



American Legion Auxiliary Media Fact Sheet

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

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Memorial Poppy

WHAT:

Seven million memorial poppies are distributed each year by American Legion Auxiliary members across the country to provide a therapeutic activity for veterans, raise awareness and raise funds to help veterans, military service members and their families.

Red crepe paper poppies symbolize the sacrifices made by our military service members.

Two million dollars are donated by people receiving the poppies each year. Up until recently, 100% of the donated funds were used to help veterans. Due to the great needs of today's military families, The American Legion recently voted to expand the use of newly-collected funds to active duty service members and their families who demonstrate a financial or medical need. Most of the funds collected stay in the communities where they were collected.

Veterans who make the poppies are paid a small stipend for their efforts.

The poppy was inspired by the famous wartime poem, "**In Flanders Fields**" by Lt. Col. John McCrae, which begins "In Flanders Fields the poppies blow between the crosses row on row..." (see attached for full text)

The tradition of the memorial poppy can be traced to a single individual beginning in November 1918, **Ms. Moina Michael**, who bought a bouquet of poppies and handed them to businessmen where she worked. She asked them to wear the poppy as a tribute to the fallen of World War I.

WHO:

The American Legion Auxiliary has nearly **800,000 member volunteers** serving veterans, military service members, and their families.

There are **22,658,000 veterans** in the U.S. military.* That is 7% of the U.S. citizenry, based on 2010 census data.

Founded in 1919, the **American Legion Auxiliary** is the world's largest women's patriotic service organization. Its mission to serve veterans, the military and their families is carried out through hundreds of outreach programs delivered by its member volunteers.

WHEN:

Memorial poppies are generally distributed on patriotic holidays such as **Memorial Day** and **Veterans Day** each year.

WHERE:

Poppies are distributed in various places throughout local communities. American Legion Auxiliary members can be found with poppies on sidewalks, in front of stores, at local meetings and more.

American Legion Auxiliary members are active in **more than 9,000 communities nationwide** and around the world.

The American Legion Auxiliary's National Headquarters are located in Indianapolis. To learn more visit **www.ALforVeterans.org**.

WHY:

Our volunteer military has been fighting American's longest war for 12 years. Less than 1 percent of Americans serve in uniform today, but they bear 100 percent of the burden of defending our nation.**

Currently, more than 2.2 million service members make up America's all-volunteer force in the active, National Guard, and Reserve components. Fifty-five percent of the force is married and 40 percent have two children.**

Only 37 percent of our families live on military installations; the remaining 63 percent live in more than 4,000 communities nationwide.**

There are 1.8 million veterans age 35 and younger.* Their lives have been changed forever by their service to our country, and like all veterans, we owe them a debt of gratitude in making sure they are cared for.

There are 3.5 million veterans with a service-connected disability.*

There were a record high number of veteran suicides in 2012, and the suicide rate among active duty has increased 15% in the last two years. One veteran commits suicide every 80 minutes.*

*From the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

**From President Obama's *Strengthening Our Military Families* report, January 2011