

Maximize Your Contributions for Poppies!

History:

In 1921 the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family in memory of the soldiers who fought on the battlefields of Belgium during World War I.

Crepe paper poppies are handmade by disabled or hospitalized veterans. Supplies to make poppies are provided free of charge by the American Legion Auxiliary department in the state the VA hospital resides. Veterans are paid a stipend for their work.

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. During 2007 and 2008, the average donation per poppy was 45 cents. Clearly, there is room for an increase in poppy donations.



Planning a Poppy Distribution:

- Plan a meeting to energize and inform members before distribution, especially if distribution is at more than one location. Tasks to cover:
 - Set up a schedule that has at least two people at each location, and provide contact information to all volunteers. Nominate a member to contact if a location should need additional poppies.
 - Decide how funds will be held and turned in.
 - Discuss attire for the day (i.e., red or navy shirt, preferably with Auxiliary emblem, and a poppy).
- Get written confirmation from venue management that poppy distribution is allowed.
 - Locations could include grocery stores, superstores or a parade.
- Be familiar with the poppy story, its origin, and its development both nationally and in your community. Research how much your unit raised last year on Poppy Day(s) and how many poppies were distributed.
- Encourage Legionnaires to join you for Poppy Day(s) and ask them to wear their caps.
- Check with the venue(s) as well as local and state laws to see if a permit is required for poppy distribution.
- Common practice is to distribute poppies around Memorial Day and Veterans Day; however, if you would like to distribute poppies at different times of the year, please contact the Department Secretary for more information.

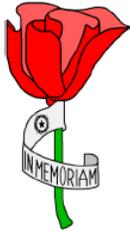
Ideas to Increase Profits:

- Produce a fact sheet to distribute that says what the money raised by the unit has gone toward. Example on page two. If the unit cannot afford to produce flyers, consider a poster that members can reference.
 - Contact local schools to translate the fact sheet into other languages commonly used in your area.
- Work with your unit's Public Relations chairman to approach local officials and media personalities to ask them to wear a poppy. Express to them the significance of the poppy and see if they would consider making a proclamation or endorsement about the poppy and Poppy Day.

- Have the Public Relations chairman write a news release announcing Poppy Day and submit it to local media. Be sure to include a Poppy Program Media Fact Sheet, available at www.legion-aux.org.
- Promote the Poppy Poster Contest in local schools. Students who participate, and their parents, will then spread the word about the program. The unit can use some of these posters as advertisement in local stores (hang a color copy one week prior to the event, as to stay fresh in customers' minds).
- Be aware of where the other units in your area will be distributing poppies, and what days, to see what areas are being missed.
- Invite local service members (active duty, reservist, or National Guardsmen) to help in your distribution, and ask if they will wear their fatigues.
- Partner with local JROTC programs and military schools to help distribute poppies. These students may need community service hours in order to graduate.
- Another great resource for poppy distribution volunteers are Girls State alumni. If your unit has poppies from previous years, use them for corsages, centerpieces, wreaths, etc. Previous years' poppies are not to be distributed.

Answering the “*How much should I give?*” Question:

- Answer with responses such as:
 - Any amount is appreciated, and here is a list of what donations went to last year. (Hand them a flyer of information relevant to the unit, example below.)
 - All funds received can be used only for helping underprivileged veterans and their families.
 - Please donate whatever you can.



Where does the money go?
All poppy funds go to the relief for veterans and their families, fulfilling the meaning of the poppy.

Last Year...

- \$1 bought travel-sized toiletries including a toothbrush or some soap
- \$5 bought 3 pairs of socks for hospitalized veterans
- \$10 provided transportation for a veteran to the VA hospital
- \$25 bought a veteran a new outfit for a job interview
- \$50 provided a holiday dinner for a veteran and her family

Wearing a poppy can honor the sacrifices made by our service members while assisting the living.

Thank you for your donation!
American Legion Auxiliary
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