



Wreaths Across America

Planning for a Successful Event

The first key to a successful year with a Wreaths Across America event is to find one, or more, dignitaries who are willing to become involved with the event. It helps if the dignitary has a vested interest in the event, such as a family member who served, or family member who is interred at the veteran's cemetery.

The second key is early planning. A meeting should be set up early in the year, such as June, to have an organizational meeting with all of those involved. This should include the WAA location leader(s), a group member from each of those selling sponsorships, city/county dignitaries, previous year's large donors, and a group member of those organizations involved in the ceremony. During this meeting a team environment with attainable goals should be the first priority.

Actions for the Meeting:

1. Collect a list of names, email addresses, and phone numbers from all of those present at your meeting. Great communication amongst your team members is a must for success.
2. Ask your dignitaries office to make a local plea to the public, and local companies to make donations through a public website, or personal contact, at the time of your "Kick Off" event.
3. Set plans in place for a "Wreaths Across America Kick-Off" for your location. A good date for this is about a week following Veteran's Day. This can be as simple as inviting all of your local media outlets to come to the cemetery. If dignitaries are present, you will have a better media turnout. During your "Kick-Off" have your dignitary speak on the purpose of the WAA program, and have him/her encourage people to contribute through a public website, or personal contact.
4. Send out invitations to Churches, Societies, Organizations, etc...to make donations, as well as to come and help with the laying of the wreaths on WAA Day.
5. Have your dignitaries' offices contact businesses and encourage them to support his office by making contributions to aid in the Wreaths Across America effort in covering the cemetery with wreaths. Also encourage the businesses to take part in the laying of the wreaths. While every wreath that is sold helps, it is the businesses contributions which makes a powerful difference in the event's success.
6. Invite members of local veteran's organizations, as well as patriotic clubs such as the Patriot Guard Riders biker club. Ask if they will provide an escort for your WAA truck as it comes to town.

Wreath's Across America "Kick-Off" Event

Have your plans from your meeting in place, and have your team members present for your "Kick-Off". Contact all of your team members to be assured that all are ready and will be present for the beginning of your event. Have your dignitaries set a time and date for this and have them invite the media. The dignitaries should provide the media with information as to where the public can go to sponsor their wreaths. His/her office should contact local businesses and ask for the help with sponsorships at this time. Encourage all of your location groups to make a final push for donations/sponsorships from their organizations.

Wreath Arrivals

Make it a big deal to the public when the wreaths come to town. Have your dignitaries provide a police escort, and ask organizations such as the Patriot Guard Riders to escort the wreath truck(s) as well. Invite the dignitaries to speak upon their arrival, and once again have all of the media outlets present. Invite the public to the event and to help in the placement of the wreaths at the ceremony.

Event Day

Have a great ceremony, but be careful of the length. Anything over 30 minutes and you will start to lose your attendees interest. Find ways of involvement for as many parties involved as possible, but be careful of too many speaking. You wish to have as many people present at your event as possible, and you want those present to stay there until every wreath has been layed. The effect of having to walk away, and seeing headstones with no wreaths, will have a lasting impact on them to do more next year to help cover the entire cemetery.

Take Aways

- A. Locate a dignitary to become involved.
- B. Collect a team and contacts.
- C. Have an organizational meeting with your team and dignitaries.
- D. Set plans in place for a public sponsorship/donation link, a "Kick-Off", Wreath Arrival event, and your WAA Ceremony.
- E. Dignitaries should push business and public sponsorships.
- F. Groups should push organizational sponsorships.
- G. Have a WAA "Kick-Off" Event...pushing public sponsorships.
- H. Have a WAA Wreath Arrival Event...make it a big deal.
- I. Have a short successful ceremony, with a great attendance.

All those involved need to use the media outlets to keep this jumping in front of the public in order to create a change in the community's culture. The more effort that the TEAM puts into the events, the better your results will grow.