

# Wreaths Across America - Arizona



Wreaths Across America coordinates wreath-laying ceremonies at 1600+ cemeteries including Arlington, to remember our departed Veterans at Christmastime. Ceremonies large and small take place on the same day across our country, at sea, and abroad.

December 15th marked the 21st anniversary of Maine wreaths being donated to be placed on headstones at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA. 2018 is also the thirteenth year of the National Wreath Sponsorship Campaign under the guidance of the nonprofit [WreathsAcrossAmerica.org](http://WreathsAcrossAmerica.org) that brought the same remembrance wreaths to National and State Veterans cemeteries, monuments, and community centers all across the Nation.

At [Phoenix National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona](#), on Cave Creek Road, the annual “Wreaths Across America Ceremony” took place at 10am on 15 December 2018. Tarra Matyas, the organizer for the event, welcomed everyone for attending and announced the beginning of the ceremony. The colors were presented by the United States Coast Guard Honor Guard and a prayer was given by Chaplain John of the [Old Guard Riders](#). Upon the completion of the prayer everyone recited the Pledge of Allegiance, which was followed by the singing of the National Anthem by Jeff Senour. Tarra introduced the Benchmark Elementary School Choir who performed a patriotic song for everyone in attendance. Col. Wanda Wright, Director of the Arizona Department of Veterans’ Services gave a speech. The [Scottish American Military Society](#) performed the POW/MIA Remembrance Table Ceremony. Tarra then got up and thanked everyone and guided them to come up and each take a wreath and go out and place it on the grave of a Veteran. Taps was then played by Vern West USA (Ret) and the laying of wreaths commenced.

Seven ceremonial wreaths were placed to re-

member those who served, honor their sacrifices, and teach our younger generations about the high cost of our freedoms. Specially designated wreaths for the Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, Merchant Marine, and POW/MIA were placed during the ceremony that was conducted simultaneously at over 1400 participating locations all across the USA.

This program continues to grow and it wouldn’t be possible without the help, support and dedication of so very many individuals, groups and businesses. Keep that support and awareness growing through 2019. The comment was made that, “There were so many organizations present that day, as well as supporting us through the year. Patriot Guard Riders, Old Guard Riders, Combat Vets, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Youth For Troops, Daughters of the American Revolution, Riders USA, Church groups, community groups, Legion Riders, Eagle Riders, the list is nearly impossible to compile.”

Tarra followed up by sharing that they placed 5,600 wreaths in Phoenix National Cemetery this year. That is a bit down from last year due to donations coming in after the cut-off date. But, seeing the silver lining, she noted that, “We already have over 1000 for next year :)” Tarra has a passion for the WAA Mission. There are more than 65,000 Veterans interred at Phoenix. As program organizer for this location, she is *determined* to have one for EVERY Veteran at PNC. Donations are already being accepted for 2019. Tarra can be reached at [tarramatyas2@gmail.com](mailto:tarramatyas2@gmail.com)



The Wreaths Across America Ceremony at the Hi Jolly Cemetery in Quartzite took place on Saturday December 15. Everyone gathered at VFW Post 769 on Central Blvd before parading to the cemetery. The

Freedom Riders led the parade, which was given a police escort. Thanks go out to the town of Quartzite for their support. There were a number of speakers plus a musical tribute by local band Skyhawks. The Jr. Color Guard escorted and assisted with the placing of the wreaths. The ceremony included the placing of 7 wreaths, for the branches of our military and the POW/MIA. In addition, there were 125 wreaths placed on the graves of Veterans who are taking their final rest at High Jolly. Thank you to Roy Austin of [VFW Post 769](#) for sharing your information with us.



Regardless of whether the remembrance event is large or small, the intent and importance are the same. The mission of Wreaths Across America is to Remember, Honor, Teach. *Remember* our fallen U.S. Veterans, *Honor* those who serve, and *Teach* our children the value of freedom. WHEREVER you are, whatever state you live in, YOU can become involved in this very moving endeavor.

From the WAA website, “A person dies twice: once when they take their final breath, and later, the last time their name is spoken.” As the wreaths are placed, the volunteers are encouraged to say the Veteran’s name aloud; reflecting a moment on their life and service. Would you like to sponsor a wreath for a specific Veteran or Cemetery? Would you like to become involved or learn more about the program? Visit <https://www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/>

Thank you All for your part in remembering our departed Veterans this Christmas Season.

Betsy

*Photos here are from the Phoenix ceremony. View more online by clicking the title above.*