



## **Event Hosting Guidelines Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery Sarasota, Florida**

Since Abraham Lincoln founded the National Cemetery Administration in the 1800s, national cemeteries have been set aside to honor men and women who served their country with distinction. Patriot Plaza was designed and constructed by The Patterson Foundation and donated to the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration in the first of its kind partnership between the National Cemetery Administration and a private nonprofit entity. The Patterson Foundation donated the complex to the National Cemetery Administration in June 2014 and endowed its capital replacement maintenance for future generations.

Patriot Plaza provides a place to conduct ceremonies and celebrate service and patriotism. Patriot Plaza is an amphitheater that includes a rostrum large enough to accommodate an orchestra, a seating area for up to 2,800 people, and public art to honor the military and military families.

Events at Patriot Plaza must be free, open to the public, and in keeping with the dignity of its location as part of the Sarasota National Cemetery. There are currently two events held each year that are hosted by the Sarasota National Cemetery (SNC) staff and the SNC Advisory Committee: the Memorial Day Ceremony in May and the Wreaths Across America program on the second Saturday of December. Currently, all other events are planned and hosted by community organizations.

The following information is provided to assist in your planning and carrying out a successful event:

1. Your first step is to meet with the Sarasota National Cemetery Director, John Rosentrater, to obtain guidance on requirements that must be met in order for your event to take place. A written request to use Patriot Plaza is required and Mr. Rosentrater will provide you with the parameters and information required for approval. It is recommended that you submit your request 90 days in advance of the event, but no less than 45 days in advance.
2. Certain logistical aspects of your event can be supported or facilitated by the SNC staff. These include use of the Garrison Flag, use of SNC trash containers and water coolers during your event, and help in coordinating with the Department of Veteran Affairs for security to be on site

that day. The majority of the logistical details are the responsibility of the hosting organization. The anticipated number of people attending your event will impact many of the details as you plan and coordinate.

The following logistical items should be addressed with the Sarasota National Cemetery Director:

- a. *Parking/Traffic Control:* SNC allows parking on site for most events. Inclement weather is a factor because parking is on the grass areas that are future gravesites. Organizations are encouraged to investigate offsite parking as an alternative. Traffic control can be coordinated with the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, usually at no charge.
  - b. *Restrooms:* Facilities are located at the SNC Administration Building; however, the distance does not always make this practical. Two sets of three portable toilets (two regular/one handicap) are recommended: one placed near the East entrance and one placed near the West entrance to Patriot Plaza.
  - c. *Sight and Sound:* Any public address systems, sound systems, photography, or video equipment needed for the event must be brought in from off site and paid for by the hosting organization.
  - d. *Seats:* There is seating at Patriot Plaza for 1,000 people, with room for 1,800 chairs to be placed between the rows of concrete benches. Attendees can bring their own chairs or the hosting organization is free to rent additional folding chairs for maximum seating.
  - e. *EMT Support:* A medical response unit can be coordinated by contacting the Special Events Division, Sarasota County Fire Department, 941-445-0606. Providing water to attendees is recommended.
  - f. *Set Up/Clean Up:* Event set up and clean up is the responsibility of the hosting organization.
  - g. *Conduct:* All National Cemetery Administration regulations governing conduct at Sarasota National Cemetery also apply to Patriot Plaza, such as "no pets are allowed (except service animals)" and "no picnicking or food is allowed."
3. Several organizations have hosted successful events at Patriot Plaza and we encourage you to collaborate or meet with these organizations for helpful hints and lessons learned. Those organizations include the [Knights of Columbus in Venice](#) who assist the [Diocese of Venice](#) in hosting a Mass on Veterans Day. Also, the [Sarasota Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America](#) and [The Pops Orchestra of Bradenton and Sarasota](#) have hosted Flag Day celebrations. The Sarasota National Cemetery Director can provide additional contacts and information that can be very helpful.
  4. Patriot Plaza is a gift from The Patterson Foundation to our community and to the nation as a lasting tribute to honor the service and sacrifice of veterans, inspire patriotism, and embrace freedom. We encourage you to visit the [Legacy of Valor Facebook page](#) and also sign up to receive the *Patriot Plaza* newsletter at [www.thepattersonfoundation.org/patriot-plaza.html](http://www.thepattersonfoundation.org/patriot-plaza.html).

For information/questions, contact John Rosentrater, Director, Sarasota National Cemetery, 9810 State Rd 72, Sarasota, FL 34241, 941-922-7200, [john.rosentrater@va.gov](mailto:john.rosentrater@va.gov).