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Wreaths Across America

Camp Lewis Cemetery honors the fallen

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An impressive mission to Remember, Honor and Teach is carried out on Joint Base Lewis-McChord at the historic Camp Lewis Cemetery in December on national Wreaths Across America day.

An evergreen wreath is placed on every veteran's interment or inurnment site to remember and honor their service.

Wreaths Across America is a national organization that began in 1992 with one company, Worcester Wreaths, placing wreaths on the graves and honoring the nation's fallen at Arlington National Cemetery. In 2007, national interest in the project had grown and a dedicated group of volunteers formed the nonprofit Wreaths Across America.

Volunteers can sponsor a wreath, participate at an event or donate to a local fundraising group. All wreaths are made and distributed from a central location in Maine.

Donated trucking services bring the wreaths to more than 1,200 cemeteries across the United States in one coordinated effort so that all the trucks arrive on the same date. The wreaths are then placed by volunteers.

The Wreaths Across America Mission is Remember, Honor, Teach. Remember the fallen. Honor those who serve and their families. Teach the future generations about the sacrifices made to preserve our freedoms.

"The symbolism of fresh evergreen wreaths honoring those who have served provides a living memorial of the veterans and their families," said Donna Dahlstrom the Joint Base Lewis McChord cemetery responsible official, in describing the experience of the Wreaths Across America event at the Camp Lewis Cemetery. "Volunteers are encouraged to say the veteran's name aloud, take a moment to thank them for their service to our country and place a wreath at the gravesite. This event teaches our children that the freedom and liberty we enjoy in the United States have come with significant loss of our military brothers and sisters."

Nearly 1,000 wreaths were placed on veterans' graves at the Camp Lewis Cemetery and Memorial Park, by approximately 400 volunteers, in December. The volunteers were a combination of JBLM's Better Opportunities for Single Service Members, scouting groups, the Mary Bell Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and others from the community.

The USO provided coffee and donuts to warm up gathered volunteers and other participants on the cold December morning.

The Interstate Distributor Company, a Tacoma based trucking service, donated not only the trucking of the wreaths from Connecticut to JBLM but also chose their driver carefully. The selected driver was a veteran who was deeply honored to transport the truckload of wreaths across the United States.

Approximately one month after the event, wreaths are gathered by scouting groups and other volunteers. The metal frames of the wreaths are recycled by the JBLM Directorate of Public Works, and proceeds from metal recycling goes into the Qualified Recycling Program to support Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs.

Dec. 16 at 9 a.m. is scheduled to be the next Wreaths Across America event at the Camp Lewis Cemetery. People interested in participating or to learn more about the program, can visit wreathscrossamerica.org or email Dahlstrom at



Camp Lewis Cemetery
Volunteers honor the fallen by placing wreaths at the Camp Lewis Cemetery during JBLM's Wreaths Across America event in Dec. 15.

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donna.j.dahlstrom.civ@mail.mil, or the volunteer opportunities contact, Tech. Sgt. Nauman, zachariah.t.nauman.mil@mail.mil.

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