



DCMA EMPLOYEE ENSURES LOCAL VETERANS REMEMBERED DURING HOLIDAY SEASON

By Ann Jensis-Dale, DCMA Public Affairs



Dwight Nelson, top left, Defense Contract Management Agency General Electric program integrator, and his volunteer group pose for a picture with the wreaths the group laid on each veteran's grave at the Union Cemetery in Holbrook, Mass.

“Remember the fallen; Honor those who serve; Teach our children the value of freedom.” — Wreathes Across America motto

Dwight Nelson, a program integrator for turbo shaft engines at Defense Contract Management Agency General Electric Lynn, Mass., had his Christmas wish granted when Wreathes Across America provided every Holbrook, Mass., veteran with a wreath this past holiday season.

Nelson, a former Marine and founder of New England Warrior — a nonprofit organization assisting local service members and veterans (see *Communicator's* Spring 2008 issue) — suggested the idea to the Winthrop Congregational Church. “We have over 600 veterans’ graves in Holbrook,” Nelson stated.

“My wish was to see each grave adorned with a wreath on Dec. 12 during Wreathes Across America 2009.”

My wish was to see each grave adorned with a wreath on Dec. 12 during Wreathes Across America 2009. — Dwight Nelson, Defense Contract Management Agency General Electric Lynn program integrator

Fundraising for this project began in October with a goal of \$6,000 to purchase 600 wreaths for the veterans’ graves at Wendell and Holbrook Union cemeteries. Private donations and fundraising events raised \$3,680. This was not enough to purchase a wreath for each veteran’s grave in Holbrook. Nelson spearheaded two additional fundraisers, earning \$600 through a spaghetti dinner and \$1,200 from a headstone motorcycle run, putting them just shy of the \$6,000 goal.

However, when the wreathes were delivered, Nelson found quite a few more than ordered. After a few counts, Nelson discovered 1,000 wreathes were delivered, 400 more than needed to cover all the veterans’ graves in Holbrook.

“I was kind of in shock,” Nelson admitted after seeing so many additional wreathes unexpectedly. Nelson contacted Wreathes Across America to verify the shipment and was informed that the 1,000 wreathes were correct and he could use the remaining wreathes for neighboring veterans’ graves since the organization received so many donations

nationally. Nelson decided he would then contact the Brockton, Mass., Department of Veterans’ Services and coordinate the placement of the additional wreathes on veterans’ graves at Brockton’s Melrose Cemetery.

On Dec. 12, volunteers convened at the Winthrop Congregational Church for coffee and refreshments to review the day’s plan for the laying of wreathes. The first stop was Hallamore Corp. storage facility, a donated storage space for the wreathes. Next, wreathes were loaded into a truck donated by a national truck rental company.

An official ceremony at the Mary Wales Holbrook Park kicked off the event with the first wreath placed on a veteran’s memorial grave site. Volunteers worked throughout the day and placed wreathes on each veteran’s grave site.

“It was a truly moving day for all who participated,” remarked Nelson. “I hope this is the beginning of a new tradition with the goal for all veterans to have wreathes placed on their graves.”

For more information on Wreathes Across America, go to www.wreathesacrossamerica.org or contact Nelson at (617) 416-4244. ■