

# ELKS NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION 101

*Serving our Nation's Veterans since 1946*





# Our Mission

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*So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them.*

The Veterans Service Commission takes that pledge one step further, and promises service to our nation's veterans and military members, with a special focus on service to those in need.





# Serving our Nation's Veterans

*Our mission is one of action. Elks have a passion for veterans, and it is our job to put passion into action, and to do so responsibly and in a way that best serves the needs of veterans and military members.*



# 2017-18 Overview

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## Programs

- ★ Adopt-a-Vet
- ★ Freedom Grants
- ★ VAVS
- ★ Veterans Leather
- ★ Welcome Home

## Partnerships

- ★ Bugles Across America
- ★ Re-Creation
- ★ Adaptive Sports Events







# Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service

The cornerstone of the ENVSC, this long-standing program stations Elks in veterans facilities across the nation, providing reliable and consistent support to veterans.

- More than 550 Elks serve as Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service Representatives (and Deputy Representatives), assisting hospitalized and recovering veterans.
- These Reps and Dep Reps are expected to visit their facilities at least monthly to spend time with veterans, plan events and recruit their Lodge's support.



**We have Reps in 334 facilities, including:**

- 160 VA Medical Centers
- 125 State Veterans Facilities
- 37 Community Vets Centers
- 9 USOs
- And more!





# VAVS Activity Ideas



## Christmas outreach

- Gifts to veterans at Veteran's Administration (VA) Hospitals and homeless veterans' shelters.

## Annual VA Hospital Carnival

- Music, games, catered food, and special guests can attend!

## Wii Homerun Derby

- Video game tournament, with prizes and appearances from local baseball team.

## Ice Cream Social

- For veterans in residence at the VA or just visiting for the day. Schedule this once a month!







# More VAVS Activity Ideas



## Steak Luncheon for Hospitalized and Homeless Veterans

- Treat hospitalized and homeless veterans to a nice steak dinner.

## Clothing Collection

- Donate clothing and supplies to VA facilities and other veterans facilities.

## Super Bowl Party

- For residents of a VA Community Living Center.

## Annual Baby Shower for Female Veterans

- Partner with the VA to support this party where moms and kids get the supplies they need.





# Freedom Grants

In 2017-18, the Elks National Veterans Service Commission will award 200 Freedom Grants of \$2,000 each.

- Freedom Grants are competitive and awarded to Lodges whose projects are judged to best serve the needs of today's veterans and/or active-duty military members.
- Applications online July 1, 2017, and due July 31, 2018 at 12 p.m. (noon) Central Time.

**Increase your Lodge's chance of approval!**

- Elks participation is a must.
- Direct interaction with veterans/ military families is ideal.
  - Ongoing projects are better than one-time events.
  - Projects should focus on serving veterans in need.







# Freedom Grants In Action



Elks at Eugene, Ore., Lodge No. 357 partnered with the VA to bring dental care to veterans attending the annual Stand Down. In addition to helping with organization and buying supplies, Elks staffed the full-day event, processed all the paperwork, assisted veterans and coordinated appointments.



Raleigh, NC, Lodge No. 735 partnered with Project Healing Waters to provide fly fishing supplies to veterans in recovery. Elks hosted meals during winter and provided space for veterans to learn to build their own fly fishing equipment.



Lake Hopatcong, NJ, Lodge No. 782 holds a year-long Operation Outreach program, with a Thanksgiving dinner and summer picnic for homeless veterans and veterans with disabilities. They also provide handmade blankets, clothing, and personal care items to the veterans.





# Veterans Leather Program

The Veterans Leather Program relies on the charity of hunters across the nation to donate hides.

- In 2016-17, more than 17,700 hides were donated and used to create thousands of gloves and therapy kits for veterans at no charge.
- Leather Program volunteers attend VA Adaptive Sports Events and distribute free gloves to veterans in wheelchairs.
- VAVS Representatives can order gloves and craft kits for veterans they serve!





# Welcome Home Initiative

In September 2015, the Elks signed a partnership with the VA and pledged to help end veteran homelessness. Join the fight against veteran homelessness! Not sure where to start?

- The VA: every VA Medical Center has at least one person on staff whose job is to focus on homeless veterans.
- Nonprofits: national groups like Volunteers of America, Catholic Charities and the Salvation Army have veterans outreach programs.
- Veterans Organizations: independent and local groups, vets rehabilitation and/or transitional centers and shelters.
- Cities and counties: many municipalities have Veterans Affairs departments.







# Part 1: Welcome Home Kits

Most formerly homeless veterans move into their homes with nothing. Elks can help by building **Welcome Home Kits**.

- Gather things like sheets, towels, dishes and cleaning supplies. Items can be new or used, donated or purchased.
- Hold a supply drive in the community to collect common items.
- Partner with local veterans homes/centers, or contact the ENVSC to be put in touch with veterans in need of kits at your local VA.
- Submit your receipts and the ENVSC will reimburse your Lodge up to \$200 for each Welcome Home Kit you donate.





# Part 2: Elks Emergency Assistance Program



This program is only available in the following cities:

Chicago	New York
Seattle	Miami-Dade
San Francisco	San Diego
Los Angeles / Loma Linda	
Washington, D.C.	

Veterans registered with and receiving services from the Department of Veterans Affairs in these 8 areas can apply for one-time monetary assistance to prevent homelessness or secure a home.

- Uses include rent and security deposits, mortgage and utilities.
- Forms must be signed by the veteran and by a VA employee.
- Intended to help with prevention of homelessness, and to help veterans exit homelessness.
- Run out of the Chicago ENVSC-office.





# Part 3: Extra Focus on Areas of Greatest Need

Select Lodges are eligible for Welcome Home grants to serve veterans experiencing homelessness.

- Applications for these grants available online July 1 to May 31.
- These 8 urban areas were chosen by the VA because they have the highest number of homeless veterans.
- Lodges outside these areas are encouraged to use other Lodge Grants to serve homeless veterans.



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San Diego

New York  
Miami-Dade  
Los Angeles

Washington, D.C.  
San Francisco  
Loma Linda





# Independent Partnerships



## Bugles Across America

- This organization provides veterans and their families with a formal recognition of their service by providing live taps at veterans' funerals. The ENVSC provides financial support to help recruit, train and organize buglers across the country. Many Elks are volunteers!



## Chicago Stand Downs

- Following our members' example, Elks HQ staff and Elks Scholarship recipients gather twice a year to help organize and volunteer at these summer and winter events for homeless veterans.



## Re-Creation

- This performance group is dedicated to providing entertainment for veterans in veterans facilities across the country. The ENVSC provides financial support and covers the group's housing costs.





# Adaptive Sports Events

Through these events, the VA and other partners offer veterans the chance to improve their health through sports and art, learn new skills and socialize with other veterans. The ENVSC assists by sponsoring 5 of these events. Local volunteers often volunteer, host dinners and provide their own support. Leather Program volunteers also attend to distribute gloves.

**Veterans Winter Sports Clinic**

**Veterans Golden Age Games**

**Veterans Wheelchair Games**

**Veterans Summer Sports Clinic**

**Veterans Creative Arts Festival**





# Volunteer Outreach

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Volunteers are our greatest asset! Our goal is to provide Elks with the information, tools and resources they need to stay engaged and take action.

- **Visit [www.elks.org/vets](http://www.elks.org/vets) to get the latest news!**
- While there, sign up to get our monthly e-newsletter. (Lodge Veterans Chairs and VAVS Reps and Deps already receive this.)
- The Elks Volunteer Resource Center has links to leather and glove order forms, Playing Cards order forms, Freedom Grant reports, resources lists for veterans in need, instructional guides, and more.
- Connect with your State Veterans Chair and volunteers in your state.

**Follow us on social media!**



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@ElksVets







# The End

