**Poppy Plan Of Action**

**2022-2023**

 Again, it is my honor and pleasure to be the Department Poppy Chairman for 2022-2023. I will strive to keep in communications with all of you and am confident we will have a wonderful and profitable year. Our history and mission is here in this plan of action.

 The American Legion Auxiliary adopted the poppy as its memorial flower in 1921, and, in 1924, in conjunction with The American Legion, instituted the national Poppy Program to protect the memorial poppy from becoming commercialized by outside interests. Each year, American Legion Auxiliary volunteers distribute millions of poppies, most handmade, in exchange for contributions to assist active-duty military, veterans, and their families. The Auxiliary’s more than 8,000 units distribute poppies throughout the year, especially on veteran-related holidays. Auxiliary members promote the memorial poppy flower in other ways as well, such as the Miss Poppy Contest, Poppy Poster Contest, and poppy craft projects. HISTORY In order to effectively implement the Poppy Program, it is important that we remember - And now the Torch and Poppy Red We wear in honor of our dead. Fear not that ye have died for naught; We’ll teach the lesson that ye wrought In Flanders Fields.

National Poppy Day is the Friday before Memorial Day

Little Miss Poppy
Department Poppy chairman submits the name, address, unit, and department of the contestant to her national division Poppy chairman postmarked or emailed by 5 p.m. EST on June 1

Unit Award: Most Outstanding Unit Poppy Program (per division). Send to national division chairman postmarked or emailed by 5 p.m. EST on June 1

Department Award: Best Department Poppy Program (per division)
Send to national division chairman postmarked or emailed by 5 p.m. EST on June 1

The Poppy Program has been a cornerstone of the American Legion Auxiliary for close to a century and has continually evolved since its inception. With the 2013 expansion of The American Legion’s rules governing the Poppy Program, Auxiliary members have the opportunity to further expand the Poppy Program like never before

Poppy Funds may **only** be used for:

★ The rehabilitation of veterans honorably discharged from the United States Armed Forces after April 6, 1917.

★ The welfare of the families of veterans of the above-named period.

★ The rehabilitation of hospitalized military service personnel returning home and awaiting discharge who require treatment in service hospitals.

★ The welfare of veterans, active military personnel, and the families of veterans and active military personnel of the above-named period where financial and medical need is evident.

★ For the purpose of poppy kits and supplies used to make symbolic poppies and poppy items that will be distributed for donations to the Poppy Fund.

We now have much greater flexibility to use the symbolic red poppy in many ways, shapes, and forms to raise money to support veterans, military, and their families. We’re no longer limited to using crepe paper poppies, and poppy labels no longer need to include the calendar year.

Auxiliary members can now distribute the poppy symbol in non-traditional displays — think poppy buttons, balloons, stickers, pencils, temporary tattoos, T-shirts, cookies, cupcakes, wreaths, Christmas decorations, notecards — all fun ways to share the poppy story and significance so that nonmembers can show their support for our military and veterans too. Many of these items are popular, inexpensive options to produce, and they give members flexibility to link the poppy item to the occasion.

The new rules still state a preference that poppies or poppy items be handmade by veterans. But since many parts of the country have a shortage of veterans available to make the traditional paper poppies, artificial poppies can now be assembled by unit members and volunteers. Consider holding a poppy-making event for your Junior members! Remember: Only veterans or those serving in the military can be paid to make the traditional poppies. The new Legion Poppy Program rules still require that poppies or poppy items be made by veterans when possible, but when veterans are not available or willing to make poppies, poppies or poppy items can be commercially made or made by volunteers. Poppy flowers can now be made from any material, and other poppy items can now also be produced for distribution to raise funds for the Poppy Program.

Yes! All Legion Family members are welcomed to join in poppy distribution. The American Legion’s Poppy Fund rules have always encouraged posts and Sons of The American Legion squadrons to be involved with their Auxiliary units in the publicity and distribution of poppies within the procedures established by their department. Whether on Veterans Day, Memorial Day, National Poppy Day, Independence Day, or any other patriotic opportunity, invite all members of The American Legion Family to participate. Legionnaires in their uniform caps are a very visible symbol of our veterans’ sacrifices and service to our nation. With our collective presence in our communities, we show strength for our mission of assisting our veterans and their families.

**Promote the Poppy Program and increase revenue.**

**Educate your community on the meaning and the history of the poppy. Celebrate National Poppy Day.**

**Increase the number of poppy makers in your community**

How can ALA departments and units support National Poppy Day?

Honor the fallen. Support the living. National Poppy Day is the Friday before Memorial Day! Remember: Poppies are not sold by volunteers — they are “distributed.” The person acquiring the poppy is invited to make a donation at his or her discretion, but we should be suggesting at least a dollar per poppy. The average donation per poppy is about 15 cents. Clearly, there is room for an increase in poppy donations. Identify a specific purpose for which you are collecting your poppy money. For example, your goal is $3,500 because you want to provide a needy military family in your area with a used car so they can get to work. Contact local schools to translate your donation request into other languages commonly used in your area. Make arrangements to set up a card table in a busy area. If distributing in front of a business, please make sure you have permission or permits to do so. When you are distributing poppies, have fun; be joyful! Don’t forget to wear your ALA branded apparel. Remember that you are representing The American Legion Family when you are out in public. Get creative! You can bake spritz cookies *(www.ALAforVeterans.org/ Programs/Poppy-Cookie-Recipe) or make felt poppies*  You don’t have to limit yourself to traditional crepe paper poppies. In the weeks leading up to National Poppy Day, ask local dentists, doctors, and hairstylists you know if they would be willing to display poppies. If they are amenable, provide them with a bouquet of poppies and sealed poppy donation can from Emblem Sales. Designed to impress and inform, our ALA poppy donation cans are brightly covered with images of the storied memorial poppy plus pertinent information for donors on how their funds support the American Legion Auxiliary’s Poppy Program. Be sure to put your name and phone number on the bottom of the can, and pick it up at an agreed-upon time. *www.ALAforVeterans.org* Have support materials to share. These include poppy bookmark

Have support materials to share. These include poppy bookmarks and poppy cans for collection of donations. Both the bookmarks and do-it-Little Miss Poppy scrapbooks are due from Department Poppy Chairmen to the National Poppy Chairmen (Jeanne Haas, 600 Arrowhead Dr., New Strawn, KS 66839) by 5:00 p.m. EST June 1,2023.

● Please communicate to your Units the date by which you need the entries submitted to you so that you have time to judge and forward ONE to National Chairman Jeanne Haas by the deadline of June 1, 2023

● National Chairman Haas will review the Little Miss Poppy scrapbook submissions and select ONE National Miss Poppy winner from the properly submitted scrapbooks.

● The rules, judging criteria, and other key information is available here: https://member.legion-aux.org/Member/Awards/Little-Miss-Poppy-Contest ourself labels for poppy cans are available at [*www.ALAforVeterans.org*](http://www.ALAforVeterans.org)

I encourage you to become a member of the National Poppy Facebook group where you will see and hear many wonderful and inspiring stories. Also, our Poppy newsletter will be published in the Poppy Facebook group. American Legion Auxiliary Poppy Program●

● I will select one Unit and one Department winner in our Division from the entries properly submitted.

● More information about Department and Unit award submission process is in the process of being updated and will be found here soon: https://member.legion-aux.org/member/awards/poppy-program-awards

I’m looking forward to working with you and I look forward to hearing from you. Please, let me know if you need additional information about any of these.

Poppy posters are due from Department Poppy Chairman to your Southern Division Poppy Chairman, Sharon Atkins, 1305 4th Ave SE, Cullman, AL 36055 by 5:00 p.m. EST June 1, 2023.

● Please communicate to your Units the date by which you need the entries submitted to you so that you have time to judge and forward ONE from each class to me by the deadline of June 1, 2023.

● I will review the Poppy Poster submissions and select ONE Poppy Poster Southern Division winner from each class from the properly submitted posters.

● The rules, judging criteria and other key information about the Poppy Poster Contest is available here: https://member.legion-aux.org/national-poppy-poster-contest

● We want to encourage ALL Department Units to have a Poppy Poster Contest this year! We want to have 100% participation this year!

● Reports and photos are due from the Department Poppy Chairman to Southern Division Chairman —Sharon Atkins, 1305 4th Ave SE, Cullman, AL 35055 by May 1, 2023.

● Please communicate to your Units the date by which you need Unit reports submitted to you so that you have time to put together your report to me. This report is a narrative (with supporting photos as available) that tells what your Department did to support the poppy program as well as what your Units did.

● I will review all reports and photos and create a single report with photos that will be shared with the National Poppy Chairman. I am counting on you to make sure the Southern Division has 100% reporting!

Please work with your Units to encourage them to report on how they worked the Poppy Program. The reports are due from the Department Poppy Chairman to the Southern Division Poppy Chairman, Sharon Atkins, 1305 4th Ave SE, Cullman, AL 35055 by 5:00 p.m. EST June 1, 2023.

● Please communicate to your Units the date by which you need UNIT award submissions and photo entries submitted to you so that you have time to judge and forward ONE Unit winner to me by the deadline of June 1, 2023.