



Poppy Program Action Plan 2023-2024

INTRODUCTION:

The Poppy Program has been a cornerstone of the American Legion Auxiliary for over a century and has continually evolved since its inception. In order to effectively implement the Poppy Program, it is important to understand the history behind the program. At the end of World War I, the American Legion adopted the poppy as a symbol of freedom and the blood sacrificed by troops in wartimes. The use of the poppy symbolical comes from the poem *In Flanders Fields*, which movingly begins, “In Flanders Fields the poppies blow, between the crosses, row on row,” referring to the poppies that sprang up in the churned-up earth of newly dug soldiers’ graves over parts of Belgium and France. The poem was written by Lt. Col. John McCrae in 1915 after witnessing the death of his friend, a fellow soldier.

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.

POPPY FUNDS USE:

- 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.

POPPY SYMBOL DISTRIBUTION:

- We are no longer limited to using crepe paper poppies.
- Poppy labels no longer need to include the calendar year.
- Poppies or poppy items should be handmade by veterans. However, if a veteran is unavailable, auxiliary, junior members, and volunteers may make them.
- All Legion Family members are welcomed to join in poppy distribution.
- Join <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ALAPoppy> to learn and find new ideas.
- Auxiliary members can now distribute the poppy symbol in non-traditional displays
 - poppy buttons
 - Balloons
 - Stickers
 - Pencils
 - temporary tattoos
 - T-shirts
 - Cookies
 - Cupcakes
 - Wreaths
 - Christmas decorations
 - Notecards
 - And much more

NATIONAL PRESIDENT LISA WILLIAMSON MISSION:

- National President Lisa's focus is suicide prevention. Using poppy funds, we can make life easier for our veterans and our service members in the following ways. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, which the Auxiliary has proudly co-presented for over 20 years. If you have ever attended a Creative Arts Festival at the local level or the National level, you realize the impact this opportunity has on our veterans. Donations can be made directly to the American Legion Auxiliary Foundation at <https://alafoundation.org/>The American Legion Auxiliary has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Honor Flight. Honor Flight agrees to be bound by The American Legion resolution to use



donated funds exclusively for the health and welfare necessities of service members and their immediate family. You may use poppy funds by contacting your local Honor Flight hub or by donating directly to Honor Flights or by visiting <https://www.honorflight.org/donations/> and clicking the “Donate Poppy Funds” button on the lower right hand side.

- In 2013-2014, The American Legion expanded the use of poppy funds to include the assistance of active duty servicemembers and their families. The American Legion Auxiliary has a MOA with the Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) to combat food insecurity. By supporting the existing network of food pantries and food distribution events offered by the ASYMCA. With the donation of ALA poppy funds, we can ease the stress of our service members by helping to feed their families. Make sure and note on your poppy fund donation that it is for the food bank program. The following is a list providing food bank programs.
- ASYMCA Oklahoma, 860 NW Cache Rd. Lawton, OK 73507 Phone: (580) 481-6523

IMPORTANT DATES:

- Department Chairman Report due to the National Committee by May 15.
- National Poppy Day is May 24, 2024.
- Department and Unit Award Nomination Form Completed and Submitted by June 1.
- Poppy Poster Contest All department entries must be sent by the department chairman to the national division chairman postmarked by 5 p.m. EST on June 1.
- Little Miss Poppy Department Poppy chairman submits the name, address, unit, and department of the contestant along with a scrapbook to her national division Poppy chairman postmarked 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



POPPY POSTER CONTEST:

- ALA Units sponsors poppy poster contests in local schools. When schools do not conduct activities, other youth groups, including ALA Junior members, may participate under direct supervision of the local ALA unit.
- Grade levels from 2nd to 12th grade are divided into seven classes (listed above) with one additional class for “Best Overall” in each division. Contest Classes:
 - Class I: Grades 2 and 3
 - Class II: Grades 4 and 5
 - Class III: Grades 6 and 7
 - Class IV: Grades 8 and 9
 - Class V: Grades 10 and 11
 - Class VI: Grade 12
 - Class VII: Students with special needs
- One award in each of the eight classes will be presented in each division. Winners will receive \$50 and a \$50 donation in the student’s name will be made to the Children of Warriors National Presidents’ Scholarship fund.
- 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, 2024.
- 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!

LITTLE MISS POPPY CONTEST:

NEW FOR 2023-2024 – Little Miss Poppy award submissions are now electronic to address postage and material cost considerations. Please refer to the rules below for submission requirements and deadline information.

- Participant must be between 6 and 12 years of age as of June 1 and be a Junior member in good standing of the American Legion Auxiliary.



- Promotional activity of the poppy story must occur through The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary, and the community during the timespan of May 1 of the current year to April 30 of the following year.
- For National Little Miss Poppy consideration, participants must submit a [Little Miss Poppy award electronic application](#) with supporting documentation.
- All entries are due by 5 p.m. on June 1.
- In addition to the information on the award application, please include documentation on the criteria below. Accepted formats are Word document, Google Slides, or .pdf. PowerPoint presentations may also be uploaded via Googles Slides. For more information on Google Slides, please visit <https://www.google.com/slides/about/>.

Criteria for judging Little Miss Poppy entries:

- The memorial poppy must be visible in all promotion and publicity submitted.
- There is no specific dress code or dress color for Little Miss Poppy.
- Promotion of the Poppy Program: What did you share and do?
- Publicity of poppy activities (newspapers, radio/TV, etc.).
- Submitted file must include the following information (both pictures and descriptions)
 - What I learned during my time as Little Miss Poppy?
 - How I shared the story of the poppy with my community?
 - What does the poppy mean to me?
 - What activities did I attend to promote the poppy and its meaning?
- Age-appropriate originality with considerations for neatness and creativity.
- The Little Miss Poppy (age 6-12) winner may be invited to the ALA National Convention immediately following her selection, and if she so chooses, will travel at her own expense.
- The winner of the National Little Miss Poppy contest will receive a citation plaque.

UNIT AWARD:

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, 2024.



DEPARTMENT AWARD:

The Best Department Poppy Program will be judged by the Southern Division Poppy Chairman where they will send it to the national division chairman postmarked or emailed by 5 p.m. EST on June 1.

REPORTS:

- Reports and photos are due from the Department Poppy Chairman to Southern Division Chairman —Janice H. MacLeod, 8268 Ferrel Place, Harrisburg, NC 28075 by May 1, 2024.
- 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, Janice H. MacLeod, 8268 Ferrel Place, Harrisburg, NC 28075 by 5:00 p.m. EST June 1, 2024.

OKLAHOMA STATE POPPY CHAIRMAN INFORMATION:

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