

Town of West Hartford

50 South Main Street
West Hartford, CT 06107-2431

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2019 Memorial Day Parade & Ceremony *Grand Marshal & Keynote Speaker announced*

WEST HARTFORD, CONN. (May 17, 2019) – The West Hartford Memorial Day Parade Committee is pleased to announce John Danaher, Jr., a 97-year old WWII Bronze Star veteran, as the 2019 Grand Marshal, and Capt. Joseph Sanborn, Connecticut's coordinator of Wreaths Across America, as the keynote speaker for the Memorial Day parade and ceremony on Monday, May 27, 2019.

John Danaher, Jr., enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1942 and rose through the ranks to Captain. He fought in the Invasion of Southern France and was awarded two Bronze Stars. He was honorably discharged in February, 1947.

From 1947 to 1975, he worked for the Federal Bureau of Investigations as a street agent and as an instructor of fire arms, defensive tactics and bombs. He was president of Danaher Investigations, Inc., a private detective agency specializing in civil, criminal and liability issues.

Mr. Danaher's community service includes teaching special education classes at St. Mark's School, serving as a Cub and Boy Scout leader and on the St. Thomas Apostle Church Council. He volunteered at St. Mary's Home and Hospital as a Pastoral Counselor, Compassionate Companions for Hospice and Eucharistic Minister. He has lived nearly all of his life in West Hartford.

Mr. Danaher earned his Bachelor degree in Business Administration from Georgetown University and his Master's degree in Special Education from the University of Hartford.

This year's parade promises to be lots of fun. All five public school bands are featured along with veterans, civic organizations, town officials, scouts, and sports teams.

Mid-way during the parade, we will experience the roar of the C-130 military jets as they flyover West Hartford. This special coordinated flyover is provided by the Connecticut Air National Guard, 103rd Unit from Bradley International Airport.

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“Immediately following the parade each year, a brief but poignant Memorial Day ceremony is held at the Veterans Memorial to bring special meaning to the holiday,” said Renée McCue, parade coordinator and public relations specialist.

This year’s keynote speaker is Capt. Joseph Sanborn, Connecticut’s logistics coordinator of Wreaths Across America. He joined the U.S. Air Force Auxiliary Civil Air Patrol in June 2012 and continues to actively serve.

The goal of the organization is to spread the message about the importance of remembering our fallen heroes, honoring those who serve, and teaching our children about the sacrifices made by veterans and their families to preserve our freedoms by laying wreaths at more than 1,600 veterans cemeteries in all 50 U.S. states, at sea and abroad.

Capt. Sanborn coordinates the annual wreath laying at Connecticut State Veterans Cemetery, Middletown, CT. This year’s event will be held on December 14, 2019. He has been a resident of West Hartford since 2006.

“To provide a little insight, the reason why I coordinate Wreaths Across America comes from my father’s service with USMC. He was a combat veteran in the Korean War. The effects of a combat veteran shapes every member of that family. I am no exception. By working with Wreaths Across America, I have come to truly understand the sacrifices of those who serve,” said Capt. Sanborn.

“I greatly appreciate and am humbled by this opportunity to speak in West Hartford on Memorial Day, about West Hartford’s Gold Star Parents and, in particular, about West Hartford local Hero USMC LCPL Lawrence Robert Philippon,” he continued.

The Memorial Day ceremony will be led by Town Manager Matthew W. Hart, a veteran of the U.S. Army and U.S. Army National Guard, who will serve as emcee. Rev. Dana Lee Hallenbeck, State Police Chaplin and former Town of West Hartford director of public works, will give the invocation. Other speakers include Mayor Shari Cantor and Town Historian Tracey Wilson with Renbrook students Landon Schlossinger and Hannah White who recently requested to have Prut, an enslaved West Hartford resident who died at Fort Ticonderoga, be added to the Revolutionary War portion of the Veterans Memorial.

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The National Anthem will be sung by Stephanie Reuning-Scherer of Conard High School, and TAPS will be played by Camille Townswick of Bristow Middle School and her father Don Townswick.

Mr. Danaher will present the memorial wreath at the ceremony.

Three color guards will present: West Hartford Police Department led by Lt. Chris Chappell, West Hartford Fire Department led by Fire Fighter Ryan P. Shea, and American Legion Hayes-Velhage Post 96 led by commander Rock Goodwin.

In the event of rain, the ceremony will be held at the Town Hall Auditorium, 50 South Main Street, at 11:00 AM. The Veterans Memorial is located at the corner of North Main Street and Farmington Avenue.

The Memorial Day Parade will commence promptly at 10:00 AM on Monday, May 27, from the corner of Woodrow Street and Farmington Avenue, and end at the Town Hall.

Honorary Assistant Parade Marshals include the U. S. Congressman John B. Larson, State Senator Derek Slap, State Representatives Joe Verrengia, Tammy Exum and Jillian Gilchrest, and local officials from the West Hartford Town Council and Board of Education.

Any organization that has a military or veterans focus and wishes to participate in this year's parade should contact Renée McCue at Renee@WestHartfordCT.gov or call 860-561-7521.

In the event of rain, the parade is canceled.

Additional information is available at www.WestHartfordCT.gov/MemorialDayParade.

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