Honoring Veterans
Inspiring Patriotism
Embracing Freedom

Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery
Free and Open to the Public!

History • Symbols • Traditions
Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery

Patriot Plaza, a 2,800-seat ceremonial amphitheater, was built and donated to Sarasota National Cemetery in Florida, featuring commissioned art that honors veterans, inspires patriotism, and embraces freedom. The space is a place of peace and reflection and exists for our community to honor veterans through ceremonies and events for generations to come. Sarasota National Cemetery, like all 153 national cemeteries managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs, is a place where all active duty or honorably discharged veterans can be buried. Some spouses and dependent children of eligible veterans can also be buried there.

Detailed eligibility requirements can be found at www.cem.va.gov.

History of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA)

On July 17, 1862, Congress authorized President Abraham Lincoln to buy land to be used as national cemeteries for soldiers who died in service of their country. There were 14 cemeteries in that first year. By 1870, there were 73 cemeteries, and then beginning in 1873 they began allowing all honorably discharged veterans to be buried in national cemeteries.

Military Funerals

When a veteran is buried, they are entitled to military honors. You may see some of these ceremonies when you visit Patriot Plaza and Sarasota National Cemetery. The veteran’s family will receive a folded American flag and trumpet or a bugle will play “Taps.” Some veterans may be eligible for an Honor Guard of 7 who fire 3 volleys of shots. At a military funeral if there is a casket, the flag is draped over the casket and folded by the Honor Guard. If there is no casket then the flag is already folded.
Symbolism at Patriot Plaza

What is Symbolism? Symbolism is when one object or thing stands in the place of something else, such as an idea, another object, a person, or a place. For instance, all countries have flags for their own country. The flag symbolizes the country.

Other examples of Symbolism:

**Eagles** symbolize strength, power, and authority. They can be found on the seals of the Marine Corp, Navy and Air Force.

**Laurel leaves** are ancient symbols of courage, achievement, and valor. Throughout Patriot Plaza, visitors can find laurel leaves on red granite pavers and mosaics.

**Stars**—Military families will recognize the symbolism of Blue Stars for a family member in the service and Gold Stars representing those who have died while serving. Stars are used in medals, like the Bronze Star, the Silver Star and the Medal of Honor.

On one of the Patriot Plaza plinths is a Louisiana mother sitting in front of a window that displays service banners representing the fact that three sons were serving in the armed forces during WWII. The top banner indicates that she donated to the Red Cross.

**Patriot Plaza Activity**

Find and record examples of symbolism in the artwork displayed at Patriot Plaza. Find the plinth from the above photograph.
Color Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States.

When you visit Patriot Plaza, try to find Abraham Lincoln’s quote:
“...Let us strive on...to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan...”

When you find it, take a picture of you and the quote and send the photo and your mailing address to: connect@gradelevelreadingsuncoast.net
We will send a prize for the first 15 photographs we receive.
Ribbons
The United States Armed Forces awards ribbons to recognize military service and personal accomplishments. They are worn on the left side of the uniform. Here are some military ribbons:

- Vietnam Service Medal Ribbon
- Afghanistan Campaign Medal Ribbon
- Iraq Campaign Medal Ribbon
- Korean Service Medal Ribbon
- Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal Ribbon
- Antarctica Service Medal Ribbon
- National Defense Service Medal Ribbon

Find and circle the service ribbons in this partial photo of the “Night to Day, Here and Away” mosaic mural at Patriot Plaza?

DID YOU KNOW?
The mosaic mural at Patriot Plaza is 50 feet long!
At Sarasota National Cemetery and other national cemeteries, the flag is flown at half-staff during funerals to honor the veterans. When there are multiple funerals in one day, the flag is lowered 30 minutes before the first funeral and raised 30 minutes after the last service.

At federal buildings and installations the flag is flown at half-staff by executive order by the President of the United States.

The colors on the flag represent:
Red: valor and bravery
White: purity and innocence
Blue: vigilance, perseverance, and justice

The traditional method of folding the U.S. flag involves 13 folds.

Each of the 13 folds represents a symbol. For example, the 1st fold symbolizes life, the 2nd fold symbolizes our belief of eternal life.
How many words can you unscramble?

1. Abraham Lincoln
2. Laurel Wreath
3. Star
4. Ribbons
5. Eagle
6. Victory
7. Strength
8. Honor
9. History
10. Symbols
11. Veterans
12. Tradition
13. American Flag

Patriot Plaza Activity
To learn more about Patriot Plaza at Sarasota National Cemetery, visit: thepattersonfoundation.org/patriot-plaza

Office hours: Monday to Friday 8:00am–4:30pm
Closed federal holidays

Visitation Hours: Open daily from sunrise to sunset

- Sarasota National Cemetery is located at 9810 State Road 72 in Sarasota
- Admission is free
- Please no pets or picnics
- Burials occur on weekdays so please be respectful of those attending services.

To honor Black History Month, join The Patterson Foundation for a virtual screening and panel discussion of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, A Walk to Respect. On Thursday, February 18 at 7pm, we’ll come together from the comfort of our homes to discuss this moving piece written and directed by Beth Duda and performed by Joel P.E. King, Michael Krebs, and Cedric Hameed. This event is free and open to all. To continue the walk to respect, The Patterson Foundation is also offering a guided discussion series. To learn more, visit: https://bit.ly/3rjZBJT

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