

# **Alton Wreaths Across America Event Touching Reminder Of Importance Of Freedoms And Those Who Served**

by Dan Brannan, Content Director  
December 20 2021 7:44 AM





ALTON - The Wreaths Across America event was again a beautiful tribute to veterans on Saturday, Dec. 18, at Alton National Cemetery.

A large crowd attended the event, and the most noticeable part was youngsters assisting other veterans in the placement of wreaths on the individual rows of the cemetery.

This marked the 15th year of the event, which has been coordinated by Alton's Margaret Hopkins since the beginning.

Families with a veteran buried outside the Alton National Cemetery also had an opportunity to order a wreath for their loved ones. Hopkins said there were an extra 135 wreaths ordered to distribute outside the Alton National Cemetery for families with a veteran.

The Alton Junior ROTC, Troop 16 St. Peter and Paul Boy Scouts, the Patriot Guard, Holy Family School in Granite City, several veterans, and others assisted in the ceremony and preparation, Hopkins said. The choral group, ceremony, a rifle salute, and taps moved the large crowd in attendance. Marine chaplain Bernie Caldwell did the invocation and issued the command to post colors to start the event.





A total of 560 wreaths are positioned in gravestones at Alton National Cemetery.

Hopkins said she was very excited about it because they weren't able to do that last year with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

"Today, we look at those who made these sacrifices to make it great," Hopkins said. "Wreaths Across America is a national organization and this year over 3,000 locations in all 50 states participating. Millions of wreaths are being laid at this hour."

Hopkins said the purpose of the day is to remember the fallen, honor those who have served and teach the value of freedom. For her, teaching the young children about the value of freedom is one of the keys to the day, as evident by the large participation of youngsters.

"Benjamin Franklin said it best: 'Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, but involve me and I learn.' I think that says it best. That is why we try to include so many youths in this activity."













