

Elks

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"Elks Care, Elks Share"

**Grand Lodge
Public Relations
Committee**

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The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is one of the oldest and largest private organizations in the United States, formally meeting since February 16, 1868. Fifteen actors and entertainers attended that first meeting in New York City. The organization has since grown to nearly 1.3 million men and women in 2,200 local "Lodges" throughout the country, embracing all occupations and professions.

The organization's philanthropic bent grew out of the founders' desire to assist members in need and young actors who were out of work. In 1871, the Elks staged a benefit for the Chicago Fire, and the organization has responded to every major disaster since then, from the Seattle fire and Johnstown flood in 1889, to the Oklahoma City bombing of 1995 and the Red River flooding of 1997. This in addition to the community service that has become an Elks tradition.

The Order is best noted for its work with youths. The Elks annually award scholarships at the local, state and national levels and sponsor activities such as the Elks "Hoop Shoot," Drug Awareness programs, Scouting, Little League, summer camps and in-home treatment for children with disabilities.

Of the many additional prides in Elkdom, two stand tall. The first is the patriotism displayed by the Order. In 1907, the Elks became the first fraternal organization to observe Flag Day on June 14. More than 40 years later, President Harry S. Truman, a member of the Order, declared the date a national observance.

The second is the promise made in World War I that disabled American veterans would never be forgotten. The Order of Elks supplied and equipped the first two field hospitals in France. For returning wounded, the Elks constructed a hospital in Boston and then donated it to the War Department. This was the only veterans hospital donated by a private entity after World War I.

The Order's history of patriotism and service has set the tone for the modern Lodge. As they have since 1868, the Elks continue to make a difference in their communities, their states and their country.



The Elks National “Hoop Shoot®” Program

The Elks National “Hoop Shoot” free throw shooting contest is the largest and most visible of the many youth activities sponsored by Elks lodges throughout the country. More than three million boys and girls from ages 8 to 13 participate each year.

The Elks “Hoop Shoot” has served to highlight the Elks’ national commitment to youth. But the program started originally as a local Elks activity in Corvallis, Oregon, in 1946.

Out of that local program grew the national competition. Each of the more than 2,200 Lodges was encouraged to establish its own local contest involving boys from ages 8 to 13. From the local area, contestants would advance through district, state, regional and national competitions.

In the first year, 1971, boys from 19 states participated. Two years later in 1973, more than 750,000 boys from 42 states took part in the contest. In the following year, girls joined the competition, and the program has continued to expand ever since. All 50 states and the District of Columbia are represented.

From the millions of youngsters who participate, six champions are named — one boy and one girl in each of three age groups: 8-9, 10-11 and 12-13. The winners each receive a trophy, and their names are inscribed at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. Past champions include N.B.A. star Chris Mullin, former North Carolina State star Jennifer Howard, and Major League infielder Chris Snopce. The competition to become a champion is tough. At each level, contestants take a total of 25 free throws. National finalists average around 90 percent.

Families participate with contestants throughout the competition. The parents of finalists on the state, regional and national levels attend the competitions as guests of the Elks.

The Elks “Hoop Shoot” has been effective not only in developing champions, but character as well. Educators and parents have endorsed the program. One parent wrote, “It teaches a person how to win in good grace and how to accept the moment of defeat without bitterness.”

The Elks “Hoop Shoot” Contest is funded entirely by the Elks National Foundation, the primary charitable arm of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America.



Elks and the Nation's Defense

In service to America since 1868, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks has much to be proud of, but the membership considers its contributions to the Armed Forces and our country's veterans as one of its proudest achievements.

World War I

The Elks patriotism and generosity helped the nation to victory in World War I. In 1917, the Grand Lodge created the War Relief Commission and endowed it with \$2 million to finance activities. The commission organized and equipped the first two base hospitals to reach France, Unit 41 staffed by faculty and alumni from the University of Virginia, and Unit 46 with the same group from the University of Oregon.

To accommodate the maimed and wounded, the Elks built a 700-bed Reconstruction Hospital and gave it to the War Department in 1918. That same year, the Order built a 72-room Community House to take care of the families visiting the 40,000 soldiers stationed at Camp Sherman, Ohio. They also volunteered to build another hospital in New Orleans, but the government declined the offer, saying that it wasn't needed at that time.

During the war, the Salvation Army was severely handicapped in its great work for the servicemen by lack of funds. To make sure that this work continued, the Elks' War Relief Commission and the subordinate Lodges of the Order undertook campaigns to raise funds for the Salvation Army, and on many occasions assumed the entire cost of these undertakings. In addition, the commission at Christmastime in 1918 gave the Salvation Army \$60,000 to continue its work.

The commission made 40,000 rehabilitation, vocational and educational loans to disabled veterans who were ineligible for government help or awaiting approval of their applications. All loans were repaid except in a few cases where death or other intervening causes made it impossible. This service was so effective that the government followed the Order's example. They set up a revolving fund and took over this activity. This was the precursor to the GI Bill.

More than 70,000 Elks served in the armed forces during World War I. More than 1,000 paid the supreme sacrifice.

World War II

The Elks, directed by its National Defense Commission and its War Commission, gave total effort throughout the war. By the time hostilities ceased, the Grand Lodge had spent more than \$1.5 million, while the subordinate Lodges spent hundreds of thousands of dollars more.

Local Lodges aided in the recruitment of Army flying cadets. More than 400 Lodges conducted refresher courses that qualified thousands of young men for training.

In 1942, the Adjutant General asked for help in recruiting 45,000 men for Air Corps ground crews. Again the Lodges responded and set up a program that recruited 97,000 men. Because of their previous record, the Secretary of the Navy asked for help in recruiting for the Naval Air Corps. Once again the Elks came through.

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Elks and the Nation's Defense (continued)

During 1943, there was a critical shortage of construction specialists in the armed services. The Elks were the only organization asked to help recruit personnel. And due to the Elks' efficiency and enthusiasm, the required numbers of Army Engineers and Navy Seabees were obtained three months ahead of schedule.

The Merchant Marine notified the Elks War Commission that there was a shortage of reading materials for their men on board ships. Once again the Elks, with the characteristic generosity of their subordinate Lodges, accepted the challenge. Within a short time, more than 500,000 books were collected and donated to the Merchant Marine, which probably gave them the world's largest floating library.

Servicemen also enjoyed the hospitality of the 155 Elks fraternal centers that were stationed throughout the country. More than one million GIs were guests at the New York City Center.

Thousands of gift boxes containing smoker's supplies, candy and personal hygiene items were sent to the fighting men, while thousands of slippers were distributed to hospitalized servicemen.

Korea and Vietnam

When a shooting war broke out in Korea in 1950, the Elks responded by sending the gift packs as they had done in World War II. The same was done in 1965 for those involved in the Vietnam War.

In 1951 during the Korean War, the Secretary of Defense appealed to the Order for help in procuring blood for our wounded. Within a few months, the Elks Lodges obtained more than half a million pints.

During the Vietnam War, the Defense Department was concerned with the morale of our 400,000 troops fighting communist aggression because of the anti-American sentiments being reported on the home front. After much discussion, it was decided that a "Letters from Home" campaign would help counteract all the negative acts emanating from this country.

The Elks again answered the call and flooded these fine young men with letters expressing our gratitude for the sacrifices they were making for our country.

Operation Desert Storm

As our fighting men and women were defending the sanctity of life from the sands of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to Iraq, the Elks once again mounted a letter-writing campaign thanking these patriots for their dedication to duty. Gift packs were also sent as in previous conflicts.



Remembering Our Nation's Veterans

In 1946 the Elks made the solemn pledge: "So Long as There are Veterans in Our Hospitals, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Will Never Forget Them."

The Elks provide year-round entertainment and recreation at each of the country's Veterans Administration medical centers. These activities are sponsored by the Elks National Veterans Service Commission in cooperation with the state Elks associations and the local Elks Lodges. The Elks treat patients to parties, barbecues, sports celebrity nights and other entertainment. They take those who can get about to sporting events and on fishing trips, picnics and other outings.

The Order supports occupational therapy programs. The Elks collect and distribute to veterans hospitals tons of leather hides, furs, rooster feathers, old clocks and watches, jewelry and electrical appliances.

Lodges collect and distribute hundreds of thousands of decks of playing cards, games, magazines, books and videos to veterans hospitals.

The Elks were among the first fraternal organizations to formally welcome home the returning veterans from Operation Desert Storm. Subordinate Lodges held appropriate functions recognizing the veterans sacrifices and thanking them for their commitment to duty.

That Elks hold veterans in high esteem is evident by their actions. When the Order opened its National Headquarters and Memorial Building in 1926, it was dedicated to the fighting men of World War I. In 1946, they rededicated the edifice to those who saw service in World War II. Again in 1976, this honor was bestowed on those who paid the sacrifice in Korea and Vietnam. The recognition by the Elks of those patriots who served in Vietnam was a full 10 years before the United States government or any other organization recognized their sacrifices to America. Once again the Elks led the way. The Order rededicated the Memorial a third time in 1994 to those Americans who served in all our nation's conflicts since Vietnam.

As long as the Elks exist, our veterans who need help will be provided for.



Elks and Americanism

The Order of Elks has always prided itself on its Americanism. One of the requirements for membership is American citizenship. The national organization and its subordinate Lodges foster Americanism in many ways.

The Order promotes American principles of individual freedom, opportunity and dignity. The Elks also make a valiant attempt to motivate people to safeguard these principles and develop pride in and understanding of the United States.

Elks Lodges furnish or display what they term the "Heritage Corner," replicas of such historic documents as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, the Monroe Doctrine, the Gettysburg Address, and the Elks resolutions of Law and Order and Declaration of American Principles.

At the Grand Lodge session in 1907, the members adopted a resolution designating June 14 as Flag Day. In 1911 the Grand Lodge mandated all subordinate Lodges to observe Flag Day with appropriate ceremonies, making the Elks the first fraternal organization to require observance of Flag Day with appropriate ceremonies.

Many Lodges give or sell flags to worthy groups and educate them in proper flag etiquette. Some Lodges even provide flags for newly sworn citizens, while other Lodges give flags to their local schools for display in the classroom.

The Elks salute law and order through special programs and awards. They honor law enforcement officers for their unselfish work. They also recognize the news media for fairness and objectivity in reporting.

These programs, along with our youth work, Drug Awareness Program and charitable endeavors, permit us to justifiably proclaim "The Elks Are Distinctively American."



B.P.O. Elks – How It All Began

The moving spirit for the Elks was an Englishman named Charles Algernon Sidney Vivian. Born October 22, 1842, this son of a clergyman was a successful comic singer and dancer in the music halls of London. In November 1867, Vivian arrived in New York City to try his fortune.

Other actors and entertainers soon gravitated toward his magnetic personality. With everything closed on Sunday because of New York City Blue Laws, a group of theatrical people began meeting for their own amusement under Vivian's leadership. A loose organization was formed to make sure the larder was well stocked for these gatherings. They called themselves the Jolly Corks, a name derived from a trick introduced by Vivian in which the uninitiated purchased a round of refreshments.

When one of their members died shortly before Christmas in 1867, leaving his wife and children destitute, the Jolly Corks decided that in addition to good fellowship, they needed a more enduring organization to serve those in need. On February 16, 1868, they established the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks and elected Vivian to head it.

Its social activities and benefit performances increased the popularity of the new Order. Membership grew rapidly. Elks traveling to other cities spread the word of the Brotherhood of Elks. Soon there were requests for Elks Lodges in cities other than New York. In response to these appeals, the Elks asked the New York State legislature for a charter authorizing the establishment of a Grand Lodge with the power to establish local Lodges anywhere in the United States. When the Grand Lodge Charter was issued, the founders then received the first local charter as New York Lodge No. 1 on March 10, 1871.

Dissension soon erupted. Legitimate actors headed by George F. McDonald wanted to restrict membership to the theatrical profession. This view was opposed by Vivian and his friends. Taking advantage of Vivian's absence due to an out-of-town engagement, the McDonald group summarily expelled Vivian and several of his closest friends. Years later the Order rectified this illegal act, but it gave rise to a controversy whether Vivian was actually the founder of the Order. In 1897, a formal inquiry firmly established his right to this honored title.

Vivian continued, after his expulsion from the Order, to enchant audiences across the country. He starred with some of the largest road companies of the time. Together with his actress wife, the former Imogene Holbrook, Vivian set up a repertoire theater in Leadville, Colorado. Shortly thereafter he died of pneumonia on March 20, 1880. In 1889, the Elks moved his body from Leadville, Colorado, to Mt. Hope Cemetery, Boston, Massachusetts. Mrs. Vivian received a stipend from the Order her husband founded until her death in 1931.

The legacy of Charles Vivian continues to this day. In addition to aiding members in distress, the Elks raise money for children with disabilities, college scholarships, youth projects and recreational programs for patients in veterans hospitals.

On June 14, 1907 the Order held a Flag Day observance. This tradition later was declared a national holiday by President Harry S. Truman.

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B.P.O. Elks – How It All Began (continued)

During World War I, the Elks funded and equipped the first two field hospitals in France and built a 72-room community house in Camp Sherman, Ohio, and a 700-bed rehabilitation hospital in Boston, which they turned over to the War Department. They also raised money for the Salvation Army's frontline canteens.

Their loans to 40,000 returning veterans for college, rehabilitation and vocational education were the precursor of the GI Bill.

When World War II broke out, the Elks were the only civilian organization asked to help recruit construction workers for the military, a task that was completed three months ahead of schedule. The Elks also contributed more than half a million books to the Merchant Marines so that their men would have reading material on board ship.

The Korean War again brought out the best in the Elks. They donated more than half a million pints of blood to help wounded soldiers.

When the wounded from Vietnam needed help, the Elks responded. They provided the funds for a recreation pavilion at the Navy Hospital on Guam. The wounded at Tripler Medical Center in Hawaii were sweltering in the heat. When the Elks heard of their plight, they purchased 24 air-conditioning units so these patriots could recuperate in some degree of comfort.

When "Operation Desert Storm" took place, the Elks again led the support for our fighting men and women in the Persian Gulf. Subordinate Lodges undertook letter-writing campaigns to help keep up the spirits of the defenders of freedom. The Elks were also among the first to welcome them home and thank them for a job well done.

Our story is long; our work is humble; our history is proud. As long as there are those who need our help, the Elks will be there to give aid and comfort.



The Order of Elks and Youth Work

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks have always known that our youths are the future of this country. Therefore, the Elks spend much time and effort working with young people.

More than 10 million youths participate in Elks-sponsored programs like the Elks National "Hoop Shoot®" Free Throw Contest, Scouting, Boys and Girls Clubs, and on more than 3,000 youth athletic teams.

Lodge facilities in hundreds of cities and towns serve as youth centers. Club rooms are used for dances, entertainment, meetings, hobby shows and other organized activities.

Many of the Elks State Associations own and operate their own camps for children with disabilities or who are financially disadvantaged.

The Elks National Foundation, the major philanthropic endeavor of the Order, annually awards more than \$3 million in college scholarships each year to graduating high school seniors. These grants are given regardless of race, creed or national origin based on need, scholarship and leadership.

The first week in May each year is Elks National Youth Week, during which the Elks recognize young people for their achievements and contributions to their community. Youth Week programs traditionally feature student government days, essay and poster contests, junior fairs, parades and other entertainment. In many communities, the highlight of the week is the award presentation to winners of the annual "Most Valuable Student" scholarship contest.

Every year, the Elks National "Hoop Shoot®" Free Throw Contest continues to grow. More than three million boys and girls from 8 to 13 compete annually. The national finals are held at the Springfield, Massachusetts, Civic Center in May. The names of the six national champions are inscribed on a plaque in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield.

One of the strongest activities in Elkdom has been the Drug Awareness Program. Hundreds of Lodges sponsor their own clinics, seminars and workshops to educate youths and adults. The program targets fourth- through ninth-graders. Since the program's inception in 1985, the Elks have printed and distributed, free of charge, more than 100 million pieces of educational literature.

The proverb "It takes a village to raise a child" has become a buzz phrase recently. But for the Elks, it was no revelation. They've been practicing this belief for years.



The Elks Drug Awareness Program

Founded in 1983, the Elks Drug Awareness Education Program is a logical extension of the Elks long-standing commitment to youth activities. The program is designed to impart knowledge of the dangers of drug use to youths and their parents.

"We knew we were not the experts," says the founding director of the program, Dick Herndobler of Ashland, Oregon, "but we had the resources to obtain accurate and credible information, and we had the facility to distribute the material." The Elks Lodges occupy a place in their communities that makes them an ideal catalyst, able to bring together diverse groups with a common objective, Herndobler notes.

Working closely with such groups as the National Family Partnership and the Parents Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE), the Elks have been able to not only continue their program, but to expand it. To date, the Elks Drug Awareness Education Program has printed and distributed more than 110 million pieces of literature, free of charge, in the ongoing campaign. Information has been derived from the groups with which the Order works. The Elks are also part of a greater coalition that includes the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, the U.S. Department of Education, DEA, FBI, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. State Department, United Nations Drug Control Programs and many other federal and state agencies.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks sponsor more than 7,000 programs every year, reaching more than six million children and two million parents. Especially in today's environment of alcohol and other drug use by youths, positive and productive alternatives are needed. The Elks "Hoop Shoot" Free Throw Contest attracts more than three million boys and girls annually. Throughout the country, Elks sponsor athletic teams, Scout and Campfire groups, Boys and Girls Clubs, and promote youth activities in myriad ways.

Investing in the future of our country by providing opportunities for children has always been a hallmark of the Order of Elks.



America's Promise: The Elks' Commitment to America's Youth

President Bill Clinton and the other organizers of The President's Summit for America's Future knew what they were doing when they invited the B.P.O. Elks to attend their bipartisan summit in Philadelphia April 27 to 29, 1997. Responding to a call to action by President Bill Clinton and former President George Bush, the Elks offered seven specific commitments to America's youth. Speaking on behalf of the more than 1.2 million men and women of the Elks, former Elks National President Gerald Coates pledged that the Elks would:

- Sponsor drug-free proms and/or graduation parties in 2,000 communities by the year 2000.
- Develop weekly after-school programs at 1,000 Elks Lodges by the year 2000.
- Develop mentoring relationships with at least 10 at-risk kids in each of the Elks' 2,217 local Lodge communities by the year 2000.
- Mobilize at least 275,000 kids as partners in the Elks' community service every year.
- Commit \$34.9 million a year in support of Scouting, athletic programs, Elks "Hoop Shoot," and other youth organizations and programs.
- Commit \$12.1 million a year in aid and treatment for children with disabilities and drug education and prevention programs by the year 2000.
- Commit \$6.5 million a year in College Scholarships, based on need, leadership, and scholastic ability, by the year 2000.

The Elks have already fulfilled their commitment to Youth Activity funding, and former National President Coates has reported significant progress on the organization's other commitments, as well.

"We're educating our members and creating new programs," said Coates. "By the year 2000, I'm confident our members will respond and fulfill all of our commitments."

Colin Powell, Chairman of America's Promise, the organization created to propel the mission and goals of the Summit, has cited the work of the Elks and other commitment-makers in his Annual Report to the Nation. For more information, visit the Elks "Commitment to Youth" web site at <http://www.elks.org/youth>.





The Elks National Foundation

PGER John F. Malley first mentioned the idea of an Elks Charitable Trust during a banquet at Meriden, Connecticut, Lodge on February 21, 1927. His plan called for the creation and maintenance of a permanent charitable and philanthropic fund, fueled completely by voluntary donations. There would be no taxes or levies, direct or indirect.

Malley's dream became reality the following year when he was serving as Grand Exalted Ruler. At the 1928 annual convention, the Grand Lodge started the Elks National Foundation with an initial \$100,000 grant. A second \$100,000 grant soon followed. Since then, the Foundation has received more than \$120 million in contributions and bequests from individuals, Lodges, state associations and other supporters of its charitable, educational and philanthropic activities.

The guidelines by which the Foundation was established state that the principal can never be touched. Donations go directly into the Foundation's Principal Fund and only the income earned on this fund is used to support charitable programs. All contributions to the Foundation are deductible for federal income and estate tax purposes.

The Elks National Foundation is administered by a board of seven trustees, all Past Grand Exalted Rulers. The board's powers and duties include the custody, investment and preservation of the funds of the Foundation; the duty to secure and receive accretions thereto; and the authority to apply the income therefrom as it may become available to such charitable, educational and benevolent purposes as they may determine.

Upon the death of PGER Malley in 1966, the Foundation trustees moved the Foundation to the national headquarters in the Elks Memorial Building in Chicago. They also appointed a director to oversee the administration of the Foundation's day-to-day operations. The funds dispersed by the Elks National Foundation are used for a variety of philanthropic purposes including:

- Scholarships
- State Elks Association grants
- The Elks Drug Awareness Program
- The Elks National Veterans Service program
- Youth activity programs such as "Hoop Shoot"
- The Elks National Home in Bedford, Virginia.

For more information, visit the Elks National Foundation web site at <http://www.elks.org/enf>.