

## GUEST SPEAKER - JUSTIN LEGRIS

Justin Legris, a Fort Smith Christmas Honors volunteer since the inception of the event in 2009, is a dedicated music educator and proud member of the Arkansas Army National Guard.

A product of the Fort Smith Public School system, he is a 2008 graduate of Fort Smith Southside High School and is a music educator at Springhill Elementary School in Greenbrier, Ark. There he instills a love of music in hundreds of students from kindergarten through fifth grade and mentors future music educators from the University of Central Arkansas.

Upon graduating from Southside he studied Music Education at the University of Central Arkansas where he also became an active member of the Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Service Fraternity. He later followed his future wife to Nashville, Tenn. where he attended Belmont University graduating with a Bachelor of Music degree in instrumental Music Education in 2015.

After Legris' first year of teaching, he became a charter member of the faculty at the new Springhill Elementary school in 2016. He has since been honored with a variety of district level and national awards including a Grammy Award nomination and a Country Music Award nomination. He also serves his church, St. Joseph Catholic Church in Conway, as a Minister of Music in addition to performing around the state.

In the summer of 2020 he answered "The Call" and began an important chapter in his life by becoming a member of the Arkansas Army National Guard. He attended Basic Training as an Army Specialist at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and graduated in the summer of 2021. After Basic Training he immediately entered Officer Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga., and graduated this past September as a Second Lieutenant as part of the Army Quartermaster Corps. He currently serves as a platoon leader with the 39th Brigade 2nd Infantry Battalion 153rd Regiment H Company BSB in Cabot, Ark.

Following his six months of study with the US Army, he returned to Conway, surprising his two children, Elizabeth and William, as well as the entire faculty and student body at Springhill with his return home. As a result of this surprise homecoming, Legris was featured on KARK television in Little Rock as a part of their weekly "Good News Arkansas" segment.

He has a deeply rooted love for his family, his wife and college sweetheart Stephanie Legris, and his two children Elizabeth, age 5, and William, age 3. He also has a passionate love for his country, the Greenbrier, Conway and Fort Smith communities, and all veterans and their families as a member of the Christmas Honors team. At the conclusion of today's program he will pay tribute to all branches of the military by once again sounding Taps.



## Schedule of Events

### 8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. – Family Time

Please respect this time to allow the families of our heroes to lay wreaths on their loved one's headstone(s).

### 11:00 a.m. – Ceremony at the Pavilion

#### 11:30 a.m. – Laying of the Wreaths

Immediately following the ceremony, attendees will be asked to lay wreaths on all remaining headstones.

*\*Please do not start to lay wreaths until the ceremony is complete.\**

#### 11:45 a.m. – Read & Ring

Volunteers in each section will read each name followed by ringing of a bell.

You can donate online at

[ChristmasHonors.org](https://ChristmasHonors.org)

or by mailing a check to:

Christmas Honors  
PO Box 10696  
Fort Smith, AR 72917

*Christmas Honors is a 501c3 tax deductible organization.*

# Christmas Honors



HONORING ALL WHO SERVED  
WITH A WREATH THIS DECEMBER

# Christmas Honors



**SATURDAY DECEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup>**

**FORT SMITH NATIONAL CEMETERY  
11:00 AM AT THE PAVILION**

## PROGRAM

*Vocal Prelude*  
*"My Country 'Tis of Thee"* ..... Members of Fort Smith Chorale  
*Under the Direction of William Cromer*

*Welcome* ..... Marshall Murphy  
*Director of the Fort Smith National Cemetery*

*Posting of Colors* ..... 188th Wing Honor Guard  
*AR Air National Guard Fort Smith*

*National Anthem* ..... Gabrielle Gore  
*Nashville Recording Artist*

*Invocation* ..... Msgr. Patrick Gaalaas  
*Diocese of Tulsa, Oklahoma*

*Welcome* ..... The Honorable Mayor George B. McGill  
*City of Fort Smith Mayor and United States Army Veteran*

*Wreath Ceremony* ..... Philip H. Merry, Jr.  
*Chairman, Christmas Honors*  
Northside High School JROTC Grizzly Battalion  
Fort Smith Fire Department

### Honored Guests:

George Goins - *Retired United States Army Master Sergeant*  
Justin Legris - *AR Army National Guard Second Lieutenant*  
John Roger Rickard - *Retired United States Navy Lieutenant Commander*  
Al Whitson - *Retired United States Air Force Major*  
Frances Wilson - *United States Marine Corps Auxiliary Lifetime Member*  
Zac Phillips - *United States Coast Guard Petty Officer First Class*  
Larry Todd - *Retired United States Navy Commander*  
*representing United States Merchant Marines*  
The Honorable Mayor George B. McGill - *All Branches POW/MIA*

*Guest Speaker Introduction.* The Honorable Mayor George B. McGill  
*City of Fort Smith Mayor and United States Army Veteran*

*Guest Speaker* ..... AR Army National Guard 2nd Lt. - Justin Legris

## PROGRAM (cont'd)

*Chorale Selection*  
*"Silent Night"* ..... Members of Fort Smith Chorale  
*Under the Direction of William Cromer*

*Benediction* ..... Rev. Tasha Blackburn  
*Pastor, First Presbyterian Church of Fort Smith*

*Closing Remarks* ..... Philip H. Merry, Jr.  
*Chairman of Christmas Honors*

*Ceremonial Rifle Salute* ..... River Valley Marine Corps League  
*Detachment #1248*

*Echo Taps* ..... Justin Legris and Claude Legris

*Laying of the Wreaths* ..... Fort Smith Fire Fighters  
and Pipe and Drum Corp



### *Christmas Honors Board of Directors*

Philip H. Merry, Jr. - *Chairman*  
Claude Legris - *Vice Chairman of Event Coordination*  
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Larry Todd

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### *Event Team*

Marvin Chapin, Victoria Hardy, Bryan & Kat Merry, & Earl Massey

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## EVENT VOLUNTEERS

188th Wing Honor Guard  
Alma High School NJROTC  
American Legion Auxiliary  
Community School of the Arts (CSA)  
Fort Smith Chorale  
Fort Smith EMS  
Fort Smith Fire Department  
Fort Smith Parks & Recreation  
Fort Smith Police Department  
Fort Smith Public Schools  
Fort Smith Roundtable/Golden

Knights and Jewels  
Fort Smith Sanitation Department  
Fort Smith Street Department  
(A Team)  
Greenwood High School JROTC  
Northside High School JROTC  
River Valley Marine Corps League  
Sebastian County  
Sheriff's Department  
Southside High School JROTC  
U.S. Department of Justice