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NATIONAL HOME BUDDY POPPY/NATIONAL HOME PROGRAM

With the holiday season upon us, we have new opportunities to increase awareness of Buddy Poppy and the VFW National Home. Always think of how you can distribute poppies and educate people about the Home. We have incredible ways to benefit the lives of those in our communities and our veterans.

Have you updated your Auxiliary PAR lately to include Buddy Poppy/National Home? Currently we are at 83% participation officially (86% unofficially) for the program. Certainly, more activities have been held supporting the program. How great would it be if AZ was at 100% by the New Year?! Let Arizona shine!

Here is a little history about the Pollett family and the beginning of the National Home to inspire you:

The VFW National Home welcomed their first residents on March 9, 1925. Annie Pollett, the widow of Sgt. Edward Pollett, WWI veteran, and her six children, Lillian, Howard, Mary, Thomas, Woodrow, and Margaret, moved in after arrangements were made.

At that time, the National Home was a working farm, and the family had chores raising and caring for the crops, cows, chickens, and more. The children went to school in Eaton Rapids, and some graduated from Eaton Rapids High School.

Annie's grandchildren visited the Home in August 2014 and said their parents considered themselves fortunate to "grow up in a safe and secure environment with supportive, caring adults." Lillian worked as a secretary in the Governor's Mansion and lived to be 91. Howard's health was poor, but he played football and basketball in high school and his daughter said, "he would do anything for anybody." Mary moved to Chicago with her husband and, also, lived to the age of 91. Thomas enlisted in the U.S. Navy and survived Pearl Harbor. He was in the Navy for 25 years, and then had a civilian job until retirement. Woodrow also served in the U.S. Navy and married a member of the WAVES. Margaret married and moved to Nebraska to raise her children. Truly a success story of the VFW National Home and its mission to Build Strong Families! \*Information from the VFW National Home newsletter.

Currently the National Home has 10 homes waiting for new residents. The Washington House just had a family success story – the family was accepted and graduated in just 7 months! Remember, though, families have up to 4 years to complete the program. Case Managers help families with guidance, encouragement, and accountability to help them understand their unique challenges and to create a personalized plan for success. The Home offers safe and stable housing, financial guidance, veteran transition support, education and childcare, and community support. To see some of the success stories, visit [vfnationalhome.org](http://vfnationalhome.org). Go to the bottom of the screen and click on “Stories.” Pick any of the videos. WARNING – you may need some tissues!

Our National Home goals, as you know, are to Promote and Increase Awareness of the Home, Educate on Eligibility and the Helpline, 800-313-4200, Purchase a Centennial/Life Membership to the Home, purchase a Tribute Brick, and fulfill our National Citation goals by submitting an outstanding event/activity that creates awareness and education of eligibility and who qualifies for help from the National Home and promoting the program to National. The VFW Commander-In-Chief, Carol Whitmore, and the National Auxiliary President, Lois Callahan, have partnered in a Special Project for 2025-2026, “Stock the Store.” Donations will enhance the Welcome Center’s retail space into a convenient kiosk accessible to residents and staff. Think of fun, creative fundraisers to benefit this project. Snow days will not need to result in no supplies!

Remember to thank your supporters and say so often. Send them a text or drop them a line to acknowledge their generosity. Sarah Sims is the Community Development Manager and can help you with questions about the National Home. [ssims@nationalhome.org](mailto:ssims@nationalhome.org).

Lastly, keep your Buddy Poppy Program strong. It is so inspiring for you to share your activities. If you are at a loss, borrow another Auxiliary’s idea. Use it as a SWAP. Recently Auxiliary 7968 presented Gold Star Mothers each with a Red Poppy planting kit. This idea was used a year ago by Auxiliary 10254 at a District 5 meeting as a gift for attendees. Buddy Poppy does not need to be limited to official drives. There are many avenues for distribution. How about a door prize for everyone who wears a Buddy Poppy at an event or a meal at your Post? If they wear a poppy, give them a raffle ticket and draw for the door prize during the event/meal. Of course, have poppies available so everyone can participate.

Some activities since the last newsletter include the following:

- Auxiliary 12098 had a “Sangria and Shopping” event where poppies were distributed.

- Auxiliaries 9907, 7400, 1796, and 10386 held Buddy Poppy/National Home Drives (with other programs included, too. 1796 attached poppies to Matchbox cars to help boost donations.
- Auxiliary 1433 hosted a Women's Veterans Day Luncheon with poppies included.
- Auxiliaries 10386 and 6790 handed out poppies at Veterans Day Parades and 6790 enlisted the help of the Girl Scouts.
- Auxiliary 8242 partnered with their Comrades and the Yuma Police Dept. in an annual event Supporting the Special Olympics. They also distributed poppies at their fundraiser for the MCAS Food Pantry.
- Department of AZ District 9 decorated program hats (including Buddy Poppy) at their School Of Instruction (SOI).
- Auxiliary 7400 included Buddy Poppies with their Gifts for Veterans in Care Centers.
- Auxiliary 10254 participated in the Community Festival with the Comrades.
- Auxiliary 12098 participated in the Getting Arizona Involved in Neighborhoods (GAIN) event on Veterans Day with Comrades.
- Auxiliary 7968, along with their Post Commander and District 10 officers, promoted membership during the AZ State Fair at a table adorned with Buddy Poppies.
- Auxiliary 9400 promoted Buddy Poppy at their craft fair.

So creative!

“Honoring the dead by helping the living” and “Building Strong Families.” Your caring for veterans in creative and innovative ways continues to shine, Arizona!