

Public Relations/Media Talking Points

- This is the 7th year of service since starting in 2015.
- Saluting Branches is a united industry-wide Arboriculture initiative to express our appreciation and gratitude for the sacrifices and services our military forces have provided to our nation.
- Our thanks to the National Department of Veteran Affairs and the V.A. District Agronomists for their **partnership** in helping to bring this day into existence.
- The Saluting Branches National Day of Service was developed by a private tree company, Rainbow Treecare in Minneapolis, Minnesota, about 8 years ago when they were looking for a way to give back to the brave troops who have sacrificed so much. The Day of Service was swiftly embraced by tree care companies, associations and utilities throughout the nation.
- Saluting Branches is a registered non-profit organization
- Including 2019, Saluting Branches has brought together over 11,000 arborists and tree care professionals at 67 veteran cemetery sites in 40 states over the last 7 years.
- On this one day tree care professionals provide volunteer services that include pruning, tree and stump removals, tree health evaluations, insect and disease treatments, and tree mapping. Since 2015 (Including this year's estimated total) Saluting Branches volunteers have donated over 88,000 hours of tree care services, which translate into more than \$11,000,000 (eleven million dollars) worth of donated services to our veteran cemeteries!
- We are honored to be able to do this for our troops and wish to thank all of our volunteers and sponsors for helping to make this day possible.

TIPS when/if talking to the media:

- Any time you refer to the Dept. of Veteran Affairs, please use the word **partnership only** (*do not use "sponsored"*).
- Be aware of what will show up in the background of any filming: we are not allowed to show names on headstones, funeral or memorial services in process, or people not involved in the event (without permission). The Saluting Branches banner or Cemetery sign, volunteers working, smiling laughing would be a great background.
- Please highlight that this is a tree care industry event which would not be possible without the support of everyone involved.
- Portray the professionalism and expertise in our industry, and the importance of trees.
- Highlight any veterans who may be helping at your site.

- Media sources respond well to heart-felt and touching stories about veterans or volunteers in relation to what this day of service means to them or how this event helps people.
- Follow any guidelines given to you by the Cemetery Director or caretaker.
- Prepare in advance if you are able. Think about the message of the day. Don't feel rushed to respond, take time to think about answers to questions. Use the above statistics, be authentic and relax.
- Be natural and remember to avoid saying anything that could have a negative context (avoid any political comments). The media will cut and edit until what you said is almost unrecognizable. A ½ hour filming segment can be reduced to 10 seconds on air.
- Say thank you
- Ask where and when the story will run and post that information on the Saluting Branches website so we can share it.