WREATHS *across* AMERICA

LOCATION COORDINATORS

HOW TO GET STARTED

Wreaths Across America

2023

WAA 2023 Theme:
Serve and Succeed

- The inspiration for this year's theme came while discussing the significance of 2022's theme, which was "Find a Way to Serve," and the need to continue to stress the importance of service and the positive ways it can impact lives. Wreaths Across America plans to focus on the storylines of veterans and military families who have found success through their own service, while also highlighting local volunteers across the country and the success that comes from serving their communities.

- ***"There are many ways to serve your community and country, and just as many definitions of success," said Karen Worcester, executive director, Wreaths Across America. "We hope through focusing on those stories of success we will help change the dialogue around what it means to serve your country."***

Locations & Groups: What's the Difference?

The more Sponsorship Groups supporting a Location, the broader the reach and opportunity to fully cover!

Locations are where the veterans' wreaths are placed during a WAA wreath laying ceremony.

Groups collect sponsorships for veteran wreaths.

Unite your community by inviting other organizations to register as a sponsorship group!

3-for-2: A 3rd wreath will be sent to the location at no charge for every 2 wreaths sponsored through a group on this plan. This is a great way for your group to help maximize the number of wreaths placed on veteran graves.

$5 Back: Your Sponsorship Group will receive $5 back for every paid wreath sponsorship. This is a great way for your group to give back to your local community.

No Plan: This plan helps cover the Wreaths Across America overhead. This is a great way for your Sponsorship Group to support the behind-the-scenes work at headquarters.

Every participating location should have at least one registered Sponsorship Group supporting it!

Tips for Getting Started in 2023!

Log in to the Dashboard and learn how to make the most of it!
Use the Dashboard Tutorial to get started.

Determine the Veteran Grave Count, then set a Sponsorship Goal that feels achievable for your location.

Bookmark the Volunteer Resource Page on your internet browser and become familiar with those resources.

Use the Wreath Day Planning Checklist in the 2023 Locations and Sponsorship Groups Handbook, then create a planning timeline for your location.

REMEMBER HONOR TEACH

WREATHS *across* AMERICA

SERVE & SUCCEED

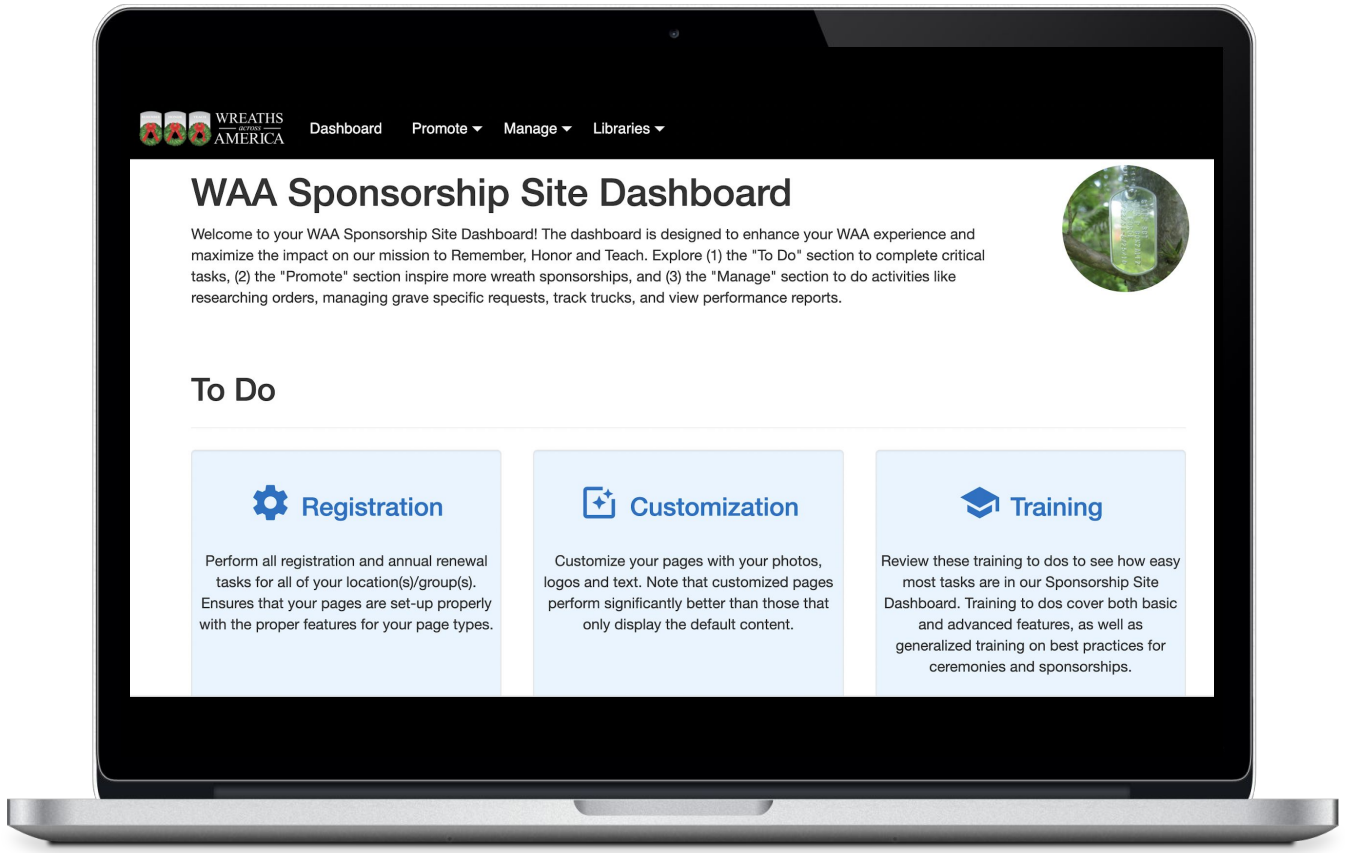
Create a team of volunteers to support you with planning and on wreath day, then delegate tasks and oversee their completion!

Join the private Facebook group for registered Location Coordinators. It's a great way to connect with other volunteers!

Communicate your wreath laying ceremony plans with your supporters, community, and the local media.

Gather more support by creating a WAA Facebook page for your location where you can share details for your event!

Why a Dashboard?



1. **The WAA Dashboard is where you will manage your group(s) and/or location(s).**

2. **Customize how your WAA page looks:** personalize with photos, create a page alert, add a news article!

3. **Message** your supporters and invite them to sponsor wreaths, attend your fundraising events, and let them know what to expect on wreath day.

4. View the **Wreath Count Report** to see the total number of wreaths sponsored for your group(s) and/or location(s)!

5. Keep track of **Grave Specific Requests** and see who has volunteered to help on wreath day.

6. **Thank sponsors for their generosity!**

Important to Know!

Your Regional Liaison Team is your main point of contact for Wreaths Across America and will work directly with you to coordinate the logistics for your location. They are happy to help!

What is the difference between your Veteran Grave Count and your Sponsorship Goal?

We ship based on your **Veteran Grave Count**, so it's important that you provide us with an accurate count of the maximum number of sponsored veteran wreaths that you will need at your location. Extras will be credited to your location the following year or if you prefer to gift extras to other locations in need, your Regional Liaison Team can set that up for you!

Your **Sponsorship Goal** is linked to the Wreath-O-Meter on your location page. It turns green as wreaths are sponsored for your location, making it a great way to motivate your community to sponsor veteran wreaths.
Your Sponsorship Goal does NOT determine how many wreaths will be shipped to your location.

Volunteer Resource Page

Where Can I Find the Volunteer Resource Page?
Go to learn.wreathsacrossamerica.org/location-group-resources or visit the main WAA page at www.wreathsacrossamerica.org and go to Location/Group Resources (Under the Menu).

What Is The Volunteer Resource Page?
It is your go-to spot for all of the WAA approved (and updated!) order forms, documents, marketing materials, logos, press releases, and volunteer tutorials.

What If I Want to Customize A Document?
If you would like to customize an image or document, email the draft to your Regional Liaison Team prior to any printing or distribution to get approval from WAA. This is required.

Should I Use a QR Code?
Yes! Be sure to link it to the WAA group page that you would like to support so they get credit for the orders.

Wreath Day Planning Checklist

- Meet with the cemetery staff and have them sign the Contact at Location Approval Form. Discuss any requirements they have for the wreath laying ceremony and ensure those are followed. Make sure parking is easy to find, close to the location and free (or at least validated).
- Start planning the details of your ceremony, line up speakers, and decide how you want to handle the logistics of unloading the truck, parking on wreath day, distributing wreaths, placing grave specifics, and wreath clean-up.
- Begin compiling a list of individuals and groups to invite. Involve as many people in your community as possible. Not sure where to start? Reach out to local veterans' groups for suggestions. You may want to plan flyovers, processions with Patriot Guard Riders, color guards, etc. Reach out to schools and other organizations in your community. Don't be afraid to think big: you can make the event as large as you wish. All we ask is that your event be open to public and remain non-political.
- Reach out to your local rabbi to discuss the best way to honor and include the Jewish Veterans while respecting their culture. Let them know that individual members of the Jewish community may request a wreath, even if veteran wreaths are not being placed as a whole. Consult with the cemetery staff to ensure special requests are fulfilled for those wishing not to receive a wreath, as well as those in the Jewish community who may want one.

"We are not here to 'decorate graves.' We are here to remember not their deaths, but their lives."

- Karen Worcester, Executive Director of Wreaths Across America

Ways Volunteers Can Help!

You need help planning for wreath day!

Create a team of volunteers to support you all year round and on wreath day.

Lining up speakers, vocalists, Honor Guard, or Ceremonial Wreath Presenters.

Passing out programs and welcoming attendees!

Placing grave specific wreaths

for those who are not able to attend.

Help with clean up!

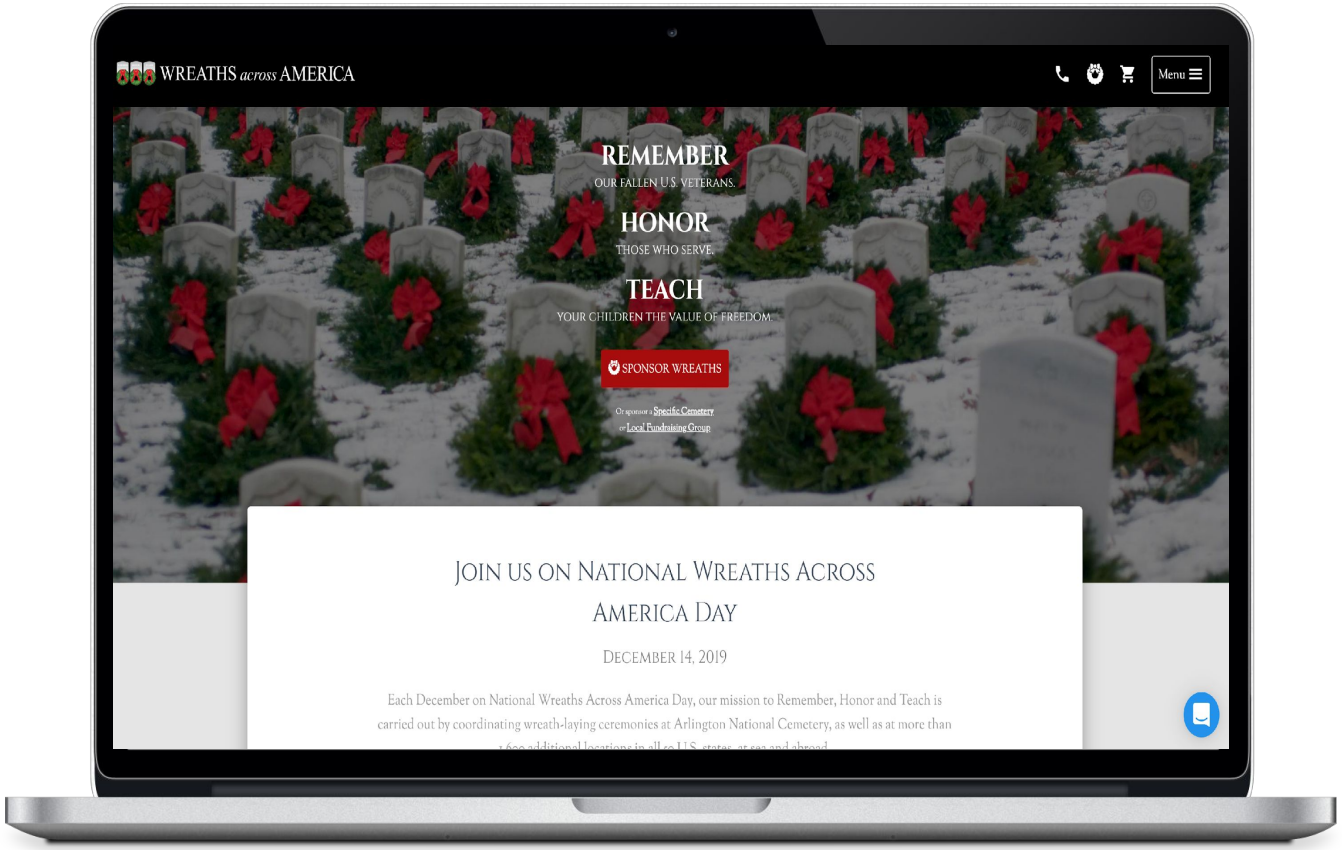
Setting up chairs and audio.

Crowd control - blocking off parking and directing traffic.

Distributing wreaths to all who wish to participate.

Overseeing wreath placements throughout the cemetery.

Stay WAA Connected!



1. **We encourage all of our volunteers to connect with us online to share photos, stories, fundraising ideas and more!**
2. The **Official WAA Facebook page** can be found at www.facebook.com/WAAHQ.
3. Registered Group Leaders are invited to join our **private Facebook group**. Check your Registration Confirmation Email for details!
4. **Instagram:** Follow us at @wreathsacross
   Twitter: Follow us @WreathsAcross
5. **YouTube:** Subscribe to our WreathsAcrossAmerica channel for videos from past events, interviews and more.
6. **LinkedIn:** Connect professionally with WAA by following our company page for organizational updates and information.

Community Outreach Checklist

Reference the Dashboard Tutorial to learn how to send Dashboard messages!

Send messages through your Dashboard to Sponsorship Groups, Sponsors, and Event Participants.

Mail, email, or hand-deliver formal letters of invitation to elected officials.

Be Sure to Include These Details in Your Messages:

Address: Give as much information as you can about where volunteers can park on the day of the event, as well as the address and any other pertinent arrival details.

Time: Be very clear about what time the ceremony starts and what time the veteran wreaths will be placed. Include details for the placement of Grave Specific Requests too!

Additional Info: Let volunteers know who the featured speakers are at your ceremony, how wreaths will be passed out, and if refreshments will be provided.

You community will appreciate your clear communication about the wreath laying ceremony.

Media Contact Checklist

Your local media wants "feel good stories" to share with your community!
Inviting them to cover your event is a great way to share the mission and gather more support in the coming years.

Develop a list of media contacts.
Find out how they like to receive information (email, online, fax, or mail).

★ **Prepare a media advisory** to invite press to the event and customize a pre-event press release, using the Wreaths Across America templates on the Volunteer Resource Page.

★ **Collect bios of public figures** who plan to attend to include in your press kits.

★ Follow up via phone or email with journalists to whom you sent the media advisory to **remind them of the event**.

★ If you expect TV coverage, **arrange for special parking for satellite trucks.**

Social Media Tips

Create a Facebook Page for your WAA Location to encourage your community to get involved!

★ **DO** share stories about heroes being honored or celebrated.

★ **DO** share stories about communities coming together to celebrate veteran's birthdays. There's no shortage of these stories!

★ **DO** share "Thank You" messages to heroes.

★ **DON'T** share notices about deaths or sickness.

★ **DON'T** share articles that are political or religious. Even if it's good news, this creates a platform for people to share disagreements.

WREATHS *across* AMERICA SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT

READY TO GET STARTED ON SOCIAL MEDIA?
REACH OUT TO OUR RESIDENT
SOCIAL MEDIA PRO, SAMANTHA CLARK!

Contact Information
207-221-5169
sclark@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Social media content can include images, articles, links to the specific WAA website for your group, videos, fundraisers, new WAA campaigns and more!

Two Weeks Before Wreath Day Checklist

Finalize Grave Specific List and placement details.

Watch for emails from your Regional Liaison Team!

Do you have your Ceremonial Flags?

Touch base with contact at location to confirm logistics.

Wreaths will be delivered during the 2 weeks leading up to wreath day.

Keep your phone close! Your driver will call you to coordinate delivery.

Respond quickly to emails from your community.

Adding a Page Alert to your page can be helpful!

It’s Wreath Day!

REMEMBER - HONOR - TEACH

Last Minute Considerations:

Arrive Early to Set Up: Be to the location at least an hour beforehand to allow you plenty of time to have everything ready to go for volunteers.

Start on Time: This shows respect for your guests time and their other commitments that day. It also promotes solidarity among the hundreds of groups nationwide holding simultaneous ceremonies.

Have Press Kits Ready: Have a dedicated person look for and direct journalists to the area where the ceremony will be held and provide each of them with a press kit.

The ceremony must be held on National Wreaths Across America Day unless permission is received otherwise by contacting your Regional Liaison Team.

The National start time is 12pm EST, for those locations wishing to hold theirs at the same time as Arlington National Cemetery.

You’ve worked hard for this day, so take the time to soak it all in and remember WHY you do what you do!

After Wreath Day:

- **Did someone in your community go above and beyond to make your event special?** We'd love to hear your story and help you recognize their efforts.
- **Did something newsworthy happen?** Issue a press release, using one of the templates on the Volunteer Resource Page.
- **Send photos and other stories from your event to the WAA office** at pr@wreathsacrossamerica.org or if you are interested in being featured on Wreaths Across America Radio, email WAAradio@wreathsacrossamerica.org.
- **If you have any questions or concerns that need to be addressed,** contact your Regional Liaison Team.
- Be sure to communicate with your location about when they would like volunteers to **clean up the wreaths**. Then reach out to your community to gather help!
- Your Regional Liaison Team will email you after the first of the year to **reinstate and stay active for the 2024 wreath year.**

Listen to Wreaths Across America Radio!

Wreaths Across America Radio is a 24/7 Internet stream.

Its unique format of informational and inspiring content about members of the U.S. armed forces, their families, military veterans, and volunteers throughout the country and overseas who support the mission to Remember, Honor, and Teach.

Along with the informational and inspiring content Wreaths Across America Radio plays a variety of music with the roots firmly planted in patriotism with a country music thread running through the core of the stream.

Wreaths Across America Radio has a live morning show every weekday morning from 6am to 10am eastern, along with a variety of special programs that support the mission.

You can listen anywhere at www.wreathsacrossamerica.org/radio, or by using the iHeart Radio app, TuneIn or Simple Radio apps, or download it at the App Store or Google!

WREATHS *across* AMERICA

Regional Map

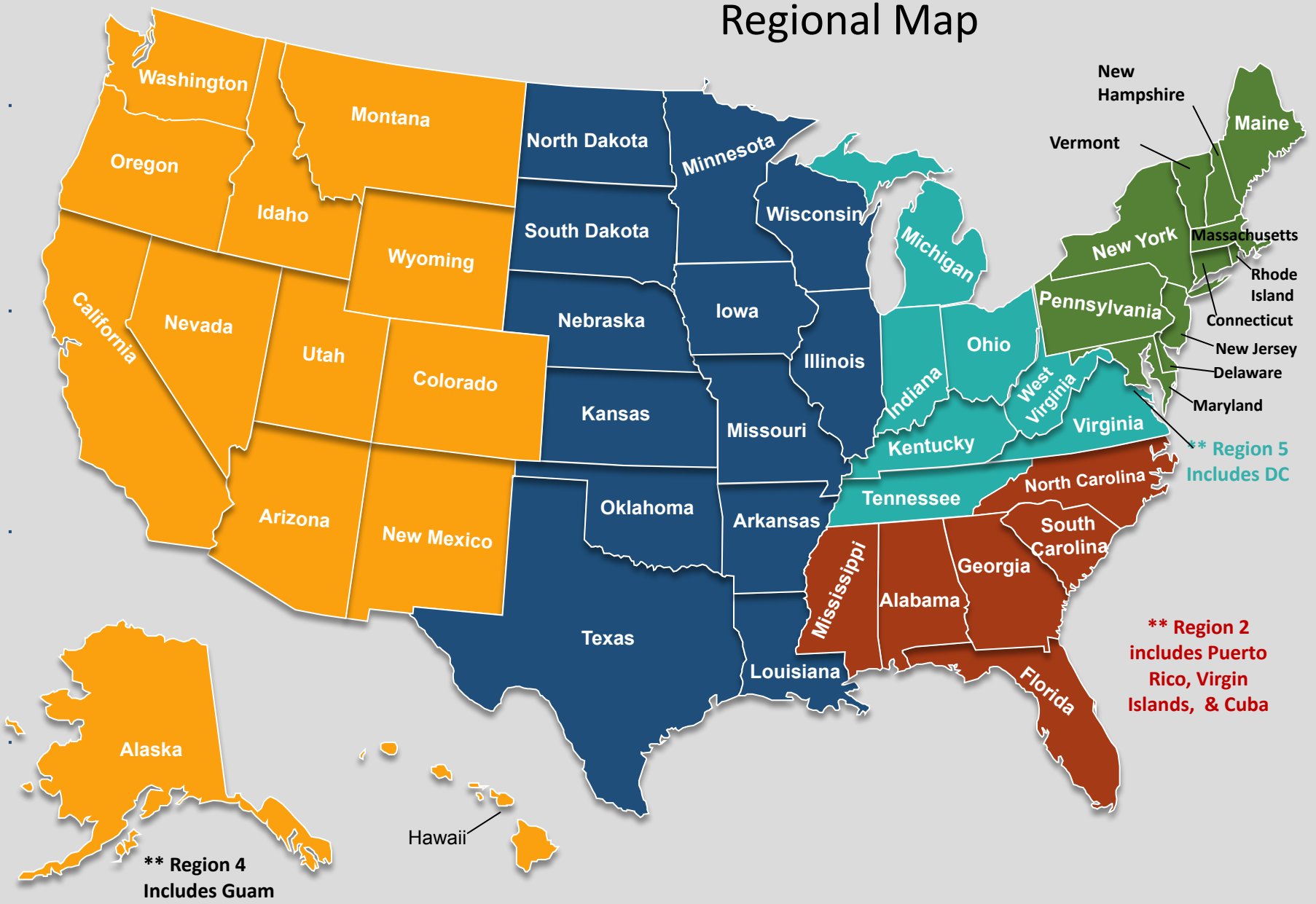
Region 1 Liaison Team
Terra Delong & Emily Carney
207-578-6277
region1@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Region 2 Liaison Team
Miesa Bland & Janelle Eveld
207-578-6283
region2@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Region 3 Liaison Team
Stephanie Molina & Ana Diaz
207-578-6287
region3@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Region 4 Liaison Team
Amber Rocha & David Koskelowski
207-578-6284
region4@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Region 5 Liaison Team
Tiffany Lynch & Annie Brooks
207-578-6289
region5@wreathsacrossamerica.org



Meet the Locations and Groups Team

Julie Bright
Director of Locations & Groups

Meagan Erickson
Asst. Director of Locations & Groups

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Terra Delong & Emily Carney
207-578-6277
region1@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Region 2 Liaison Team
Miesa Bland & Janelle Eveld
207-578-6283
region2@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Richelle Bergeson
Finance Liaison

Region 3 Liaison Team
Stephanie Molina & Ana Diaz
207-578-6287
region3@wreathsacrossamerica.org

Region 4 Liaison Team
Amber Rocha & David Koskelowski
207-578-6284
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WREATHS across AMERICA
THANK YOU!
Wreaths Across America