

Poppy campaign starts Friday



By Tabitha WellsBy Tabitha Wells

Poppy Campaign Days by the Royal Canadian Legion in Orangeville will start tomorrow (Friday) and run until Remembrance Day, November 11.

Announcement of the campaign dates was made Tuesday afternoon by Mayor Jeremy Williams, who was accompanied by Vice President of the RCL Branch 233 and Poppy Campaign Chairman, Howard McKinnon and Poppy Trust Chair Darrick Landry.

"The poppy has stood as a symbol of Remembrance since 1921, [as] our visual pledge to never forget those Canadians who have fallen in war and military operations," said Mayor Williams.

Throughout the First World War, the red poppy covered much of the western front as a native plant to the area, and often grew and spread amidst the mass graves left behind from the battles.

The familiar symbol was first largely recognized outside the war by Canadian poet and soldier, John McCrae, whose poem "In Flanders Fields" was published shortly after his death in 1918.

Despite the landscapes from the battles being completely disrupted from artillery bombardments, the chalky soils that had been infused with lime created the perfect environment for the poppies to thrive, and their stark, blood-red colouring, stood out drastically against the terrain.

Although the poppy first became symbolic mainly to remember those who had died in the war, it was eventually welcomed to pay respect and honour to those who continue to fight or who have returned from fighting. It also serves as a reminder that much of what we have today, and continue to have are because of the men and women who risked and continue to risk their lives to keep that freedom.

"From the last days of October to Remembrance Day, poppies blossom on lapels and collars to inspire Canadians to remember the many blessings and freedoms [we] enjoy today as a result of the sacrifices of those who serve our country," added Mayor Williams.

Each year, for the two weeks leading up to Remembrance Day, the Royal Canadian Legion runs the Poppy Campaign, designed to support the services of local legions and encourage Canadians to show their recognition of those who gave their lives. The entire campaign is lead and carried out by legion members who volunteer their time to deliver poppies and raise funds to support Veterans and families in need.

"The proceeds of the poppy campaign support Canada's serving and retired veterans, and their families, while ensuring Canada never forgets," said Mayor Williams. "During the poppy campaign, over 18 million poppies and 70,000 wreaths, crosses and sprays are distributed across Canada and overseas annually."

There is no actual charge for the poppies delivered by veterans, cadets and other volunteers, but they do request a donation as part of the campaign, which is where the funds raised come from.

?I urge all citizens to wear a poppy to show their appreciation and support for this very worthwhile cause,? concluded Mayor Williams.