

2026–2027 “BUDDY”® POPPY PROGRAM

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“Remember Your Whoo”

Serving America’s Heroes — One “Buddy”® Poppy at a Time

Here to Support Every District Throughout the Year

- Ordering guidance and advance-purchase planning
- Event preparation and display assistance
- Relief Fund questions and compliance
- District Schools of Instruction
- Creative ideas, vintage layouts, and promotional materials
- Encouragement, teamwork, and statewide unity

A Message of Purpose

With gratitude, wisdom, and the spirit of service, we begin a new year honoring the veterans who shaped our lives and the communities we proudly serve. May this program guide your steps, strengthen your mission, and inspire every “Buddy”® Poppy you place into the hands of a grateful Californian.

Remember Your Whoo — Serving America’s Heroes, One “Buddy”® Poppy at a Time

This year, we honor the wisdom of the owl and the memory of the one who inspires our service—our “Whoo.” Each “Buddy”® Poppy we distribute carries their story forward. Crafted by the hands of disabled and hospitalized American veterans, the “Buddy”® Poppy reminds us why we serve and who we serve for. When we Remember Our Whoo, we serve with purpose. When we offer a “Buddy”® Poppy, we serve with heart. Together, we honor America’s heroes—one memory, one act of gratitude, one “Buddy”® Poppy at a time.

“Buddy”® Poppy History

The “Buddy”® Poppy has been the official memorial flower of the Veterans of Foreign Wars since **1922**, inspired by the red poppies of *“In Flanders Fields”* and the sacrifices of those who served in World War I. In **1923**, the VFW made a defining commitment that continues today: **every “Buddy”® Poppy would be assembled by disabled, hospitalized, and aging American veterans**, providing them with therapeutic activity and much-needed income. The name **“Buddy”® Poppy** was trademarked in **1924**, ensuring its identity as a symbol of remembrance and veteran support. Funds raised through “Buddy”® Poppy distributions are used exclusively for veterans’ relief, community assistance, and the VFW National Home for Children. For more than a century, the “Buddy”® Poppy has stood as a living promise to **honor the dead by helping the living**, reminding every generation of the cost of freedom and the duty to care for those who served.

Reporting Instructions

Auxiliaries should report “Buddy”® Poppy activities at least **quarterly** through the Department reporting system. Reports should include:

- Number of “Buddy”® Poppies distributed
- Educational activities conducted
- Community outreach events
- Displays created
- Social media posts made
- Partnerships with schools, youth groups, or businesses
- Funds raised (if applicable)
- Veteran stories shared or highlighted

Encourage Auxiliaries to **attach photos**, flyers, or screenshots of social media posts.

Department Contests

These contests encourage creativity, education, and community involvement.

1. Best “Buddy”® Poppy Display

Categories:

- Public Event Display
- Post Home Display
- Patriotic Holiday Display
- Youth-Involved Display

Judging Criteria:

- Creativity
- Educational value
- Visibility and impact
- Connection to the theme

2. Best “Buddy” ® Poppy Community Outreach Project

Recognizes Auxiliaries that partner with schools, Scouts, civic groups, or local businesses.

3. Best Social Media Promotion

Awarded for consistent, creative, and meaningful “Buddy” ® Poppy posts.

4. Most Inspiring Veteran Story

For Auxiliaries that highlight the story of a veteran connected to their Post or community.

5. National “Buddy” ® Poppy Display Contest (Optional)

Encourage Auxiliaries to participate in the National Convention contest by submitting displays that meet National guidelines.

“Buddy” ® Poppy Event Preparation & Ordering Guide

Preparing for Your “Buddy” ® Poppy Event

Across towns and crossroads, from Main Street storefronts to courthouse squares, the “Buddy” ® Poppy drive has long been a proud tradition—neighbors standing shoulder to shoulder to honor the fallen and lift up the living. A successful event begins with steady planning and a clear purpose.

Set Your Course Early Choose your dates well ahead of time, giving your Post and Auxiliary room to prepare. Secure your locations—grocery stores, hardware shops, and local merchants who still believe in community and country.

Gather Your Supplies A simple table, a clean cloth, a patriotic sign, and a can for donations are all you need to begin. Keep your “Buddy” ® Poppies plentiful and visible. Prepare a short message for volunteers so each one can speak confidently about the meaning behind the little red flower.

Train Your Volunteers Before the first poppy is offered, gather your team. Remind them that “Buddy” ® Poppies are never sold—they are given in remembrance, and donations are accepted with gratitude. Encourage warm smiles, firm handshakes, and heartfelt thanks.

Promote with Purpose Post notices in shop windows, share announcements in community bulletins, and let your town know that the Auxiliary and Post will be out honoring America's heroes. A well-informed community is a generous one.

On the Day of the Drive Arrive early, stand tall, and keep your display neat and welcoming. Rotate volunteers so spirits stay high. Take photographs to preserve the moment and inspire others to join next time.

After the Last Poppy Is Given Count donations with care, deposit them into the Relief Fund, and send your thanks to every volunteer and business who stood with you. These small courtesies keep the tradition strong.

Ordering “Buddy” Poppies & Making Advance Purchases

For more than a century, every “Buddy”[®] Poppy has been assembled by disabled, hospitalized, and aging American veterans—hands that once carried rifles now crafting the small red flower that carries their story. Because of this sacred trust, all orders must go through the **VFW National Headquarters**, placed by the **Post Quartermaster**.

How to Order Your Post Quartermaster submits the order through the official “Buddy”[®] Poppy Order Form or the online system. Auxiliaries do not order independently; they work hand-in-hand with their Post, just as they always have.

When to Order Order early—**6 to 8 weeks** before your first event, and even earlier for Memorial Day or Veterans Day. The busiest seasons can stretch shipping times, so planning ahead keeps your table well-supplied.

How Many to Order A small Auxiliary may begin with **1,000–2,000 poppies**, while larger or multi-location drives may require **5,000–10,000 or more**. Keep a reserve on hand for funerals, school programs, and unexpected community requests.

Why Advance Ordering Matters Every “Buddy”[®] Poppy is made by a veteran who depends on this work. Early orders ensure steady employment for them and steady supply for you—a partnership that has stood the test of time.

What Is the Relief Fund — And Why It Matters

The **Relief Fund** is the heart of the “Buddy”[®] Poppy Program. It is a **protected, dedicated fund** used *only* for the aid and comfort of veterans, service members, and their families. Every dollar placed into a “Buddy” Poppy can go directly into this fund—never into general expenses, never into operating costs, never into social activities. It is sacred money, entrusted to us by the community for one purpose: **to help those who served**.

Why the Relief Fund Is So Important

For more than a century, the Relief Fund has been the steady hand that reaches out when a veteran is struggling. It provides:

- **Emergency assistance** for veterans and their families
- **Help with food, utilities, transportation, and temporary shelter**
- **Support for hospitalized and disabled veterans**
- **Aid for widows, widowers, and orphans of veterans**
- **Funds for community service projects that directly benefit veterans**
- **Support for the VFW National Home for Children**

Every “Buddy”[®] Poppy distributed keeps this fund alive. Every donation—large or small—becomes a lifeline for someone who once wore the uniform.

A Tradition Rooted in Honor

Since the early days of the VFW, the Relief Fund has stood as a promise kept. When a veteran needed help, the Post or Auxiliary could answer swiftly, quietly, and with dignity. No red tape. No delay. Just neighbors helping neighbors, the way it has always been.

The Relief Fund is important because it ensures that the “Buddy”[®] Poppy is **not just a symbol**—it is action. It is impact. It is hope.

Why It Must Be Protected

The Relief Fund is governed by strict rules because the integrity of the “Buddy”[®] Poppy Program depends on it. When the public gives, they trust that their donation will go exactly where it should: **to veterans in need**. That trust is the foundation of the entire program.