

Alton Wreaths Across America Ceremony Widely Attended, Again Raises Deep Emotions

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
December 18 2023 1:30 PM





ALTON - Each year, one of the most meaningful events in the region is the Alton Wreaths Across America Ceremony coordinated by Margaret Hopkins. This year for the 17th time, Alton marked the special occasion at Alton National Cemetery.

An abundance of people attended this year's event and several youth participated in the ceremony. A feature story will appear about the [youth participation at Wreaths Across America](#) and also [a special interview with 100-year-old World War II Art Williams](#), who received special recognition this year.

Chaplain Bernie Caldwell did the invocation and the USAF - ROTC Color Guard at Alton High posted colors, followed by a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem by Deborah Maneke.

Hopkins said she was very pleased with the overall participation on a cold and rainy day and the attendance showed the importance of the ceremony.

“We were so appreciative people came despite the bad weather,” Hopkins said. “I was overwhelmed with the number of people that came with the challenges of the weather.”



Ceremonial Wreath Laying Participants:

Sgt. Nick Crawford, U.S. Army

Petty Officer First Class, Doug Sheary, U.S. Navy

Sgt. Maj. Lonnie Saffell, U.S. Marine Corps

CCM Sgt. Bill Moyer, U.S. Air Force

ROTC Cadet Sr. Airman First Class Jonathan Henderson, U.S. Space Force

PO First Class Stephen Fielder, U.S. Coast Guard

ROTC Sr. Airman Jeremiah Henderson representing U.S. Merchant Marines

John Rain Jr, representing POW/MIA

Veterans and students placed the wreaths on the Alton National Cemetery graves.

The Alton VFW Post 1308 conducted the rifle salute and Emily Schrumpf and Gabriel Futhey did Echoing Taps.

A dove release and honoring of Art Williams was also done and Caldwell conducted the ending benediction.

The Alton Wreaths Across America Committee consists of Margaret Hopkins, the chair, SMSgt. Katie Rosenbeck, Barb Hinson, Nick Crawford, Bernie Caldwell, Sam Roberts, Bill Moyer, Greg Reinhardt and Don Huber.

