

“Buddy”® Poppy & National Home

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NATIONAL HOME PROGRAM

Please join us as we **CELEBRATE** the 100th anniversary of the VFW National Home! The VFW National Home, located in Eaton Rapids, Michigan will turn 100 on January 7th, 2025. A millionaire cattleman, Corey Spencer, heard about a 23-year-old woman, Amy Ross, from Detroit who had made it her mission in life to help veterans returning from war to find employment, and gifted her 472 acres of land in Michigan. And on January 7, 1925, their efforts **“Together Helping Veterans”** began a legendary tale which is the VFW National Home.

The National Home (which was the VFW Auxiliary’s first National Program) is a campus where military veterans and their families can make a fresh start, living rent free for up to 4 years. These families have access to life skills training, educational services, case management services, recreational, and community services. Through the years, the National Home has adapted to better serve the veteran community with assistance for things such as post-traumatic stress disorder, re-integration into society, rehabilitation for emotional and physical injuries, financial stress, and high unemployment. Families accepted must commit to making changes in their lives and make progress towards their family goals. The National Home is dedicated to helping each family succeed! As our National President Brenda Bryant believes - **“From Our Roots to Our Branches Extending Service to Our Veterans.”**

Through the years, the National Home itself has become a campus with childcare facilities, playgrounds, parks, a chapel, guest lodge, a community center, along with administrative offices. The living facilities include 42 single family homes sponsored by different states named after their sponsors. Cottage #3 is sponsored by the Department of PA VFW Auxiliary.

Under the direction of the new Executive Director Mike Wilson, new changes have begun. Such as a **GUITARS FOR VETS PROGRAM**, in which a Veteran receives a new acoustic guitar after completing a ten-week program. A **HEROES TO HIVES PROGRAM**, in which staff and residents participate in beekeeping classes taught by a local beekeeper, who is also a VFW member. On Saturdays, there is a **CUP OF JOE** where Veterans can spend up to 2 hours with other Veterans having conversation, coffee, and donuts. **THE VETERAN TRIBUTE TREE** honors our living, deceased, or deployed by placing a ribbon on the tree at Christmastime. There is also a **GOLF**

EVENT in which an annual golf outing helps raise money for activities and events at the National Home.

The VFW Auxiliary supports the National Home through donations to the Health and Happiness Fund, 25 cents per member is the recommended donation. These funds support maintenance on Auxiliary sponsored buildings for emergency repairs and needed renovations. It also funds Christmas and Graduation gifts. Donations are accepted through **Malta**. Treasurers can log in under DUTIES and make donations for their Auxiliary OR individuals can log in and make their own donations. You may also send a check earmarked **Health and Happiness** to:

VFW Auxiliary National Headquarters
Attn: Health and Happiness Donations
406 W. 34th Street, 10th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64111

The National Home Helps Families in Need

The National Home offers families of veterans, active-duty military and members of the VFW and its Auxiliary opportunities for growth and development in our nurturing community. All 42 of their beautiful homes are located in Eaton Rapids, Michigan on the grounds of the VFW National Home. If any Auxiliary or member becomes aware of a family needing assistance, ask them to call the Helpline at 1-800-313-4200 or email help@vfwnationalhome.org. In addition, referring them to the National Home Helpline may give them valuable information about local services.

National Home Centennial Life Membership

As the VFW National Home **CELEBRATES** its **100th Anniversary in 2025**, I am inviting you to join the Centennial Membership program. In celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the National Home, a once-in-a-lifetime special Life Membership is being offered: **CENTENNIAL LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR \$100**. In appreciation they offer current & nonmembers who apply between April 1, 2024, to December 31, 2025, the following benefits: an exclusive Centennial Membership Pin; 10% off Souvenirs and Apparel; Reduced Guest Lodge Rates; and Exclusive Member-only Apparel. Visit vfwnationalhome.org/membership for more information, an application, or to purchase a life membership! Only Life members may vote for Trustees who represent their National Home District and approve any changes to the bylaws and articles of incorporation. An Auxiliary may purchase a life membership and will receive one vote as well!

National Home's 100th Anniversary Celebration

Various events will be held at the VFW National Home, throughout the 2024-2025 year in celebration of the home's 100th anniversary. Keep an eye out for flyers and information on these events. *Please consider sending a **BirthDay Card** by early January to the National Home to be displayed at the Birthday Party!! Also, encourage others (if not yourself) to check out vfwnationalhome.org and explore the **Tribute Bricks** which are available to purchase.*

"BUDDY" POPPY

I am overwhelmed by the power and emotion evoked by this tiny red flower. It's a symbolic representation of patriotism, beauty, bravery, and unfortunately – death. These feelings all stem from the poem named "IN FLANDERS FIELDS" by Canadian Colonel John McCrae. In WWI, Col. McCrae saw a battlefield littered with many, many dead soldiers' bodies amid a carpet of red poppies during the second battle of Ypres in Belgium, after which he wrote the poem.

In Flanders Fields

by John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you, from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow,
In Flanders fields.

Although Col. McCrae did not live to see the end of WWI, his poem lives on and helped the poppy become a symbol of hope and faith showing we will not forget their sacrifice and that we are eternally grateful.

In 1922, the VFW became the first National Veterans' Organization to organize a nationwide poppy distribution. This changed the little red flower into a symbol of the blood sacrificed by American servicemen and women everywhere. In 1923, the VFW decided that these "Buddy" Poppies should only be made in America by disabled, hospitalized, and/or needy veterans who will be compensated. These poppies are only created in 5 locations in the United States. In 1924, the VFW patented the "Buddy" Poppy name.

It is very desirable for each Auxiliary to have a poppy distribution. How to do it is up to your members, but working with your VFW Post Members is the most helpful. Remind everyone that you are **GIVING** poppies and not **SELLING** them. Poppies may be ordered by contacting the VFW Department Headquarters and the request should be made 8 to 12 weeks before they are needed. **New this year** is the addition of a **metal poppy** which is perfect for lapels! This program requires a "Buddy" Poppy purchase be made by each Auxiliary every new membership year. Also, "Buddy" Poppy distribution supplies, and promotional items can be purchased from the VFW Store at vfwstore.org or by calling 1-833-VFW-VETS. Each "Buddy" Poppy distribution contributes to VFW NATIONAL HOME, VFW NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS VETERANS' SERVICE FUND, and THE DEPARTMENT'S VETERANS' SERVICE FUND.

Before going to distribute poppies, please have any required permits if needed. Also, make sure you have permission from managers and/or owners if needed. Have your team wear VFW/Auxiliary apparel and share the event on every available avenue you can think of! REMEMBER, the "Buddy" Poppy proceeds **go only** to the National Home **or** the Auxiliary's relief fund. See our Bylaws – Sec. 901, page 91 in the ritual book.

Buddy Poppy Display Contest

The Department "Buddy" Poppy display contest will take place and be announced at the Department Convention. There are 5 categories in which the displays are to be judged:

- Public promotion of Poppy Campaign (Window, booth, parade, poster displays, campaign promotions, etc.)
- Memorial or Inspirational Displays (Wreaths, memorial tablets or plaques, patriotic or devotional items, etc.)
- Artistic or Decorative Use of Poppies (Post home displays, table centerpieces, corsages, etc.)
- *NEW* Unique ideas for successful "Buddy" Poppy distributions (where and when)
- *NEW* Did your auxiliary have any special events to distribute and/or raise money for the "Buddy" Poppy program?

All entries MUST include at least one "Buddy" Poppy in its original form and color with the label attached. For all other rules, please go to www.vfwauxiliary.org/resources and visit the VFW "Buddy" Poppy Chairman's Guide. *The first-place winner of each category of the Department's "Buddy" Poppy Contest will be entered into the National "Buddy" Poppy Contest Level.*

NATIONAL "BUDDY POPPY" & VFW NATIONAL HOME PROGRAM AWARDS

Awards for Auxiliaries

1. Most outstanding activity and/or event using the VFW "Buddy" ' Poppy to educate their community about the VFW "Buddy" Poppy.

**Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event using the VFW "Buddy" Poppy, to educate their community about the VFW "Buddy" Poppy.

2. Most outstanding activity and/or event to recognize and **CELEBRATE** the VFW National Home's 100th Birthday.

**Citation and \$25 to one VFW Auxiliary in each of the 10 Program Divisions that hosts the most outstanding activity and/or event to recognize and celebrate the VFW National Home's 100th Birthday.

Entry forms required for each award and available in MALTA Member Resources. VFW Auxiliaries must send the required entry forms to their Department "Buddy" Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman by March 31, 2025, for judging. The Department "Buddy" Poppy & VFW National Home Chairman must sign and send a copy of the completed Department winning entry forms to the National "Buddy" Poppy & VFW National Home Ambassador by April 30, 2025, for judging.

Citations will be mailed directly to the winning VFW Auxiliaries from National Headquarters and money will be deposited into the winning VFW Auxiliary account after the 2025 VFW Auxiliary National Convention.

DEPARTMENT “BUDDY POPPY” & VFW NATIONAL HOME PROGRAM AWARDS

1. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division who has the best promotion of the “Buddy” Poppy through distribution and education within their Post or Community. (Must submit a description and/or photos to the Department Chairman.)
2. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division that hosted or co-hosted with their Post, the most “Buddy” Poppy distribution drives within the Post or community.
3. Citation to the first, second, and third place winners in each category for the “Buddy” Poppy display contest at Department Convention (Rules and Guidelines can be found on MALTA Resources.)
4. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division who has the best promotion of the VFW National Home at an event. All entries will be considered and must be submitted with year-end reports. (Must submit a description and/or photos to Department Chairman.)
5. Citation to the Auxiliary in each membership division who purchases the most Life Memberships and/or Tribute Bricks for the VFW National Home.
6. A Star Award to the Auxiliary who submits the highest amount of donations overall to the VFW National Home Health and Happiness Fund. (Must show proof of payment.)

ALL OBLIGATIONS INCLUDING AUDITS, BONDS, DELEGATE FEES, PLEDGES, SUPPLIES, ETC. TO NATIONAL, DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTERS AND DISTRICT MUST BE MET FOR YOUR AUXILIARY/DISTRICT PRESIDENT AND CHAIRMEN TO QUALIFY FOR AWARDS