

Honoring the Departed

VFW Post in Ohio laid 500 wreaths in December

Jan 16, 2024

Members of VFW Post 10380 in Green Township, Ohio, partnered with Wreaths Across America to lay 500 wreaths in a ceremony at their local Bridgetown Cemetery on Dec. 16.

Led by location coordinator Bill Ostermeyer, Post 10380 welcomed more than 70 guests to their ceremony at Bridgetown Cemetery, where they laid 500 wreaths on the graves of local veterans from a slew of wars and conflicts dating as far back as the Civil War.

“The VFW believes in honoring all those who have served before us, and that is something we at Post 10380 take pride in doing,” Ostermeyer said. “I would add, as a member of the VFW Honor Guard, that we participate in funerals where you realize a lot of these graves have not been visited in 100 or more years, so it is nice to do things like this.”

Ostermeyer added his Post partnered with Wreaths Across America following a touching ceremony he and his wife attended at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati, Ohio, renowned for being the third largest cemetery in the country.

“It was hosted by Daughters of America, and I remember thinking ‘this is something we should be doing for our local cemetery,’” Ostermeyer said.

Ostermeyer assumed the role of location coordinator and worked closely with Wreaths Across America, joining Post members in honoring 250 veteran graves at a section of Bridgetown Cemetery in December 2022.

“We purchased 250 wreaths our first year because we were unsure how many veterans were buried there,” Ostermeyer said. “But when we went out before the ceremony and identified the veterans' graves, we found out we were way short.”

Motivated to honor all veterans at Bridgetown Cemetery last year, Ostermeyer purchased 500 wreaths for the ceremony on Dec. 16.

Last year, the Post also welcomed a volunteer fourth-grade class from nearby St. Aloysius

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Gonzaga School two days before the ceremony to help them identify the graves of veterans at Bridgetown Cemetery in accordance with VFW's longtime beliefs.

"Remember, honor and teaching are things the VFW aspires to do," Ostermeyer said. "What better way to do that than this. Many of the kids even took notes on the headstones they found, and some helped us clean those headstones."

On the day of the ceremony, Ostermeyer surprised the guests by hosting several Gold Star family members whom he tasked with the honor of placing one of the eight ceremonial wreaths that represent each branch of service.

"Placing the ceremonial wreaths is important to me," Ostermeyer said. "We had the family of Marine Sgt. David Kreuter of Cincinnati, who was killed in Iraq, do us the honor of placing the wreath for the Marine Corps this year. I think having that element adds to the ceremony."

For December 2024, Ostermeyer and Post 10380 have already placed an order for 650 wreaths, hoping to lay one by all the veterans graves at Bridgetown Cemetery.