



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHRISTMAS HONORS ANNOUNCES GUEST SPEAKER

Fort Smith, AR – Thursday November 10, 2022 – Every December Christmas Honors invites the citizens of the Fort Smith Region to honor the servicemembers of our community who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our nation at the annual Christmas Honors event. Families, friends, and volunteers will transform the Fort Smith National Cemetery by placing a wreath on each of the 16,000+ headstones in their honor. Part of the event is a powerful ceremonial tribute that includes a special message to our veterans, their families, and our community delivered by a noteworthy guest speaker.

This year, Christmas Honors is excited to announce that Terisa C. Riley, Ph.D., Chancellor, University of Arkansas Fort Smith will be the guest speaker.

“When Philip Merry asked me to speak at Christmas Honors to honor the Veterans and their families, I was both humbled and surprised. I heard the list of previous speakers—brave men and women who served in our U.S. military—and I wondered how I could ever live up to the expectations of the families who gather for Christmas Honors.” shared Terisa. “Then, my next thought was of my dad, Chet Easley, who passed away in 2013. As the daughter of a 10-year Navy Veteran, it brought my entire family such comfort to have a funeral with full military honors for my dad. More importantly, my dad was a Patriot Guard rider who never missed an opportunity to honor his fellow Veterans. So, my thoughts turned to how proud my dad would be that by speaking at Christmas Honors I am carrying on his tradition of honoring Veterans and their families during their most vulnerable moments. My dad is my reason for accepting this invitation.”

Terisa will share her message during the 11:00 a.m. public ceremony at the pavilion at the Fort Smith National Cemetery on December 3rd, 2022. She joins an extensive list of prestigious speakers who have addressed the community at past events.

Past speakers include:

2021 2nd Lt. Justin Legris, Arkansas Army National Guard

2019 Chad Colley, Decorated Military Veteran

2018 Greenwood Mayor Doug Kinslow

2017 Deena Burnett Bailey

2016 Sebastian County Sheriff Bill Hollenbeck

2015 Col. Bobbi Dorrenboss, Commander, 188th Wing, Arkansas Air National Guard

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Christmas Honors

2014 Jeffrey Teas, US Veterans Administration
2013 General William Wofford, Adjutant General, Arkansas National Guard
2012 Clint Hill, Author "Mrs. Kennedy and Me"

*** Terisa C. Riley, Ph.D., full bio and photo are attached. ***

DATE REMINDERS:

Wreath Workshop/Assembly

Friday, December 2, 2022

Fort Smith Convention Center Hall C from 9:00AM-2:00PM

Christmas Honors Wreath Event

Saturday, December 3, 2022

Fort Smith National Cemetery

- 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – Family Time - Please respect this time to allow the families of our heroes to lay wreaths on their loved one's headstone(s).
- 11:00 a.m. Public Ceremony
- 11:30 a.m. Public Laying of the Wreaths – Immediately following the ceremony, attendees will lay wreaths on all remaining headstones. Please do not start to lay wreaths until the ceremony is complete.

Wreath Pick Up and Storage

Wednesday, January 5, 2022

Fort Smith Convention Center Hall C from 9:00AM-2:00PM

** In 2009, a volunteer group began the local program, *Christmas Honors*. The mission was to transform the National Cemetery in Fort Smith each December into a vision of beauty, and the families of those buried at cemetery to take comfort in seeing the respect shown to their grandfathers, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, friends, and other fallen heroes who so loved our Country. The first year more than 1,000 volunteers respectfully placed a wreath on each of the 12,000 headstones. The program has since grown to serving 16,000+ veterans and their families.

For more information, visit www.ChristmasHonors.org or Facebook @ChristmasHonors

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