ELKS NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION

Meeting the needs of today’s veterans
It has been 70 years since the Elks National Veterans Service Commission was officially established, at a Grand Lodge convention in New York in 1946, formalizing a commitment to serving veterans that had been evident almost since the Elks were founded.

The Elks pledge “So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them”. Thanks to the work of our Elks volunteers, that pledge is backed by thousands of hours of Elks service to veterans and military members.

Since we began, the needs of military members and returning veterans have continued to change, and the Elks have adapted to those needs, remaining an ever-present ally to those who have served this country.

We hope you enjoy reading about our work this past year, and look forward to your support for another 70 years to come.
Freedom Grants

We increased the number of Freedom Grants available, and 180 Lodges received $2,000 grants to serve veterans and/or military members in their communities.

Elks use these grants to provide food and clothing for homeless and hospitalized veterans, hold adaptive sports clinics for veterans with disabilities, repair the homes of military families and veterans in need, support student veterans and more.

Here are a few examples of this year’s grant projects.

BOCA RATON, FLORIDA, LODGE NO. 2166

partnered with Wounded Warrior Anglers of America, Inc. to facilitate a weekend fishing trip for veterans with disabilities.

TRAVERSE CITY, MICHIGAN, LODGE NO. 323

partnered with Operation Homefront to provide food baskets, cards created by students, and toys to Coast Guard families.

HORNEILL, NEW YORK, LODGE NO. 364

hosted a family day in the park to support at-risk veterans, with a VA information booth, cookout, children’s activities and gift bags for attendees.

TAMPA, FLORIDA, LODGE NO. 708

hosted recreational outings and holiday events for veterans in transitional housing, and provided needed supplies to the housing facility.
In 2015-16, the Elks had 145 Elks certified as VA Voluntary Service Representatives. These Elks received monthly stipends to help hospitalized and recovering veterans relax, rehabilitate and thrive.

By the numbers:

145
The Elks have VAVS Representatives in 145 facilities

14,000
More than 14,000 Elks volunteered at these facilities

278,262
Elks served 278,262 veterans

344
344 Deputy Representatives assisted

$550,000
More than $550,000 went to directly serve veterans in VA and other facilities

TOP CONTRIBUTORS

1. Missouri
2. Iowa
3. Wyoming

26,928 square feet of leather was donated by Elks to Help Hospitalized Veterans, helping to provide free craft kits for veterans in rehabilitation

CONTRIBUTORS

Missouri
4,729 hides collected

Iowa
3,006 hides collected

Wyoming
1,771 hides collected

17 states collected
17,103 hides
In 2015-16, the Elks National Veterans Service Commission partnered with the Department of Veterans Affairs and pledged to help end veteran homelessness. The Welcome Home program had a successful first year!

Lodges provided Welcome Home Kits to veterans exiting homelessness and moving into new homes, ensuring they had the supplies and support they needed for a fresh start.

Through the Elks Emergency Assistance Fund, the Elks provided more than $911,000 in assistance to 323 veterans, with funds going to end or prevent homelessness.

We spread the word about the issue of veteran homelessness, sharing personal stories of veterans who’ve exited homelessness.

“‘The Elks... they focused in on the veterans in a way that other organizations haven’t. They’re coming from a totally different direction. They’re innovators.’

– Cynthia King Myers, HUD-VASH Social Worker

“The Elks are one of many partners who are stepping up to make sure every Veteran in the City of Chicago has a place to call home.”

Victor Lagroon, City of Chicago Veterans Affairs Director

We also partnered with the city of Chicago to create an emergency fund to prevent or end homelessness for more than 50 veterans.
Elks partner with Re-Creation USA to provide entertainment and assistance for veterans in VA facilities across the nation. Performers put on 142 shows for veterans, reaching 6,837 veterans with their performances and personal visits.

Bugles Across America works with more than 5500 buglers in all 50 states to perform live taps at thousands of veterans’ funerals and memorial services each year.

Playing Cards for Veterans works with local casinos to retrieve their old playing cards, and help Elks send them to veterans homes, VA facilities, USOs and more. In 2015-16, 32,000 packs of cards were distributed!

Elks partner with the VA to sponsor 6 different VA adaptive sports and arts events helping veterans rehabilitate, recover and thrive. Veterans Leather Program volunteers attended 3 of these events and distributed 2,870 pairs of wheelchair gloves to veterans in attendance.

National Veterans Golden Age Games
National Veterans Summer Sports Clinic
National Veterans Creative Arts Festival
National Veterans Winter Sports Clinic
National Veterans Tee Tournament
National Veterans Wheelchair Games
The cornerstone of our success is our army of dedicated volunteers. From our local Lodge, District and State Veterans Chairs, to our VAVS Representatives and everyone in between, we are indebted to and thankful for our generous Elks volunteers.
Financial highlights for 2015-16 were summarized from the Financial Statements of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission, with the Independent Auditor’s Report prepared by Cutrara & Company. The audit covered the period beginning April 1, 2015, and ending March 31, 2016. Complete financial statements, including all notes, may be obtained by contacting the Elks National Veterans Service Commission.

Revenue and Support

$2,463,750
Appropriation from Elks National Foundation, Inc.

$17,336
Other Contributions

$ 2,481,086
Total revenue and support

Programs and Partnerships

7% Other Sponsorships
2% VA Adaptive Sports Events
5% Re-Creation USA
7% Leather Program
15% Freedom Grants
40% Welcome Home
24% VAVS

Letter from the Commission

We are proud to report on this, another successful year.

We extend special thanks to Grand Secretary Bryan R. Klatt and the Grand Lodge staff, as well as to the Grand Lodge Sponsors for their assistance.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission operates thanks to a generous grant from the Elks National Foundation. We are very grateful to the ENF for their continued and generous support.

Respectfully Submitted,

James L. Nicholson, PGER, Chair
David Carr, PGER, Vice-Chair

John Amen, PGER, Secretary/Treasurer
Paul D. Helsel, PGER, Past Chair
Louis J. Grillo, PGER, Member

In Memory

of the Volunteers We Lost in 2015-16

Richard Drabick
Mandarin/St. Johns, FL Lodge No.2866
VAVS Rep., Clyde E. Lassen State Home

Aurelio Arce
Bronx-New Rochelle, MO Lodge No. 75
VAVS Rep., Bronx VAMC

James Dement, PER
Poplar Bluff, MO Lodge No.2452
VAVS Dep. Rep., Poplar Bluff VAMC

James Ray Gailbreath, PER
Roebuck, AL Lodge No. 79
VAVS Dep. Rep., Birmingham VAMC

Richard Hazelbaker
Lawton, OK Lodge No. 1056
VAVS Rep., Lawton-Fort Sills Veterans Center

Jack Spellacy
Lakewood, OH Lodge No. 1350
VAVS Rep., Cleveland (Wade Park) VAMC

Raymond Valdez
Midwest City, OK Lodge No. 1890
VAVS Rep., Norman Veteran Center

Glenn A. Johnson, PER
Kankakee, IL Lodge No. 627
VAVS Rep. IL Veterans Home – Manteno

Gilbert Parry
Alhambra-San Gabriel, CA Lodge No. 1328, VAVS Rep., Los Angeles VAMC

Vernon D. Pickenpaugh
Tampa, FL Lodge No. 708
VAVS Dep. Rep. Tampa VAMC

James L. Rooney, PER
Brookfield, IL Lodge No.1510
VAVS Rep., Hines VAMC

Archie “Joe” Biggers
Poway, CA Lodge No. 2543
State ENVSC Chair & VAVS Dep. Rep., San Diego VAMC

Bobby J. White
Cleburne, TX Lodge No. 811
VAVS Dep. Rep., Waco VAMC
“Thank you to Elks across this great country for your generosity and loyalty to our nation’s heroes.”

- Robert McDonald, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs