



Kelly Moyer, Eastern Division Poppy Chairman

2023 - 2024

Connecticut/Delaware/District of Columbia/Maine/Maryland /Massachusetts/New Hampshire/New Jersey/New York/Pennsylvania/Rhode Island/Vermont

Let's make February Poppy Events a success in your community!

The red poppy is a nationally recognized symbol of sacrifice worn by Americans since World War I to honor those who served and died for our country in all wars. It reminds Americans of the sacrifices made by our veterans while protecting our freedoms.

Led by the American Legion Auxiliary, each year members of The American Legion Family distribute poppies with a request that the person receiving the flower donate to support the future of veterans, active-duty military personnel and their families with medical and financial needs.

Poppy Days have become a familiar tradition in almost every American community. The American Legion Auxiliary members know when they are asked. What is our most recognized symbol of the sacrifices of our military? The answer is POPPY! As we move through our Christmas and New Year holiday celebrations using poppies on our gifts, decorations and crafts, FEBRUARY is the perfect month to continuously keep our poppy in the public eye. With Freedom Day, Valentines Day and Presidents Day, February provides great opportunities to proudly wear a poppy every day.

Make February Poppy Events a success in your community:

- Wear the ALA poppy proudly. That bright, red flower on your label is a visual, tangible, and steadfast example of respect.
- Help distribute poppies and tell everyone why. Place donation cans at work, and in local businesses.
- Include a poppy on Valentine cards and gifts for Inpatient and Outpatient Veterans in a Medical facility.
- Including poppies in flower arrangements, crafts and gifts, makes Valentines Day a happy celebration of Love with a Poppy.

- Share on Facebook what you are doing and how. Make sure to use our hashtags #PoppyDay and #LegionFamily. Media is your friend; make good use of radio, TV, newspaper, and every electronic avenue available. You can find ideas, supplies, support, and tools at www.ALAforVeterans.org under the Poppy Program and poppydayusa.org.
- For more information on how to use poppy funds, refer to the POPPY PROGRAM GUIDE, Which is available through the American Legion Auxiliary Flag & Emblem Sales or online at ALAforveterans.org.

The distribution of this bright-red memorial flower to the public is a big component of the ALA's Poppy Program, one of our oldest and most widely recognized programs. The poppy symbolizes the sacrifice made by our veterans, servicemembers, and their families. However, many people do not know how the funds received from poppy distributions may be used or where the money can go. Poppy funds are used to support **THREE Major** national mission outreach activities. The **FIRST** mission outreach activity is the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, which the Auxiliary has proudly co-presented for over 20 years. The **SECOND** mission outreach activity is to support aspects of the Honor Flight mission. The **THIRD** mission outreach activity is to support our servicemembers nationwide.

In the past only poppies made by veterans could be distributed by American Legion Auxiliary members. Now several new options are available to allow for creative use of the poppy as a symbol. Check out National Headquarters Pinterest page at www.pinterest.com/alaforveterans with how to instructions on felt poppies, crocheted poppies, and a recipe for poppy cookies. These ideas provide our members with many opportunities to tell the poppy story and raise funds for our veterans, military, and their families. National approval is not required for wearing homemade poppies, only poppies with an "In Memoriam" tag are officially branded. When homemade poppies and various poppy images are used the poppy should be RED since it symbolizes the blood sacrifice for our freedom; however previous rules governing the number of petals, colors or leaves no longer apply. (Listed below are some tips on making **February events** a success in your community).

For more detail poppy information, including resources on the American Legion Auxiliary's program visit www.ALAforVeterans.org.

MAKING THE MOST OF OUR POPPIES: TIPS for making the February event a success in your community.

1. DISTRIBUTE THE POPPY SYMBOL IN NON-TRADITIONAL WAYS.

We are no longer limited to using crepe paper poppies, and poppy labels no longer have to include the calendar year. For many years, the Illinois American Legion has used a fabric poppy manufactured by a veteran-owned business. Although a different design and feel from the traditional red crepe paper poppy, the fabric flower is attractive, meets The American Legion's specifications, and is easy to assemble. ALA members also can distribute the poppy symbol in non-traditional displays such as poppy buttons, jewelry, T- shirts, crafts (like the ornament pictured here), or cookies.

2. WHAT SUPPLIES DO I NEED FOR NATIONAL POPPY DAY?

While National Poppy Day is still a few months away, now is a great time to prepare? If units wish to distribute the traditional crepe paper poppies, they will need to procure an adequate supply of poppies, either from veteran poppy makers within their department or from the American Legion Flag & Emblem Sales (www.emblem.legion.org), which is available for purchase in bundles of 25. To collect donations, ALA-branded cans are also available through Emblem Sales. Or make your own via www.ALAforVeterans.org/programs/poppy.

3. USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT YOUR EVENTS

A key factor to hosting a successful National Poppy Day is making the public aware of your events and activities. Here's an easy way to communicate the poppy message for everybody -social media. With the simple click of a button, you can share your National Poppy Day plans with all your followers! You can also request to join the national ALA Poppy Program Facebook group at www.Facebook.com/groups/ALApoppy. There, you and other American Legion Auxiliary members can share ideas, projects, and information about our Poppy Program!

4. I'VE RAISED THE MONEY....NOW HOW CAN THE FUNDS BE USED?

It's up to each American Legion Auxiliary unit as to where they want their Poppy Funds used, as long as the unit follows the Poppy Fund criteria, which you can view in the ALA Poppy Program Guide at www.ALAforVeterans.org/Programs/Poppy (member login required). ALA units may also send their poppy money to their department headquarters earmarked for a state Veterans Creative Arts Festival, or units may send their poppy money to American Legion Auxiliary National Headquarters earmarked for the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival and just this year you can support Honor Flight in your area. For additional information on the Honor Flight, you can visit www.honorflight.org.

Resources:

www.legion-aux.org/poppy

www.legion-aux.org/poppy-funds

www.legion-aux.org/Poppy-Day-Banner-Templates

www.legion-aux.org/Poppy-Day-Poster-Templates

www.legion-aux.org/Poppy-Day-Media-Templates

emblem.legion.org/Poppy-Shop/products/1330/

emblem.legion.org/Poppy-Coloring-Book/productinfo/355.301/

www.honorflight.org

Wear or display your poppy with honor and pride every day to bring greater awareness to this symbolic flower, remember our fallen and support the living heroes.