

PATRIOT PLAZA IMPACT REPORT as of December 2016



SARASOTA NATIONAL CEMETERY SARASOTA, FLORIDA

A place where stories of service and sacrifice are honored



Patriot Plaza was designed and constructed by The Patterson Foundation and donated to the Department of Veterans Affairs' National Cemetery Administration

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This report documents the history of and activities held at Patriot Plaza in Sarasota, Florida, and was prepared by The Patterson Foundation.

For additional information, please visit the following webpages:

[The Patterson Foundation's Patriot Plaza Initiative](#)

[National Cemetery Administration's Sarasota National Cemetery](#)

To schedule a group or school tour of Patriot Plaza, please contact Cindy Balistreri at the [Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County](#): cbalistreri@sarasotaarts.org or 941-365-5118 x301.

Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery

From Concept through Construction: January 2010 – May 2014

Since Abraham Lincoln’s time, national cemeteries have been set aside to honor men and women who served their country with distinction. Honoring the memory of those who served to protect our freedom, national cemeteries are the final resting place for men and women who served our country with unmatched valor and dedication.

The Patterson Foundation’s mission to honor veterans began in early 2010, with an offer to enhance Sarasota National Cemetery in Sarasota, Florida, with the creative donation of an amphitheater that would conform to the National Cemetery Administration’s mission of honoring and remembering. The unprecedented partnership between the National Cemetery Administration and The Patterson Foundation has a long history. This entwined history — from the connections with Abraham Lincoln to the Patterson family and their forefathers’ legacy of military service to the Patriot Plaza events — recognizes the service and sacrifice of veterans. These events were staged to re-introduce the Sarasota community to their new national cemetery and to create an enduring experience that would recognize and remember veterans, both of which were goals of Abraham Lincoln and the National Cemetery Administration.

During construction of Patriot Plaza, the “Legacy of Valor – Freedom Pass It On” campaign engaged the region to “Honor Veterans, Inspire Patriotism, and Embrace Freedom.” This campaign involved over 100 organizations who executed 92 events, parades, and festivals that touched nearly 500,000 people.

The activities, events, and social media leading up to the dedication focused on Patriot Plaza and Sarasota National Cemetery, educating the community about the existence of Sarasota National Cemetery and showing the nation how enhancements can be made for the betterment of all through partnerships such as this successful public/private partnership endeavor.

Patriot Plaza Features

Patriot Plaza provides a place to conduct ceremonies honoring veterans and their families. [Key features of this amphitheater](#) include an 80-foot-tall stainless steel flagpole, a rostrum that is large enough to accommodate a 55-piece orchestra, and a covered seating area for up to 2,800 people.

The [art installations at Patriot Plaza](#) are some of the space's most inspiring and touching features:

- “Testimonies” by Larry Kirkland
- “Witness to Mission” by Larry Kirkland and Kenny Irby
- “Home” by Ann Hirsch
- “Guardian Eagles” by Pablo Eduardo
- “Night to Day, Here and Away” by Ellen Driscoll
- “Star Map” fabricated by Creative Edge Master Shop

With a goal to preserve memory through art, the installations honor men and women who serve and their families, while communicating their stories to future generations.

Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery **Year One Activities: June 2014 – December 2015**

Dedication Ceremony (June 2014) and Veterans Legacy Summit (November 2014)

On June 28, 2014, Patriot Plaza was dedicated and donated to the National Cemetery Administration. The community dedication was held at Patriot Plaza to introduce the local community to their new 2,800-seat amphitheater and more than \$2 million in commissioned art highlighting veterans and their service. However, The Patterson Foundation’s mission was still not complete; there remained the desire to share the news of this unique partnership with the nation.

The four-day Veterans Legacy Summit (November 13–16, 2014) led up to the Celebrate Service and Sacrifice Ceremony on the 15th and closed on the 16th with the West Point Band Community Concert — both events being held at Patriot Plaza. The Veterans Legacy Summit included Gallery Walks by two of the Patriot Plaza artists, a Film Festival for adults and students, an Art Symposium by all four of the Patriot Plaza artists, a morning of educational workshops that enabled national visitors and locals to be “Zoned In” on veterans’ issues, and the Legacy Zone’s exhibition tent for national veterans organizations to share with attendees their veterans services and assistance. With individuals and groups coming from 23 states, plus the District of Columbia, thousands of people experienced Patriot Plaza, a gift to the nation.

2014–2015 Events and Tours

Patriot Plaza was designed as an amphitheater to function as a gathering place for events that honor veterans. From June 2014 through the end of 2015, 13 events held at Patriot Plaza had a combined attendance of 22,550 people. The Patterson Foundation established a Guide Program through a partnership with the [Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County](#) for the purpose of providing information on Patriot Plaza and the commissioned art. This art is permanently displayed to demonstrate the service and sacrifice of veterans who fought and protected our freedom. Public tours were conducted every Tuesday (except for holidays) at 10 a.m., where the audience learned about the artists and their commissioned work. The guides also conducted private tours for groups and school tours for students on Wednesday, Thursday, and weekends. These public, private, and school tours had a combined attendance of 1,718 people during this period.

2014–2015 ACTIVITIES	SPONSOR(S)	ATTENDANCE
2014 EVENTS:		
Thank You Recognition	The Patterson Foundation	400
Community Dedication	The Patterson Foundation	2,800
Veterans Day Mass	Diocese of Venice and Knights of Columbus in Venice	1,500
Legacy Summit	The Patterson Foundation	3,550
Celebrate Service & Sacrifice	The Patterson Foundation	2,000
West Point Band Concert	The Patterson Foundation	2,400
Wreaths Across America	Sarasota Military Academy and Sarasota National Cemetery	1,100

2015 EVENTS:		
Memorial Day	Sarasota National Cemetery	1,200
You're A Grand Old Flag	Sarasota Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America and The Pops Orchestra of Bradenton and Sarasota	2,000
70 th Anniversary of WWII	Spirit of '45	500
Missing in America Ceremony	Missing in America Project	300
Veterans Day Mass	Diocese of Venice and Knights of Columbus in Venice	2,000
Wreaths Across America	Sarasota Military Academy and Sarasota National Cemetery	2,800
EVENTS SUBTOTAL		22,550
2014-2015 TOURS:		
64 Public	The Patterson Foundation and Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County	407
33 Private Group	The Patterson Foundation and Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County	774
11 School	The Patterson Foundation , Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County , and Sarasota County Schools	537
TOURS SUBTOTAL		1,718
EVENTS AND TOURS TOTAL		24,268

Patriot Plaza Endowment

As outlined in the partnership agreement between the National Cemetery Administration and The Patterson Foundation, an endowment in the amount of \$1 million was established for the capital maintenance of Patriot Plaza. This endowment was placed with the Community Foundation of Sarasota County for their management. The endowment fund was established in mid-2014, allowing time for interest to begin building and to put procedures in place. The endowment covered the waxing of the "Home" Eagles during the first year as well as soil testing to assist with a study the Agricultural Agency conducted to determine proper acidic plants for Patriot Plaza.

Community Reaction to Patriot Plaza

During construction of Patriot Plaza, an intentional effort was made by The Patterson Foundation to highlight Sarasota National Cemetery since only 17% of our nation's veterans utilize their Veterans Affairs burial benefit. The "Legacy of Valor – Freedom Pass It On" campaign was organized with over 100 local partners to inform the community of the upcoming enhancement to Sarasota National Cemetery and to raise awareness of our national shrines. When you combine the approximately 500,000 times that the campaign reached individuals before the community dedication ceremony with the 24,268 attendees reached through events and tours, it is not a surprise that Sarasota National Cemetery saw a 58% increase in burials during 2015.

Beyond the local community — TripAdvisor recommended Sarasota National Cemetery/Patriot Plaza as one of the top 4 places to visit in Sarasota, Florida, and has recorded numerous positive comments from out-of-state visitors.

Summarized by Sandy Beckley, Consultant to The Patterson Foundation

Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery

Year Two Activities: January 2016 – December 2016

Patriot Plaza, an amphitheater surrounded by commissioned art, continues to function as a place for honoring and reflecting on the service and sacrifices of veterans who have fought, are fighting, or will fight for our freedom. Patriot Plaza is located within a Department of Veterans Affairs' national shrine, the Sarasota National Cemetery.

2016 Events and Tours

The Sarasota region continued to embrace Patriot Plaza during 2016 by supporting events held there through sponsorships, participation, or attendance. In 2016, six events held at Patriot Plaza had a combined attendance of 10,200 people. The Patriot Plaza Guides stood ready to share the story of veteran service and sacrifice at every event and public, group, or school tour and with individual visitors on special days such as traditional Memorial Day.

The Patterson Foundation established a Guide Program in 2014 through a partnership with the [Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County](#) for the purpose of providing information on Patriot Plaza and the commissioned art. Public tours were conducted every Tuesday (except for holidays) at 10 a.m., where the audience learned about the artists and their commissioned work. The guides also conducted, upon request, private tours for groups and school tours for students. These public, private, and school tours had a combined attendance of 1,753 people during 2016.

2016 ACTIVITIES	SPONSOR(S)	ATTENDANCE
EVENTS:		
50 th Anniversary of Vietnam Era	Sarasota County Veterans Commission	1,400
Memorial Day	Sarasota National Cemetery	1,500
You're A Grand Old Flag	Stars & Stripes Foundation	1,800
9/11 Remembrance – 15 years	Sarasota Ministerial Association	1,800
Veterans Day Mass	Diocese of Venice and Knights of Columbus in Venice	1,200
Wreaths Across America	Sarasota Military Academy and Sarasota National Cemetery	2,500
EVENTS SUBTOTAL		10,200
TOURS:		
51 Public	The Patterson Foundation and Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County	387
31 Private Group	The Patterson Foundation and Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County	514
18 School	The Patterson Foundation , Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County , and Sarasota County Schools	782
Open House	Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County's InspireSarasota! and American Institute of Architects' Florida Gulf Coast Chapter	70
TOURS SUBTOTAL		1,753
EVENTS AND TOURS TOTAL		11,953

Altogether, 36,221 people have attended events and tours since Patriot Plaza was opened in June 2014.

Every event, tour, or outreach activity attended by a Patriot Plaza Guide, a team member of The Patterson Foundation, or a staff member of the Sarasota National Cemetery was done in an effort to support veterans, to spotlight the cemetery, and to highlight Patriot Plaza.

Education and Transportation

The Patterson Foundation recognized early on that Patriot Plaza would be a place where students can learn about veterans and their service and sacrifices through the \$2 million commissioned art. During the summer of 2014, Sarasota County Schools' educators gathered to prepare the curriculum for 4th–12th grade, using the criteria of [EdExploreSRQ](#), in collaboration with the [Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota County](#) and the EdExploreSRQ team. The explorations — [Patriot Plaza: Stories of Honor and Dedication – Grades 4-6](#), [Patriot Plaza: Stories of Patriotism and Inspiration – Grades 7-8](#), and [Patriot Plaza: Stories of History and Freedom – Grades 9-12](#) — were produced as lesson plans that would include a visit to Patriot Plaza. These visits are the school tours that you see listed earlier in the Activities table.

In 2016, the program director of the [Any Given Child Sarasota](#) project selected Patriot Plaza as the site that every middle school student will visit to learn about civics and American history through an art exhibition of photography, mosaics, and sculpture.

The Patterson Foundation realized that the primary concern for educators when selecting any EdExploration, including the Any Given Child Sarasota's art experience, is transportation funding. As a result, The Patterson Foundation began funding these fieldtrips to Patriot Plaza for any school in Charlotte, Desoto, Manatee, and Sarasota Counties.

Community Support

Community support and successful partnering is exemplified by the founding of the [Stars & Stripes Foundation](#) following the first "You're A Grand Old Flag" ceremony at Patriot Plaza in 2015. The [Sarasota Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America](#) and [The Pops Orchestra of Bradenton and Sarasota](#) partnered to establish the Stars & Stripes Foundation in order to provide education about and honor the American flag and to pay tribute to America's veterans with ceremonies at Patriot Plaza and other locations within the Sarasota area. The Sarasota Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America also partnered with The Patterson Foundation and the Sarasota County Schools district in the development of the [American Flag EdExploration](#).

Architectural Recognition

In June 2016, Patriot Plaza won two Spirit of Sarasota architecture awards from the [American Institute of Architects' Florida Gulf Coast Chapter](#) — one through a panel's selection and another through online voting. The Spirit of Sarasota awards honor buildings that exemplify Sarasota's unique character and setting. The

panel of judges that selected the winners praised Patriot Plaza for being a great example for other communities as well as for capturing dramatic vistas and evoking solemnity. In addition to the panel's award, online voters from cities across the United States and Canada chose Patriot Plaza as the winner of the People's Choice Spirit of Sarasota award.

"It is deeply gratifying for the firm to see that this sacred venue has been embraced by locals and visitors alike," said Gary Hoyt, the design architect for Patriot Plaza. "Frankly, it's hard to believe that a cemetery is now listed as one of the top four of 126 things to do in Sarasota by TripAdvisor. It underscores our sincere appreciation for those who have given so much for this country."

In July 2016, Patriot Plaza was one of the top three winners in the 2016 AIA Florida People's Choice Award. Presented by the [Florida Association of the American Institute of Architects \(AIA Florida\)](#), the People's Choice Competition gave individuals the opportunity to promote public awareness of Florida's built environment and great designs by voting online for their favorite project.

Summarized by Sandy Beckley, Consultant to The Patterson Foundation

2017 Goals for Patriot Plaza Initiative

The Patterson Foundation's Patriot Plaza Initiative is committed to:

- Continuing to support education through [EdExploreSRQ](#).
- Increasing the number of Patriot Plaza school tours through The Patterson Foundation's continued funding of bus transportation for schools in Charlotte, Desoto, Manatee, and Sarasota Counties.
- Continuing to use social media, publications, and promotional information — such as the Patriot Plaza calendars and the rack cards highlighting the Patriot Plaza tours and Sarasota National Cemetery — in a continued effort to “Honor Veterans, Inspire Patriotism and Embrace Freedom.”
- Supporting the [National Cemetery Administration's Veterans Legacy Program](#) by sharing the Patriot Plaza EdExplorations and assisting Sarasota National Cemetery in becoming a “Legacy Cemetery” within the program.