



“BUDDY”[®] POPPY CHAIRPERSON GUIDE



"Buddy" Poppy Chairperson Guide



A BRIEF HISTORY

Since 1922, the "Buddy"® Poppy has been an integral part of the VFW community. As VFW's official memorial flower, the Poppy represents the blood shed by American service members. It reiterates the VFW 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 WWI.

And so, it was known, for veterans in VA hospitals and domiciliaries and in state veterans' homes, every day would be VFW "Buddy"® Poppy Day. These men and women assemble the Poppies, tie them in bunches of ten and pack them in boxes of 500, 1,000 or 2,000 for shipment to the Posts and Auxiliaries. Poppy assembly was often used as a therapy program to provide exercise for fingers and hands crippled by wounds, disease, and effects of old age. Another reason Poppies are so important is because all proceeds from the distribution are used for veteran's welfare or for the well being of their needy dependents and the orphans of veterans. More than 2,300 children of veterans have been or are being cared for in the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Michigan, thanks to a portion of Poppy funds.

The way forward, with the closing of VA domiciles due to COVID we had no way to assemble Poppies, the New "Buddy"® Poppy Tin Tab was introduced to continue the mission of supporting veterans and their families. We still had millions of Poppies that needed to be assembled and we looked for a way that would benefit the community. A partnership with Cottonwood Industries began, an adult disabilities center in Lawrence, Kansas that provides work for adults with multiple challenges who would not otherwise have an opportunity for paid work. This is how we continue to provide the traditional "Buddy"® Poppy for distribution to our Posts.

As your Post's Buddy Poppy Chairperson, you need to build enthusiasm for this program. Reiterate to your fellow members the two-fold importance of Poppies. It's truly all about veterans helping veterans and living up to VFW's motto of "No One Does More for Veterans."

Recognition is Important, Too!

It is only human nature to desire and appreciate recognition for a job well done. A word of praise often means more than any kind of financial reward - especially if it is done publicly. It is in recognition of these truths that special citation awards are made available through the VFW Department Headquarters or "Buddy"® Poppy Chairperson. Check with them to determine the rules in effect in your Department. Don't overlook the faithful Post or Auxiliary member who goes on the streets each year to distribute Poppies. Recognize their efforts at Post or Auxiliary meetings.

DISTRIBUTION OF BUDDY POPPIES SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN EVERY POST, DISTRICT OR DEPARTMENT ACTIVITY OR ANYTHING IN WHICH YOU PARTICIPATE. MEMBERSHIP DRIVES, PATRIOTIC EVENTS, EVEN BINGO SHOULD INCLUDE DISTRIBUTION OF OUR FAVORITE FLOWER!

There are two critical components to conducting a successful campaign:

PLANNING & ENTHUSIASM

Planning ensures nothing will be left to chance and there will be plenty of Poppies for distribution. And the more enthusiasm you demonstrate, the greater your chances of inspiring others to help make this year's campaign a true success.

Here are some important things to consider when preparing for your Buddy Poppy distribution:

- ✓ Identify potential volunteers within your Post and Auxiliary and gather them together for an informational meeting explaining the purpose of the Buddy Poppy campaign.
- ✓ Plan on each volunteer distributing 200 Poppies. It sounds like a lot, but with the right placement in the community, 200 will go fast.
- ✓ Multiply the number of volunteers by 200 and that's approximately how many you should order.
- ✓ Choose distribution dates. Memorial Day and Veterans Day are always a popular time, but any time is a good time to distribute this memorial flower.
- ✓ **Request from your Department Headquarters an order form to purchase your Poppies.**
- ✓ Stake out key distribution venues in advance.
- ✓ Choose high traffic areas and determine the number of workers you need to cover the locations. Ideal locations include storefronts, office or factory entrances and recreational areas.
- ✓ Make sure you get permission from the business owners before setting up shop. Post flyers around town in key areas such as the Post Office, coffee shops, gas stations, etc. It will let people know when and where they can get a Buddy Poppy.
- ✓ If your local newspaper has a community calendar section, be sure to let the editor know about two weeks in advance that you'd like to place your Poppy announcement on the calendar.
- ✓ Encourage your volunteers to smile and be enthusiastic during the distribution. If they appear friendly, it will project a good image for VFW.
- ✓ Make sure your volunteers wear their VFW or Auxiliary caps.
- ✓ Remind your volunteers that they are not "selling" Poppies, but distributing them with the hope of getting donations.

If you follow these simple steps, your Buddy Poppy campaign is sure to be a success.

OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Many factors can lead to poor Buddy Poppy distributions. Perhaps you live in a bustling city like Chicago or New York City where folks aren't as eager to stop on the streets. Or maybe you live in a town with only 600 people and you'd be lucky to hand out 200 Poppies in a week. Or perhaps your members are primarily older and in failing health.

If any of these sound familiar, perhaps you should try a different approach to handing out the Poppies and raising funds for needy veterans.

Below is a list of alternative methods for distributing Poppies:

- ✓ Sell coat hanger wreaths made out of Poppies. Use a child-sized wire coat hanger and bend it into a circle. Straighten the hook to make a ground stake.
- ✓ Wind the stems of about 50 Poppies around the wire to complete your wreath. Popular around Memorial Day.
- ✓ Make a "Wall of Remembrance" at your Post. Patrons can request a Poppy in honor of a loved one who has died. Their name gets placed on the wall with a Poppy hanging next to it. Honorees' names can be typed on note cards with the Poppies stapled to them.
- ✓ Use Poppies to make table centerpieces that can be raffled off at Post suppers.
- ✓ Contact another civic organization in your community and ask if you can give a small presentation on the Buddy Poppy. Be sure to have plenty with you, as you'll likely get several takers.
- ✓ Set up a booth at county fairs, public forums, school events, church suppers or other civic organization meetings.

Let your imagination and that of your volunteers guide you in distributing these beautiful red flowers.

REMEMBER: NEVER REFUSE SOMEONE A POPPY BECAUSE THEY ARE UNABLE TO CONTRIBUTE. A POPPY ON ANYONE'S LAPEL HONORS ALL VETERANS!

NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY CONTEST

A Buddy Poppy Display Contest will be held at the National Convention. Rules have been designed to put emphasis on the purpose and effectiveness of the displays. It is suggested that Department Contest rules be set up in conformance with this outline.

Rules

Displays will be presented and judged in three categories:

Category 1. Public Promotion of Poppy Campaign

(Window, booth, parade, poster displays, campaign promotions, etc.)

Displays must be designed for public exposure and must bear a message soliciting a donation for and wearing of the VFW Buddy Poppy. At least one Poppy used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

Category 2. Memorial or Inspirational Displays

(Wreaths, memorial tablets or plaques, patriotic or devotional themes.)

Displays must be designed to honor the dead, to inspire devotion to God and Country, or to dramatize the activities supported by the Buddy Poppy. At least one Poppy used in the display must be in its original form and color, with label attached.

Category 3. Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies

(Post Home displays, table centerpieces, corsages, pictures, plaques, models, scenes, hats, novelty pieces, etc.)

Any display not meeting the qualifications for Categories 1 or 2 shall automatically be entered in Category 3. At least one Poppy used in the display must be in original form and color, with label attached.

SPECIAL NOTE: Departments are authorized one entry per category.

The Department Adjutant will have to notify the Programs Department, in writing by submitting a completed entry form, by June 15, of the Posts/ Auxiliaries that will represent the Department in each category. This will allow us the time necessary to ensure each entry has sufficient space to set up at the National Convention.

The National Programs Committee shall have no responsibility in setting up, taking down, or returning displays. Displays may be entered and set up at any time from 8 a.m. Saturday until 12 Noon on Monday of the Convention week. Displays shall be set up in space provided in the Convention exhibit or meeting halls. At the time the display is set up, the responsible person

must complete an entry form which will show the category of competition, the number of Poppies used, the purpose of the display, the Post and/or Auxiliary number and location, and the name of the person who will dismantle and remove the display at the close of the Convention.

Displays may be accompanied by a white card, not to exceed 4 X 6 inches in size, on which is lettered in black ink an explanation of the theme for the display or other information of interest to the viewer or the judges.

Post name, Post number, city or state (including the shape of your state) may not be visible on display entries; failure to comply will result in disqualification.

Any use of non VFW trademarks or copyrighted material on your display must have prior approval from the trademark or copyright holder. These include but are not limited to names, logos, audio/visual graphics, images and/or props. The VFW and Buddy Poppy logo and name is authorized but use of any outside organization trademark or copyrighted material and/or logos must have prior approval through their respective organization.

Judging

Judging of displays will be on the basis of effectiveness, purpose, clarity of theme, suitability, originality, beauty and number of Poppies used. Where a sample of a large number of identical items (such as corsages or wreaths) is entered, full credit shall be given for the total number of Poppies used.

For more information on the VFW National Buddy Poppy Contest you can contact Mary Spencer at,
Phone: 1.833.VFW.VETS (1.833.839.8387) ext. 6287 or
Email: mspencer@vfw.org.

ANNIVERSARY BUDDY POPPIES

Special poppies are now available to 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 Post, gold for the 50th anniversary Post and diamond (iridescent white) for the 75th anniversary Post. Posts currently in their 100th anniversary can order any color and as many as they need. If not in your 100th anniversary year, please limit your order of anniversary poppies to 1,000 to ensure stock does not run out. They should be distributed and used in displays just like normal poppies.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Aside from the Cross of Malta, the Buddy Poppy is the most visible symbol of our great organization. We have ample evidence that the public interest in our Buddy

Poppies is increasing particularly around Memorial and Veterans Day. As chairperson you must be creative to meet this rising interest. You may need to work a bit harder to establish relationships with retail outlets and venues to hand out poppies. We are working on new materials and promotional pieces to enhance your distribution. VFW leaders have broadened the use of the Post Relief Fund dollars to give your Posts greater latitude in the use of these funds.

Wishing you all the best and much success with your Buddy Poppy Program planning!

For more information on the VFW Buddy Poppy Program you can contact the VFW Store at:

VFW Store
406 West 34th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111

1.833.VFW.VETS
(1.833.839.8387
vfwstore.

Revised 9/2025