VFW BUDDY POPPY CHAIRMAN'S GUIDE

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

In 1922, VFW conducted a campaign and got Poppies from France. Members soon discovered it took too long to get the flowers in from France and they came up with a better idea. Disabled, hospitalized and aging veterans could make the paper flowers and ship them out to the members for distribution.

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 10 and pack them in boxes of 500, 1,000 or 2,000 for shipment to the Posts and Ladies Auxiliaries. VFW pays the disabled veteran for the work. In most cases, this extra money provides additional income for the worker to pay for the little luxuries, which make hospital life more tolerable. Furthermore, Poppy assembly is often used as a therapy program to provide exercise for fingers and hands crippled by wounds, disease and the effects of old age.

Another reason Poppies are so important is because all proceeds from distribution are used for veteran's welfare or for the well being of their needy dependents and the orphans of veterans. More than 2,100 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.

As your Post's Buddy Poppy Chairman, 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 "Honor the Dead by Helping the Living."

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 Chairman. 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 Buddy Poppies. Recognize their efforts at Post or Ladies Auxiliary meetings

DISTRIBUTION OF BUDDY POPPYS 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 Ladies 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.
- ✓ Request from your Department Headquarters an order form to purchase your Poppies at least 8 – 12 weeks in advance of your distribution dates.
- ✓ Multiply the number of volunteers by 200 and that's approximately how many you should order.
- ✓ Be sure to place your order at least three months before your first distribution date.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ 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" Buddy 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 Buddy 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 and school events.

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 four 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. At least one Poppy used in the display must be in original form and color, with label attached.

Category 4. Memorial or Inspirational Displays
(Created by Junior Girls and/or Sons of the VFW)

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.

SPECIAL NOTE: Departments purchasing over 250,000 Poppies will be allowed two displays in each of the four categories for the National Display Contest. All others will be allowed one display in each of the four categories.

The Department Adjutant will have to notify the Buddy Poppy Director, in writing, by **June 30** of the Posts 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 Buddy Poppy 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 Ladies 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, number, city or state may not be visible on display entries; failure to comply will result in disqualification.

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.

Prizes

Plaques will be awarded to the first, second, and third place winners in each of the four categories.

NATIONAL BUDDY POPPY AWARDS

Each year, awards are given to Department Commanders, Department Buddy Poppy Chairmen and Post Commanders and their respective Ladies Auxiliary counterparts. The contests are as follows:

Over One Million Buddy Poppy Club

Recipients: Department Commander & Ladies Auxiliary President

Criteria: A national award will be issued to those Departments that have purchased 1 million or more Buddy Poppies during the current program year. Awarded automatically and presented at VFW's National Convention.

Divisional Contest

Recipients: Department Commander & Ladies Auxiliary President.

Criteria: A National Award will be issued those Departments who lead each of the nine divisions at the end of the Memorial Day Campaign — June 30. The award will be forwarded to the Department headquarters for presentation following National Convention.

Outstanding Department Chairman's Award

Recipients: Department Buddy Poppy Chairmen and their Ladies Auxiliary counterpart.

Criteria: A national award will be presented to those Buddy Poppy Chairman and Ladies Auxiliary counterparts who have exceeded their previous year's total distribution along with their Department's three-year sales/campaign quota for the current program year ending June 30. Quotas will be established using the prior three-year sales/campaign history of each Department. Awarded automatically and mailed to Department Buddy Poppy Chairman.

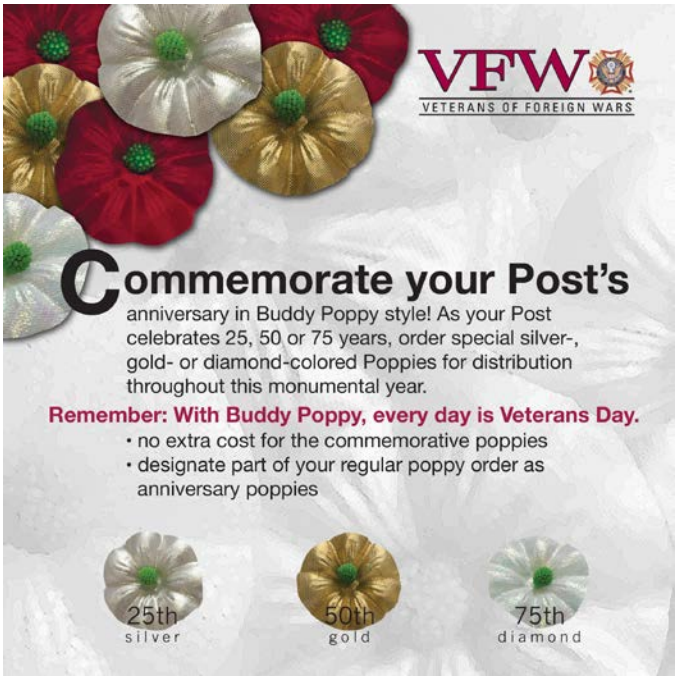
Outstanding Post Commander & Ladies Auxiliary President's Award

Recipients: Post Commander & Ladies Auxiliary President

Criteria A national certificate will be issued to one Post and one Ladies Auxiliary in each Department that has the best Buddy Poppy Promotional/Public Awareness Program in their respective Departments. Each Department Buddy Poppy Chairman should submit to the National Buddy Poppy Director the name of the outstanding Post and Ladies Auxiliary in his/her Department. A certificate honoring the Department winners will be prepared and mailed to the respective Department Headquarters for proper presentation to the winning Post Commander and Ladies Auxiliary President.

ANNIVERSARY BUDDY POPPIES

Special poppies are now available to Posts celebrating their 25th, 50th and 75th 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. These poppies can be ordered along with the regular poppies prior to and during your anniversary year. 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 chairman and as the director of the Buddy Poppy Program, you and I 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. I and my staff are working to provide a mailable poppy that has been successful for many Posts. I am also 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.

Please know that I and my staff stand ready to help you in any way we can. Thank you for your commitment to the VFW Buddy Poppy Program.

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