



## AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY SUPPORT TOOLS

A collection of resources from National Headquarters to assist and guide members and volunteers in serving veterans, servicemembers and their families.

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# National Poppy Program

## History:

In 1921, the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family in memory of the soldiers who fought on the battlefields of Belgium during World War I.

Red crepe paper poppies are handmade by disabled or hospitalized veterans. Supplies to make poppies are provided free of charge by American Legion Auxiliary departments to their area VA hospitals. Veterans are paid a small stipend for their assembly work.

Poppies are not sold by volunteers—they are “distributed” for donations. The person acquiring the poppy is asked to make as generous a donation as they can. The suggested minimum is \$1. Since 2007, the average donation has stagnated around 45 cents. Given increased costs and our veterans’ needs, we need to encourage increased donation amounts.

## Planning a Poppy Distribution:

- For help with ordering poppies, please contact your department.
- Check with the planned venue(s) as well as local and state laws to see if a permit is required for poppy distribution.
- Once you have your assembled poppies and selected your distribution date(s), plan a meeting to energize and inform members, especially if distribution is at more than one location.
  - Set up a schedule that has at least two people at each location, and provide contact information to all volunteers. Nominate a member to contact if a location should need additional poppies.
  - Decide how funds will be held and turned in.
  - Discuss attire for the day (i.e., red or navy shirt, preferably with Auxiliary emblem, and a poppy). Identify prime locations such as grocery stores, superstores, high traffic shopping areas, school events, veteran events or a parade.
- Obtain written confirmation from venue management that poppy distribution is allowed.
- Be familiar with the poppy story, its origin, and its development both nationally and in your community. Research how much your unit raised last year on Poppy Day(s) and how many poppies were distributed.
- Encourage Legionnaires to join you for Poppy Day(s) and ask them to wear their Legion caps.
- Plan poppy distributions around Memorial Day and Veterans Day and other times of the year that work well for your community and members. You may plan as many poppy days as you like. Please contact your department secretary when scheduling your Poppy Days.

## Ideas to Increase Donations:

- Produce a factsheet to hand out stating how the money raised by the unit has helped veterans. Consider other promotion tools such as flyers, posters or buttons.
- Contact local schools to translate the factsheet into other languages commonly used in your area.
- Work with your unit’s Public Relations chairman to approach local officials and media personalities to ask them to wear a poppy. Express to them the significance of the poppy and ask them to make a proclamation or endorsement about the Auxiliary poppy and Auxiliary Poppy Day.
  - Work with your Public Relations chairman to help prepare a news release announcing Poppy Day and submit it to local media. Be sure to include a Poppy Program Media Fact Sheet.
  - A Poppy Day proclamation, news release template and news release sample are available through National Headquarters or online at [www.ALAforVeterans.org](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org).



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- Promote the Poppy Poster Contest in local schools. Students who participate, along with their parents, will in turn spread the word about the program. The unit can use some of these posters as advertisement in local stores by hanging a color copy a week prior to the event to keep the poppy significance fresh in customers' minds.
- Be aware of where and when other Auxiliary units in your area will be distributing poppies to insure areas are not being missed.
- Invite local servicemembers (active duty, Reserve or National Guardsmen) to help in your distribution, and ask them to wear their fatigues.
- Partner with local ROTC programs and military schools to help distribute poppies. These students often need community service hours in order to graduate, and the Auxiliary Poppy Program is an excellent way for them to volunteer.
- Engage ALA Girls State alumnae as poppy distribution volunteers.
- Use poppies from previous years for corsages, centerpieces, wreaths, etc. Remember: Previous years' poppies are not to be distributed.
- Other resources available from National Headquarters:
  - Poster: Where your donation goes
  - Poster: In Flanders Field
  - Thank You for caring bookmark
  - Sample PSA
  - Poppy Program certificate