

The Elks and Youth

Celebrating Our Youth

In the 1904s, the Elks made a commitment to “lay a solid foundation for the future; building the moral and physical character of American boys and girls, the leaders of tomorrow.” Since then, the Elks have done much to fulfill that self-charged responsibility — and not for fanfare or publicity, but simply because they know it is the right thing to do.

In fact, of everything the Elks do, perhaps nothing is more important than their work with the country’s young people. Like no other fraternal organization, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks celebrates the accomplishments of the country’s youth. The efforts of the Elks on behalf of the young — through youth organizations and scholarships, and by sponsoring athletic and artistic endeavors, summer camps, and drug awareness programs — sew the seeds of accomplishment and commitment that benefit the whole nation. This work and the generosity of the Elks help today’s young people become tomorrow’s scientists, industrialists, academic, artists, athletes, and much more.

The first week in May each year, the Order holds its Elks National Youth Week, recognizing young people for their involvement with the achievements in the community. Traditionally the Elks present awards and plaques to outstanding youngsters during this week, in addition to hosting teams—similar to those that are held all year—that provide young people with ever greater chances to play an active role in their communities.

By their sponsorship of youth fairs, career nights, student government days, athletic and educational programs, clubs, and more, the Elks truly make a difference in the lives of many young people. It is this caring commitment that makes the BPO Elks the fraternal organization most actively engaged in promoting strong and healthy futures for young people.

Youth Activities

In many communities, Elks Lodges help support Boys and Girls Clubs; 4-H programs; youth athletics, including Little League, football, and soccer teams; debate and speech programs; fine arts programs and contests, and other local youth organizations. Elks lodges also sponsor scout troops, offering our lodges as meeting places. We are proud to work with thousands of youth groups and organizations, ensuring that no child is ignored or forgotten.

One of the Order's most impressive youth programs is the Elks "Hoop Shoot" National Free Throw Contest. With more than 3 million annual participants between the ages of 8 and 13, the odds of making it to the championship round of the Elks "Hoop Shoot" are less than 40,000 to 1. The odds of capturing one of the six national titles that are up for grabs each year are less than 500,000 to one!

At an Elks "Hoop Shoot" Free Throw Contest, boys and girls in one of three age-groups, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, attempt to sink 25 free throws--10 in the first round, and 15 in the second, with ties being resolved by 5-shot shoot-offs. The competition is fierce but fun, and that's one reason the Elks

"Hoop Shoot" has grown, since 1946, from a local youth activity at the Corvallis, Oregon, Elks Lodge to the largest coeducational sports program in the country.

The Elks "Soccer Shoot" Contest is the most recent addition to the Order's highly successful coeducational youth sports programs. The competition, which is open to boys and girls under the age of 14, is designed to promote athletic ability and sportsmanship, foster developing talents and skills at soccer; and provide a fun competition in a safe environment. Each competition consists of two contests: the 5-goal contest for youngsters under the age of 10, and the grid-goal contest for 11- to 14-year-olds. The object of both competitions is to accurately kick a soccer ball through successively smaller goals. The smaller the goal, the more points scored. This program, which became nationwide in 1999, is already drawing more than 200,000 participants annually.

Special Youth Programs

Handicapped Youth

Nationally and locally, the Elks have worked diligently to better the lives of handicapped youngsters. The Order has a long history of supporting Special Olympics events, donating special equipment and supplies to the families of disabled children, sponsoring the treatment and research of many illnesses that affect children, and arranging for medical personnel to provide free in-home therapy services.

Drug Awareness

The BPO Elks, both at the local level and through its national Elks Drug Awareness Education Program, has done stellar work informing the nation's youth and their parents about the dangers associated with using illegal substances, tobacco products, and alcohol. Since 1983, the Elks have distributed more than 250 million pieces of educational literature to students, educators, and parents. In addition to their educational efforts, the Elks work with other organizations and agencies to provide youth with healthy and safe alternatives to drugs and alcohol. Local Lodges sponsor drug- and alcohol-free post-prom and graduation parties and dances, as well as a host of other activities. The Elks also provide financial support to law enforcement agencies for their efforts to curb the growth of drug use and to encourage children and young adults to make healthier decisions.

Scholarships and Grants

With monies from local Lodges and from the national organization, the Elks typically donate approximately \$8 million in scholarships each year. On the local and national levels, Elks award scholarships and grants to Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts; to exemplary high school seniors through the Elks "Most Valuable Student" scholarship program; to the children of Elks through the Elks Legacy Awards and Emergency Education Fund Grants; and to many other worthy recipients. The Elks rank as one of the largest providers of college scholarships in the United States.

The Presidents' Summit for America's Future--America's Promise

In the spring of 1997, the BPOE publicly announced its goals for laying a solid foundation for the leaders of tomorrow, making several pledges to America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth. One of those pledges was to commit \$31.9 million per year in support of Scouting, athletic programs, and other youth organizations and programs by the year 2000. The Order not only reached that goal but, in every year since 2000, has actually surpassed it, due in large part to the efforts of local Lodges. Another pledge made by the Order to America's Promise was to commit \$12.1 million per year in aid and treatment for children with disabilities as well as in drug education and prevention programs by 2000--and this goal was exceeded long before 2000. The BPOE also pledged to commit \$6.5 million per year in scholarship/grants by the year 2000--another goal that the Order has surpassed.