

**PUTNAM COUNTY COMPOSITE SQUADRON**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 21, 2016

**Civil Air Patrol honors Putnam County Veterans with Wreaths Across America Ceremony**

CARMEL, New York – December 21, 2016 – Members of Civil Air Patrol’s Putnam County Composite Squadron held their annual Wreaths Across America ceremony at the Raymond Hill Cemetery in Carmel, New York on December 18, 2016, to honor Putnam County Veterans.

Civil Air Patrol officers and cadets ventured into the snow covered ground, in rain and fog, to lay evergreen wreaths on the graves of 180 veterans in recognition and remembrance of their service to the nation. Putnam County Composite Squadron Commander, Captain Elena MacDermant said, “We participate in Wreaths Across America each year to show respect to our veterans and to honor their service to our country. We do this so the next generation never forgets and takes our great country and way of life for granted.” Twenty members of the public, from across Putnam County, observed the ceremony, some assisting with the placement of wreaths.

Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell and Putnam County Sheriff Donald B. Smith were in attendance, each thanking the Putnam County Composite Squadron for showing gratitude to the nations veterans and for their service to the community. Sheriff Smith remarked that in honoring our veterans we “remember freedom is not free.” The New York Riders of Putnam County, who generously donated seventy wreaths, also participated in the ceremony.

As a key partner in Wreaths Across America, Civil Air Patrol ensures the sacrifices of our nation’s soldiers are not forgotten. Wreaths Across America, a non-profit organization, began the tradition of laying thousands of Christmas wreaths on gravestones at Arlington National Cemetery in 1992. The ceremony now takes place every year during the holidays to honor veterans at cemeteries nation-wide. According to Wreaths Across America, 1.2 million remembrance wreathes were placed at 1,228 cemeteries across the country this year. The mission of Wreaths Across America is to “Remember the fallen; Honor those who serve; and Teach our children the value of freedom.”

Civil Air Patrol, the longtime all-volunteer U.S. Air Force auxiliary, is the newest member of the Air Force’s Total Force, which consists of regular Air Force, Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve, along with Air Force retired military and civilian employees. CAP, in its Total Force role, operates a fleet of 550 aircraft and performs about 90 percent of continental U.S. inland search and rescue missions as tasked by the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center and is credited by the AFRCC with saving an average of 78 lives annually. Civil Air Patrol’s 56,000 members nationwide also perform homeland security, disaster relief and drug interdiction missions at the request of federal, state and local agencies. Its members additionally play a leading role in aerospace education and serve as mentors to more than 24,000 young people currently participating in the CAP cadet program. Performing missions for America for the past 75 years, CAP received the Congressional Gold Medal in 2014 in honor of the heroic efforts of its World War II veterans. CAP also participates in Wreaths Across America, an initiative to remember, honor and teach about the sacrifices of U.S. military veterans.

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