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Reflecting on Renewal and Remembrance

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NALP recently made the difficult decision to cancel Renewal & Remembrance and Legislative Days for 2020 due to COVID-19.

This would have marked the 25th year NALP members gathered to lend their professional skills to care for and beautify Arlington National Cemetery. Originally started by the Professional Lawn Care Association of America (PLCAA, a legacy organization of NALP) as a volunteer event, Renewal & Remembrance was first held in February, before being moved to its traditional July date

Phil Fogarty, owner of Weed Man franchises in Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania, has attended every Renewal & Remembrance to date.

"What we do also helps provide their survivors with a beautiful and tranquil setting to mourn and heal and hopefully shows how very grateful we are for the sacrifices made by their loved ones."

– JOHN EGGLESTON, RENEWAL & REMEMBRANCE CHAIR

"Renewal & Remembrance has always been our industry's way of demonstrating our gratitude to those involved in every one of the wars and armed conflicts our country has had to deal with," Fogarty says. "We want to let the families know that there is a group of people out there that refuse to forget the sacrifices that were made. We think of it as a giant green blanket that covers our heroes and comforts their families and once a year we get to tuck them in."



Bruce Allentuck, president of Allentuck Landscaping Co. based in Rockville, Maryland, says he's probably attended at least 20 times and the event serves as a good way to show his appreciation and gratitude to who made the ultimate sacrifice or served throughout their lives.

John Eggleston, current Renewal & Remembrance chair for NALP, says he's been attending for over 10 years.



"The opportunity to participate in this event has been one of the highlights of my career," he says. "In our small way, we are able to give back a little to those who have given so much for our freedoms by contributing to the maintenance and improvement to their final resting place. What we do also helps provide their survivors with a beautiful and tranquil setting to mourn and heal and hopefully shows how very grateful we are for the sacrifices made by their loved ones."

Miles Kuperus, Jr., owner of Farmside Landscape & Design in Sussex, New Jersey, has been attending Renewal & Remembrance with his wife and kids for the past 16 years. Bringing their children along was what started the Children's Program portion of Renewal & Remembrance as they wanted a way for their kids to participate as well.

Favorite Parts of Renewal & Remembrance



The Children's Program is actually Fogarty's favorite part, as he says it gives you hope for the future as the children learn about the price of their freedom. For Allentuck, he says he will find a quiet moment to be by himself and reflect on what Arlington means and why they're there. Eggleston says his favorite part about Renewal & Remembrance is the opportunity work and learn with the best of the best in our industry on this amazing effort to give back. Kuperus says he enjoys seeing the funeral processions and the changing of the guard.

"It brings you front and center about how we honor our soldiers as a country, but then also as an industry," he says. "We're working on grounds doing what we do best to make a very beautiful space."

The Children's Program is different every year and provides members' children the opportunity to serve as well.

Honoring the spirit of Renewal & Remembrance

While they all admit it is disappointing that they won't be able to volunteer this year, they also agree it is a unique situation and necessary to cancel.

"I think it's important that the folks that were planning on being at R&R truly are understanding of the fact that our association made the right call," Kuperus says. "I think the association made a wonderful call, and I applaud the leadership and the volunteers that had everything planned and that got suspended. Our heart goes out to those folks who put in so much work to get prepared for this, only to be postponed so to those people, I want to say thank you and recognize the disappointment that comes along with that."

However, this doesn't mean the spirit of Renewal & Remembrance has to be lost this year. One main suggestion is to volunteer and care for a local memorial or beautify a local veteran's home.



"I think the way we act every day pays respect and being kind to another person and helping another person," Allentuck says.

Eggleston says they are currently working closely with ANC to determine if a small ceremony and symbolic, yet meaningful project may be possible.

"I would also urge everyone to reach out to other members and their state associations to see if they too can give back at a regional or local level," Eggleston says. "There are thousands of cemeteries, monuments, and memorials across our country that I am certain could benefit from a little green industry TLC. Whether we are able to do an event at ANC or not, many can hopefully provide such benefits a little closer to home this year."

NALP has entered a 3- to 5-year Memorandum of Understanding with ANC for future Renewal & Remembrance events.

"It is our intention to simply pick up where we have left off and continue with this event for many years to come," Eggleston says

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sponsors and companies who have been long-time supporters of the event. Arlington National Cemetery has indicated that NALP will likely be able to host a small ceremony this summer in honor of those buried at Arlington National Cemetery and to highlight the lasting impact our industry has made on the grounds. We hope to be able to livestream this ceremony to all of you. We will share the details once confirmed.

The next Renewal & Remembrance will be held on Monday, July 19, 2021, while the Legislative Days on the Hill, will be held in conjunction with our Workforce Summit in late winter/early spring of 2021.



Jill Odom

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