

VFW Celebrates 100 Years of the "Buddy"® Poppy

This month celebrates the centennial of VFW's 'flower of remembrance'

Aug 23, 2022

August marks 100 years since VFW declared the poppy as the official VFW flower. At VFW's 1922 national convention in Seattle, Washington, the organization officially adopted the blood-red flower.

In February 1924, VFW registered the name "Buddy Poppy" with the U.S. Patent Office. The term "Buddy"® was coined by the poppy makers, who, at the time, were disabled veterans. It was a tribute to the veterans who did not come home and those disabled or scarred for life.

Since May 1924, when the trademark was granted, VFW has owned all rights to it.

Buddy Poppies have enjoyed broad popular support since their inception. American presidents have had poppies pinned to their jackets by girls from the VFW National Home in Eaton Rapids, Mich. During the 1940s and 1950s, leading Hollywood actresses became "Buddy Poppy Girls," representative of the American ideal "girl next door."

Distribution of poppies remains a staple of Veterans and Memorial Day activities at VFW Posts throughout the country. One extraordinary Buddy Poppy donation was made in New Jersey in 1997. An anonymous donor gave \$13,640 in cash and checks to Post 2294 in Jersey City. By any measure, that display of generosity is unique in the annals of the program.

More than 1 billion Buddy Poppies have been distributed since 1922. Under VFW bylaws, the proceeds are designated for Post Relief Funds that assist disabled veterans, or for maintaining the National Home or similar facilities dedicated to the care of veterans.

9 MILLION POPPIES ASSEMBLED

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When COVID-19 shut down Buddy Poppy assembly centers, VFW members mobilized across the country to build nearly two years' worth of the red flowers of remembrance.

According to VFW Programs Director Lynn Rolf, through the efforts of VFW Posts, he was able to collect 9 million Poppies, which came close to two years' worth of Buddy Poppies.

"When I put the word out that we needed help, a lot of people stepped up to do just that," Rolf said. "Many found that it helped bring the community together."

Rolf drove to Minnesota, where he visited the Minnesota Veterans Home in Silver Lake and also the Veterans Home in Hastings. Residents at those homes assembled Poppies as well.

"We are very proud of our Buddy Poppy program," Rolf said. "It is extra special to the VFW because we were the originators of the flower which commemorates our war dead. With the proceeds assisting our living veterans, their families and our local communities, it goes hand in hand with VFW's pledge to 'Honor the Dead by Helping the Living.'"

This article is featured in the 2022 August issue of [VFW magazine](#), and was written by [Janie Dyhouse](#), senior editor for VFW magazine.