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Submitted by:

Eric Mens, Public Affairs Officer
American Legion Post 68 Leland
Ph (703) 626-9104

For Immediate Release:

HELP KICK OFF THE 2026 WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA PROGRAM

“To be killed in war is not the worst that can happen. To be lost is not the worst that can happen... to be forgotten is the worst.” Pierre Claeysens (1909-2003)

Over the 34 years since Morrill Worcester, owner of Worcester Wreath Company of Harrington, Maine, first conceived the idea of paying tribute to America’s fallen heroes by placing surplus wreaths at Arlington National Cemetery, much has changed, making his dream far larger than he originally imagined. With support from numerous groups and individuals, including veterans’ organizations, the idea blossomed into Wreaths Across America (WAA), a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization founded in 2007. Its mission is simple: “REMEMBER the Fallen...HONOR those who Serve... TEACH the next generation the value of Freedom.” As a nonprofit that receives no government funding, WAA relies on individual wreath sponsors, corporate donors, and volunteers to fund its programs.

One year later, in 2008, Congress designated December 13, 2008, as Wreaths Across America Day. That same year, thousands of volunteers placed more than 100,000 wreaths on veterans’ graves across every state, Puerto Rico, and 24 overseas cemeteries. Today, the wreath-laying that began more than 30 years ago is held annually on the second or third Saturday in December.

The program has grown exponentially since its inception. In 2025, with support from 7,778 sponsorship groups, corporate contributions, and in-kind donations from the transportation industry nationwide, local communities paid tribute as volunteers placed more than 3.1 million sponsored wreaths on veterans’ gravesites at 5,598 participating locations across all 50 US states and in overseas cemeteries.

The John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68 in Leland is proud to serve as a sponsoring organization for the WWA program. For each wreath purchased through a sponsorship group, such as the John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68, WAA redistributes a portion of its proceeds to the sponsoring group. As a result of this “give-back” to the community, WAA has redistributed over \$28M to civic organizations and other non-profits since 2007. Proceeds from the “give-back,” distributed through the John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68, support Post efforts to aid local veterans, schools, and other local organizations through a variety of community programs.

Through the local community’s generosity, Post 68 surpassed its 2025 goal of securing enough wreath sponsorships to place live wreaths at all veterans’ gravesites at Wilmington National Cemetery. Thanks to its 2025 golf tournament, ‘Tee It Up Fore Veterans’, which included a wreath sponsorship component, and a successful media campaign, Post 68’s sponsorships accounted for nearly 14 percent of the 5,172 wreaths needed to honor each gravesite. Overall, public participation in the 2025 greater Wilmington sponsorship program helped ensure that each gravesite at Wilmington National Cemetery was honored.

This year, Post 68’s goal is to sponsor at least 600 of the needed wreaths to honor each of the 5,172 veterans’ gravesites at Wilmington National Cemetery. We are well short of that goal and need local community participation to reach it. To purchase a wreath, make checks payable to American Legion Post 68; in the Memo line, write “Wreaths Across America” and indicate the number of wreaths purchased in \$17 increments per wreath. Mail checks to American Legion Post 68, PO Box 521, Leland, NC 28451. To purchase a wreath online by credit card, visit: <https://wreathsasscrossamerica.org/NC0380P>. To meet the WAA deadline, orders must be placed by December 1, 2026.

Wreath-laying will take place on Saturday, December 19, 2026, with commemorative ceremonies beginning at 12 pm. The public is invited to attend and participate in the wreath placement. Wilmington National Cemetery is located at 2011 Market St., Wilmington, NC 28403.

To learn more about WAA, visit <https://www.wreathsasscrossamerica.org/About/OurMission>.

To learn more about Pierre Claeysens, visit <https://www.pcvf.org/pierre-claeysens>.

To learn more about the John E. Jacobs American Legion Post 68 and our role in serving the community, visit <https://www.ncpost68.org/>. The Post meets on the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Banquet Room at Blossoms Restaurant in Magnolia Greens, Leland (1800 Tommy Jacobs Drive). Meetings are preceded by dinner at 4:30 p.m. in the restaurant for those who wish to participate. After the meeting, attendees typically adjourn to the restaurant bar for a social hour. All veterans and active-duty service members in the Leland area are invited.