths to all 50 statehouses this year. ▲