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Export date: Fri Oct 30 7:47:28 2026 / +0000 GMT

Local Poppy Fund campaign drastically scaled back due to ongoing pandemic

Written By PAULA BROWN

LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

As Remembrance Day draws nearer, you won't be seeing veterans and volunteers in Shelburne offering poppies in-person.

Shelburne Royal Canadian Legion Branch 220 has announced that they won't being doing their in-person poppy offerings in the lead up to Remembrance Day, instead donations will be gathered through drop boxes.

Dean Schroeder, chair of the Poppy Fund at the local Legion, told the Free Press that the decision to stop in-person poppy offerings for 2020 was made as a way to protect volunteers and community members.

?I don't want to put anybody in danger,? said Schroeder, also adding that with the COVID-19 pandemic showing no signs of slowing, and the Legion remaining closed, that getting volunteers is more difficult.

The Poppy Fund Campaign is an annual fundraiser for the Royal Canadian Legions that typically starts at the end of October and runs until Remembrance Day (Nov.11). The donations raised through the fund go directly to veterans within the community.

?Nothing can be spent out of the Poppy Fund other than for a veteran use, and if it is anything (outside of that) you have to get a special application,? explains Lesa Peat, President of Branch 220.

Some of the many ways that donations through the Poppy Fund are used include providing assistance to needy veterans, purchasing construction materials or providing maintenance for housing and care facilities of elderly and disabled persons, bursaries, and getting service dogs for veterans.

In the past the local Legion has used both drop boxes and volunteers at different locations within Shelburne to hand out poppies for donations, this is the first time that they are relying strictly on the drop box method.

?I think when there's somebody there, donations are probably better, but we've never had this kind of situation before,? said Schroeder.

?We always got lots when we canvas, especially when someone saw an older veteran standing there. They always wanted to help the older veterans, and the older veterans would spend eight hours standing outside canvassing so that's what you're losing,? said Peat.

With less and less people carrying change on them, an issue that Schroeder said is getting harder to deal with, the Shelburne Legion is also offering online payments, by way of e-transfer, as a new way to donate.

To send a donation to the Legion using e-transfer, use the email rcl220@gmail.ca, adding a comment on what the donation is for.

The Shelburne Legion has put out around 100 Poppy Fund drop boxes that can be found around the community. Donations for the Poppy Fund Campaign can be made through to Nov. 11.