

POPPY

The purpose of the Poppy program is to connect the visual image of the poppy with servicemembers who sacrificed their lives for our freedoms. In Virginia **all** poppies are handmade by veterans as part of their therapeutic rehabilitation. These veteran poppy-makers are paid a piece-work wage which allows them a small income while also providing a tangible sense of purpose. They are *not* made by unit members.

Poppies are distributed – *never sold* – in exchange for donations that go directly for rehabilitation and welfare of veterans, welfare of their families, and in limited instances to assist military and their families.

Congress has designated the Friday before Memorial Day each year as National Poppy Day. Units should consider contacting their local government officials to request a Proclamation to that effect.

Units should plan accordingly to distribute poppies and share the story of the poppy with the public, highlighting the importance of wearing the poppy as an opportunity to pay tribute to all who have fallen in service to our country.

Activities

All ALA members should be familiar with *The Poppy Lady* by Barbara Walsh, which tells the story of Moina Michaels and how the poppy came to be the flower of remembrance of the fallen. Units can consider donating a copy to their local school library.

Promote the *Poppy Poster Contest*. Students in grades 2-12 are eligible to participate. Detailed contest Information and Rules are available at https://www.legion-aux.org/cmsdesk/ALA/media/PDF/Programs/Poppy_Poster_Contest_Rules.pdf

Reminder: Units sponsor the Poppy Poster Contest in their area, and the contest must be under the direct supervision of units.

Units should be encouraged to identify a Little Miss Poppy; they *must* be ALA Junior members in good standing between 6 and 12 years of age. Those individuals are also eligible to participate in the *Little Miss Poppy Contest*. Contest information is available at <https://www.legion-aux.org/Member/Awards/Little-Miss-Poppy-Contest>

Poppy distribution can occur at any time throughout the year, though most successful distributions align with patriotic holidays. This is a perfect opportunity for collaboration with the entire Legion Family, and involvement of Junior members and SAL youth.

Poppy Funds

Donations collected from Poppy distribution are restricted funds and should be a separate line item in the Unit ledger.

How Poppy Funds CAN be used:

- For the rehabilitation of veterans honorably discharged from the U.S. Armed Forces after April 6, 1917.
- For the welfare of the families of veterans of the above named period.
- For the rehabilitation of hospitalized military service personnel returning home and awaiting discharge.
- For the welfare of veterans, active military personnel, and the families of veterans and active military personnel where financial and medical need is clear.
- Use of Poppy funds is allowable for care packages only when it is for a welfare need as opposed to comfort items such as leisure items.

How Poppy Funds CANNOT be used:

- Any general operating fund of a department, unit, or post.
- Any community service project that does not directly benefit the welfare of an individual veteran/military servicemember or the welfare of his/her family.
- General maintenance, enhancement, or improvement projects of American Legion or Auxiliary facilities, including ramp(s) to a post home.
- Investments, even those that would bring profit to the unit or post.
- POW/MIA programs
- Memberships, including other veteran support organizations such as Gold Star Mothers, etc.
- Contributions to, or payouts from, the Auxiliary Emergency Fund.
- ALA Girls State/Boys State or Girls Nation/Boys Nation fees.
- Flags or flagpoles
- Scholarships which do not restrict eligibility solely to military servicemembers, or their children, or where financial need is not clear.
- Mileage, travel, or lodging expenses; registration fees for conferences or conventions; or costs incurred by a person – including ALA members, volunteers, and staff – to attend any meeting, conference, or event about veterans.
- Attire or uniforms used by volunteers or staff in promoting or conducting ALA program activity or business.

Other

Join the ALA Poppy Facebook group and check the National ALA website frequently for updates.

Excerpted from the ALA Unit Guide (2024, pp.75, 83-86), the ALA Poppy Guide at <https://www.legion-aux.org/Member/Guides/Poppy-Guide>, <https://www.legion-aux.org/Poppy> and webpages noted above.