

Remember, honor, teach: Wreaths Across America Day celebrated at Alton National Cemetery

by Madelaine Gerard, Staff Writer
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ALTON - Despite the bitter wind chill and drizzling rain, many made it out to the **10th Annual Wreaths Across America** event this **Saturday** morning at the **Alton National Cemetery**.

Wreaths Across America Day is recognized across the country as millions gather to remember fallen United States military veterans, honor those who serve and teach children the value of America's freedom.

Margaret Hopkins, chairperson for Wreaths Across America, was humbled by those who came and attended the event, despite the cold weather.

"It's the dedication of to know how valuable this service is," Hopkins said. "This ceremony is to remember those, especially this time of year, who can't be here because of their active service and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice."

Veterans and young Boy Scouts from around the region joined together to place wreaths on each grave of fallen military members. With each wreath placed, the veteran and the scout saluted the man or woman who lay beneath.

The celebration, which is in its tenth year, normally entails quite a bit more pomp and circumstance. Due to the weather that arrived Friday afternoon, event organizers decided to cut the ceremony short. The turnout of veterans, local Boy Scouts troops, JROTC groups and spectators was welcoming nonetheless.

"It's an honor to come out here. We're so pleased that we have a national cemetery out here in Alton and that we have the opportunity express our thanks to them by doing this."

Although the ceremony did not go on in its full flourish, the event at the Alton National Cemetery was well-attended with spectators, family members of volunteers, members of the **Illinois Patriot Guard** as well as living veterans who served in World War II, the Vietnam and Korean wars, and most recently, the War on Terror.

"It means so much. The generosity is so amazing that it makes me want to do this even more," she said. "It's amazing what the city and the volunteers in this community has done for us."

After a beautiful rendition of Echoing Taps by **Alyssa Plummer** and **Deven Long**, **Chaplain Bernie Caldwell of A Few Good Men Marines** led the group in prayer to close out the event. Hopkins again thanked all who were in attendance before the short ceremony concluded.

