

Wreathes Across America Reception
Remarks
Denise Doring VanBuren, President General

They come from communities large and small. They come from military and non-military families. They come from every state in the nation – and from every corner of America.

***They* are the volunteers who step forth each December to ensure that the men and women who have courageously worn the uniform of our nation are remembered during the holidays. They do it because they know that our Armed Forces *earned* the respect of a grateful nation – as part of a proud tradition that stretches back to the founding of our republic nearly 250 years ago.**

And they do it because the wreaths they place symbolize the circle of eternal life – something these citizen soldiers won

through their willingness to lay down their lives for their fellow Americans if duty required it.

On behalf of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution, with our nearly 190,000 members in three thousand chapters around the world, it is an honor for me this evening to thank everyone associated with Wreaths Across America for their support of our nation's heroes – the service men and women who stood their ground at Yorktown, who manned their stations at Gettysburg, who stormed San Juan Hill, who fell at Belleau Wood; the soldiers, sailors, air force and marines who died at places like Pearl Harbor, the Battle of the Bulge and Iwo Jimo; who breathed their last at the Chosin Reservoir; who gave their all during the Tet Offensive or who died in the mountains of Afghanistan. All who have worn the uniform of our nation – those who came home and those who did not – deserve our deep

gratitude and our respectful remembrance – every day of the year, year after year.

During the earliest days of the Wreathes effort, our National Society invited Morrill and Karen Worcester to be honored at our Continental Congress here in Washington, D.C. Though they had already started a movement, no one then recognized the enormous impact they would ultimately make – and the lives that they would touch through the seemingly simple act of placing a fresh evergreen wreath, adorned with a simple red bow, in row upon row of the graves of our nation’s heroes. It is truly a heart-warming sight to visit one of the more than 2,500 cemeteries that will take part in this holiday ritual.

I’m immensely proud that the DAR has grown to become the largest participating partner in Wreathes Across America during

the last three years. We are honored to have been the sponsor of the Mobile Education Exhibit that travels the nation. We're also so pleased that Karen is a member of our service organization, which has given more than 11 million hours of community service during the last two years alone – despite the headwinds of the pandemic. DAR members are among the most committed volunteers at VA Medical Centers; we support active duty service personnel; we encourage new citizens and we support students. Since our founding in 1890, more than 1 million Daughters have embraced our vibrant mission to promote historic preservation, education and patriotism --- values that are reflected in the focus of Wreathes Across America.

We also hope that all Americans will be inspired to take the spirit of this weekend's events and carry it forward throughout the year. Those who wear -- or who have worn -- the uniform of our

nation deserve our respect and our support 365 days a year. Let us not wait to place a wreath on their final resting places before we seek them to express our gratitude. George Washington once declared that “the willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation.”

Organizations like the DAR consider it a moral obligation to take up this important work to honor our veterans – the everyday men and women who may live next door but who are truly superheroes. It is incumbent upon all of us to reduce the rate of veteran suicide, to assist those who struggle from their injuries and to support the dependents of those who never returned. It’s also important to express sincere gratitude to those who served without visible scars – an occasional card, a surprise cookie

delivery, a simple-yet-sincere expression of appreciation are all warmly received from these neighbors. As the descendants of America's first citizen soldiers, we welcome others to join us in support of outreach and programs that help our veterans to flourish in Society – for they represent the very best of the American spirit.

To Karen and Morrill, to the organizers here at Arlington National Cemetery, to all the volunteers across this great country: thank you for making possible Wreathes Across America. We are proud to stand among you to honor those who have sworn their allegiance to these United States of America -- and placed their lives in danger as a result. They are the angels who watch over us still – and who protect our democracy within a republic, ever vigilant and ever aware that freedom, truly, is never free.