



ALA Poppy Program Fact Sheet



The Remembrance Poppy – Significance and Program Overview

Each year, the American Legion Auxiliary's three-quarters of a million members – direct female relatives of wartime veterans – raise more than \$5.5 million through the distribution of the symbolic red poppies to support active-duty military, veterans, and their families. The Auxiliary's 8,000+ neighborhood units distribute poppies throughout the year, especially on Memorial Day and Veterans Day. The red poppy has become a nationally recognized symbol of sacrifice worn by Americans since World War I to honor those who served and died for our country in all wars. It reminds Americans of the sacrifices made by our veterans while protecting our freedoms. One hundred percent of the donations collected directly support the needs of veterans, military, and their families.

Quick Facts

- The red poppy came to symbolize the blood shed protecting Americans' freedom following publication of the wartime poem "In Flanders Fields" written by Lt. Col. John McCrae, M.D., while serving on the front in WWI, to honor soldiers killed in battle.
- The popularity of the red poppy as a memorial to those who sacrificed their lives in war began in November 1918 when Moina (*pronounced mo-ee-na*) Michael was so moved by Lt. Col. McCrae's poem that she bought a bouquet of poppies on impulse – all that New York City's Wanamaker's Department Store had – and handed them to businessmen meeting at the New York YMCA where she worked. She asked them to wear the poppy as a tribute to the fallen. WWI was over, but America's sons would rest forever "in Flanders Fields." Later, Moina would spearhead a campaign that resulted in the adoption of the poppy as the national symbol of sacrifice. In 1923, the poppy became the official flower of The American Legion Family in memory of soldiers who fought on the battlefields during WWI.
- Last year, American Legion Auxiliary members raised more than \$5.5 million from poppy donations, 100 percent of which was used exclusively to support active-duty military, veterans, and their families through the Auxiliary's outreach program services.
- Veterans handcraft the flowers with assistance from unpaid volunteers. The veterans not only earn a small wage, which helps to supplement their incomes and makes them feel more self-sufficient, but the physical and mental activity provides many therapeutic benefits for the veteran.
- A veteran who devotes five to six hours per day assembling the red crepe paper poppies can make as many as 2,000 to 3,000 poppies in a week.
- Volunteers do not sell poppies – they "distribute" them, with a request that the person receiving the poppy make a donation to the poppy fund to support the Auxiliary's veteran outreach programs.
- Founded in 1919 to support the work of The American Legion, the American Legion Auxiliary is recognized as the world's largest women's patriotic service organization.

About the American Legion Auxiliary

American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) members have dedicated themselves for nearly a century to meeting the needs of our nation's veterans, military, and their families both here and abroad. They volunteer millions of hours yearly, with a value of more than \$3.1 billion. As part of the world's largest women's patriotic service organization, ALA volunteers across the country also step up to honor veterans and military through annual scholarships and with ALA Girls State programs, teaching high school juniors to be leaders grounded in patriotism and Americanism. To learn more about the ALA's mission or to volunteer, donate, or join, visit www.ALAforVeterans.org.