

“BUDDY”® POPPY AMBASSADOR



DONNA MARIE KING



The “Buddy”® Poppy has been part of the VFW since 1922. The history of the “Buddy”® Poppy is a great tool to use when educating the community about what they represent and why we are always seen with the “Buddy”® Poppies.

The “Buddy”® Poppy is a symbol that reminds Americans of the sacrifices made by our veterans while protecting our freedoms.

Education

There are many resources in MALTA to help you prepare for any “Buddy”® Poppy event. In MALTA under resources on the left, open “Buddy”® Poppy and you will find a wealth of helpful items. The VFW Store also has “Buddy”® Poppy items as well as a pamphlet called Story of the VFW “Buddy”® Poppy. These items can be used to liven up all your Poppy events.

Through education of the “Buddy”® Poppy, what it represents, who does it, where we have distributions and why, the community will have a better understanding of why we do what we do.

With your VFW, have an event educating your community on the “Buddy”® Poppy. Let’s see who can come up with interesting ideas and let’s make sure we SWAP. SWAP is an Auxiliary initiative started in 2018 that encourages members to Share Wonderful Auxiliary Projects, when you have a great idea for an event or promotion, share it with other Auxiliaries (I also like to call it Sharing With A Purpose). Even if you don’t use an idea, you can still

SWAP it, for example, what doesn’t work on the east coast may work wonderfully on the west coast.

“Buddy”® Poppy Distribution

Distributing Poppies dates back more than a century when it became the VFW’s official memorial flower. When you have a “Buddy”® Poppy distribution you are honoring the dead by helping the living.

Here are some important things to consider when preparing for your “Buddy”® Poppy distribution.

- Identify potential volunteers within your Post and Auxiliary; get together with them for an informational meeting explaining the purpose of the “Buddy”® Poppy campaign. The Auxiliary can do a distribution with or without the comrades. Who can participate in a “Buddy”® Poppy drive? Anyone can promote the “Buddy”® Poppy. It is **not** restricted to VFW comrades or Auxiliary members, nor is there an age restriction.
- Plan to distribute a certain number of Poppies per volunteer.
- Determine how many Poppies you should order based on the number of volunteers. To order your Poppies you need to go through your VFW Post. If not, contact your Department headquarters.
- Choose distribution dates. Memorial Day and Veterans Day, patriotic holidays are always a popular time. However, since every day can be a day to honor veterans, the “Buddy”® Poppy can and should be promoted throughout the year.
- Determine your distribution venues in advance. Choose high traffic areas and make sure you have enough volunteers to do those locations. Make sure you get prior permission from business owners.
- Encourage volunteers to smile and be enthusiastic during the distribution. Friendliness will project a good image for the VFW and Auxiliary.

- It is always best when your volunteers wear their VFW or Auxiliary gear.
- Remind the volunteers that they are not “selling” Poppies but distributing them with the hope of getting donations.
- Donations collected during your “Buddy”® Poppy distribution will be allocated to the Relief Fund per our Bylaws. I encourage you to consult the Booklet of Instructions found within your *Podium Edition: Bylaws and Ritual* on ways to use the funds.
- Poppy Drives can be held by the Auxiliary or in conjunction with the VFW. Be sure to meet with them prior to dates of distribution.



See page 14 for more information about the VFW’s “Buddy”® Poppy contests.

Thank you to everyone for their efforts as we continue ***Serving America’s Heroes*** one “Buddy”® Poppy at a time.



“BUDDY”® POPPY PROGRAM

“Buddy”® Poppy Education and Distribution • VFW National “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest

The “Buddy”® Poppy has been an integral part of the VFW community for over 100 years. As the VFW’s official remembrance flower, the Poppy represents the blood shed by American service members. It reiterates that we will not forget their sacrifices.

The Poppy movement was inspired by Canadian Army Col. John McCrae’s famous poem, “In Flanders Fields.” Poppies were originally distributed by the Franco-American Children’s League to benefit children in the devastated areas of France and Belgium following World War I.

The VFW conducted its first Poppy distribution before Memorial Day in 1922, becoming the first veterans’ organization to organize nationwide distribution. In February 1924, the VFW registered the name “Buddy”® Poppy with the U.S. Patent Office. A certificate was issued on May 20, 1924, granting the VFW all trademark rights in the name of Buddy under the classification of artificial flowers. No other organization, firm or individual can legally use the name “Buddy”® Poppy.

Honor the Dead by Helping the Living

These small but mighty remembrance flowers have raised millions for the welfare of veterans and their dependents. The VFW “Buddy”® Poppy Program also provides financial assistance in maintaining state and national veterans’ rehabilitation and service programs and partially supports the VFW National Home.

How to Order

Contact your VFW Post to order VFW “Buddy”® Poppies. Please request the order at least two to three months (8 to 12 weeks) in advance of your distribution date.

“Buddy”® Poppy Items

“Buddy”® Poppy apparel, distribution supplies and promotional items can be purchased from the VFW Store.

VFW Store
406 West 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111
1.833.VFW.VETS (1.833.839.8387)
vfwstore.org

“Buddy”® Poppy Distribution Tips

“Buddy”® Poppy drives can be hosted at any time during the year – not just Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Try doing one at least once a quarter. If you have enough volunteers, host a monthly “Buddy”® Poppy drive.

- Talk to your VFW Post about joint drives and splitting the proceeds.
- Contact your city/town clerk’s office to see if a permit is required for your distribution event.
- Get permission from the desired distribution location(s) store managers/owners prior to promoting your “Buddy”® Poppy distribution event.
- Make sure all Auxiliary members know the time, day and place of your distribution event.
- Share information about your distribution event with your local paper and on social media. Post flyers in high-traffic areas such as grocery stores, coffee shops, the post office, etc.
- Ask for assistance from youth groups such as VFW and/or Auxiliary youth, JROTC, afterschool, Scouts, Young Marines and faith-based clubs.

- Ask volunteers to wear Auxiliary and/or VFW branded clothing to both promote the VFW and the VFW Auxiliary.
- Remind volunteers they are NOT SELLING “Buddy”® Poppies but DISTRIBUTING them for donations and never refuse someone a “Buddy”® Poppy because they are unable to donate. A “Buddy”® Poppy honors all veterans.
- See the VFW’s “Buddy”® Poppy Chairperson’s Guide for further assistance in setting up a “Buddy”® Poppy drive, as well as other helpful resources. The guide can be found in MALTA Member Resources.
- At the Auxiliary and Post level, all proceeds from Poppy drives are to be placed in the Relief Fund with receipts and expenditures in accordance with the Treasurer’s Guide and the *Podium Edition: Bylaws and Ritual*.
- Distribution of “Buddy”® Poppies should be included in every Auxiliary, District or Department activity including parades, patriotic events, membership drives, bingo or trivia nights, etc.
- There are many creative ways to distribute the “Buddy”® Poppy including window displays, posters, wreaths, remembrance walls, hats, event centerpieces, etc.

Two Versions of the “Buddy”® Poppy Are Available

- Traditional artificial flower “Buddy”® Poppy
- Tin tab “Buddy”® Poppy

Anniversary “Buddy”® Poppies

Special traditional artificial flower Poppies are available to VFW Posts celebrating their 25th, 50th, 75th and 100th anniversaries. The poppies are the same design as traditional poppies but come in silver for the 25th anniversary, gold for the 50th anniversary and diamond (iridescent white) for the 75th anniversary. VFW Posts currently in their 100th anniversary can order any color and as many as they need. Anniversary “Buddy”® Poppies are available from the VFW Store while supplies last. Once they are all sold they are gone.

Official National VFW “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest

- Takes place annually at National Convention.
- Displays are judged in three (3) categories.
- This is an official National VFW contest.

Contest rules and judging guidelines are available in MALTA Member Resources. This is a VFW contest and the rules cannot change. If you have further questions after reading the rules and guidelines, please contact Lynn W. Rolf III at lrolf@vfw.org.

Unofficial “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest & VFW National “Buddy”® Poppy Awards

Find details about the Unofficial “Buddy”® Poppy Display Contest & VFW National “Buddy”® Poppy Awards in MALTA Member Resources.

“BUDDY”® POPPY PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries:

1. Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the most outstanding activity and/or event to educate their community about the VFW “Buddy”® Poppy.

Entry form is required and available in MALTA Member Resources.

VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry form to the VFW Auxiliary Department “Buddy”® Poppy Chairman by March 31, 2027 for judging.

The VFW Auxiliary Department “Buddy”® Poppy Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department-winning entry form to the VFW Auxiliary National “Buddy”® Poppy Ambassador by April 30, 2027 for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

Awards for Departments and Department Chairmen:

1. Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary Department “Buddy”® Poppy Chairman in each of the 10 Program Divisions for the best promotion of activity and/or event to educate their community about the VFW “Buddy”® Poppy.

Winners will be announced, and citations will be presented at the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention. Money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary Department account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention for disbursement to the winning VFW Auxiliary Department Chairman.

2. The Outstanding Performance Award and Second-Place Outstanding Performance Award will be awarded in each of the 10 Program Divisions based on the criteria listed on page 5 and for the promotion of the Ambassador’s Program goals.

Winners will be announced and awards will be presented at the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention. Money will be deposited into the VFW Auxiliary Department account after the 2027 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.