November is for giving thanks, remembrance

Our promise to our veterans is not an idle pledge. Over the years, our Lodges nationwide and their Members have honored our pledge and have donated 10’s of millions of dollars in cash and in-kind contributions for those who gave so much to preserve our freedom. While our support to our nation’s veterans is ongoing throughout the year, November is designated by our Order as Veterans Remembrance Month.

Your Lodge should have an active Veterans Committee, dedicated to meeting the needs of veterans and military members in your community. During Veterans Remembrance Month, it is a time to remember, a time to say thank you to those who have served our country. Wherever veterans are institutionalized, the monotony of their day-to-day existence will be eased by personal visits by your Lodge Members and their spouses. These visits bring cheer and comfort to veterans confined to VA medical centers and other veterans facilities.

But for many their struggles are not over. Their battles are not yet won. We as Elks need to provide hope and comfort to veterans or active military members, many of whom are not confined in VA hospitals, but are using outpatient clinics as well as those who live alone and have no family or friends to assist them in their time of need. We can also assist homeless veterans to return to the society he or she helped protect, as well as reach out to those veterans residing in assisted-care living centers.

As the needs of today’s veterans have changed, so has our programs. Today the Elks National Veterans Service Commission has many new exciting activities to share with your Lodge.

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Help provide care for Elks Memorial

Originally dedicated in 1926 to the memory of the fallen Elks of World War I, the Veterans Memorial Building is at the heart of Elkdom. Magnificently constructed in Chicago, the Memorial is a breathtaking structure representing the values Elks cherish. Through the years, the Memorial has been rededicated to honor the memory of American Veterans who have died for our great nation. Our duty is to ensure this Memorial remains an extraordinary symbol of the bravery and patriotism of these Veterans.

By making an individual or Lodge 501(c)3 donation, you will assist in the perpetual care and continued restoration of this beautiful Memorial. Go to www.elks.org and click “Veterans Memorial” on the home screen. Take the virtual tour, read about the history, plan a visit, make an online donation or mail a donation to the national headquarters today.

Promote Elks through civic activities

By ANDREW COSTELLO Committee Member

The words of our Past Grand Exalted Ruler Michael Smith have often been echoed: “Be Loud and Proud.”

We have heard those words repeated many times, but to some only when we have a blockbuster event like finding a new way to Mars or turning dust into gold. Only then, they contend, will we have something to boast about. That’s not what those words are telling us. Every Lodge nationwide does many things to be proud of each and every week of the year. Many are not blockbuster events but nevertheless benefit the community and involve activities you can be proud of.

So what are some of those many things that go on in every Lodge that we can talk about…that we can brag about to our communities via the internet and media? You might be surprised at some of the news that is of interest to both our Members and the people of the community. Ask yourself: Did your Lodge participate in a community event such as a parade or Flag Day? Were you a participant in a flag retirement program, a veterans tribute, or some other community event? Did your Exalted Ruler attend a convention or a mid-year meeting? How about a visit to your Lodge from a District Deputy or Vice President? Who were the new Officers installed in your Lodge? Did you initiate a new Member, or 10 new Members? Did you use an ENF Gratitude Grant to assist a needy family? Did you provide a lunch?
for some veterans, host a blood drive or give out dictionaries to third-graders, have a dinner to honor some firefighters or police officers, host a Scout meeting, or raise funds for your major project? The list goes on and on.

We do so many good things that we sometimes forget just how meaningful they are to so many people in the community. Many events by themselves may not qualify as blockbuster happenings and not worth bragging about. But when they are posted on the internet or published by the media and then collectively shown in our reports, they become a brilliant beacon for Elkdom in your communities and throughout the nation.

Publicizing our good works has never been easier than it is today. We have online newspapers, community billboards, the social media, along with a growing number of local weekly hard-copy newspapers that are interested in just the kind of news we can provide. Just take a closer look at all the good things your Lodge is doing for the community and the less fortunate. Those are all accomplishments that are newsworthy and meaningful to your neighbors in the community.

Remember to be loud and proud of those accomplishments, and then watch for the wonderful effect they will have on growing membership, increasing Lodge Activities and improving Member retention.

programs and partnerships catering to veterans and military members, including the Army of Hope, the Welcome Home Program and the Veterans Affairs Volunteer Service Program. In addition, the Elks National Foundation provides Freedom Grants, enabling Lodges to harness the Elks’ passion for serving veterans and military members and to expand your Lodges’ Veterans Programs.

For more information about these programs and the Elks Veterans Service Commission, please visit www.elks.org/vets.

I am certain your Lodge has scheduled special events during the November for Veterans in our VA hospitals, soldiers homes and other VA facilities to benefit the unsung heroes of our nation, and demonstrate that “Elks” continue “Leading the Way.”

Donna and I wish you a very happy Thanksgiving. May God bless you, our veterans and the men and women who are serving in the Armed Forces around the globe.

Thank you for being an Elk and for Caring and Sharing.

Follow our travels at https://travelsofgermikezellen.wordpress.com/
Elks featured in Smithsonian online exhibit

The Order of Elks has received a welcome public relations boost with the launch of a virtual exhibit at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum, in which the Elks are prominently featured. The exhibit includes a 1,500-word overview of the Elks, accompanied by a dozen images, as part of “America’s Mailing Industry – Powered by the United States Postal Service.”

The BPOE was among the organizations selected for the exhibit because of its extensive reliance on the mail over the years to deliver The Elks Magazine.

The exhibit was opened at a reception in Washington, DC, on September 13. Call up Elks.org and click on the link on the right side of the page under “News and Events” titled “The Order has just been featured at the Smithsonian National Postal Museum...” No log-in is required.

How much exposure the Elks will reap from the exhibit is anyone’s guess, but the Smithsonian Institution annually attracts 10s of millions of people, many of whom likely visit the website, where the Elks feature is posted.

The Elks feature will remain on the Smithsonian’s website indefinitely as an exhibit.

Antlers program is fertile ground for membership

By RICHARD E. LARKIN
Committee Member

With our membership at a 30-year low, we as Elks should ask ourselves what can be done to stem this tide. One answer would be to encourage our youth and future members by joining the Antlers Program.

The program’s major objectives are: To quicken the spirit of American Patriotism; to teach respect for parents and love of home; to inculcate the fundamentals of good citizenship; to aid in a worthy cause; to establish foundation of character; to promote the welfare and enhance the happiness of its Members; and to respect the conviction of others in the matters of worship and religion is true Americanism.

With mentoring from their Elks sponsors, these “junior” Elks, ages 12-20, learn what it means to become a member of the BPOE. The Antlers mirror their sponsors’ ritual and office structures while discovering the benefits of working together for the good of the Order. Antlers youths assist established benevolent programs and add their own civic programs.

The Antlers Program, while infusing new blood and ideas into an Elks Lodge, prepares youths for when they reach age 21 and can be initiated into the BPOE.

We are working to refine the Antlers Program process. For information log onto http://www.elks.org/grandlodge/activities/antlers.cfm for all the information required to start a program. The Grand Lodge Activities Committee is here to help.

In addition, we are pleased to announce that Antlers membership cards, a new logo and pins will be available in the near future. We are also developing a list of those existing Antlers Lodges nationwide. If you have an existing program or are just beginning to organize one, please let us know. If you have any other questions, feel free to contact me at rrlarkin@swbell.net.

Here’s hoping the Antlers Program will be one of the means to help bring our diminishing membership back to the plus side while our Lodges and communities benefit from youthful involvement.

Veterans remembrance, patriotic duty and Thanksgiving

By JAMES W. MARTSFIELD
Committee Chairman

November is for honoring our V.E.T.S. It is also the month to elect our legislators, and a time to be thankful for all we have.

V – Veterans Day – November is Veterans Remembrance Month, in which we remember our solemn pledge that “So Long As There Are Veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Will Never Forget Them.” Our Order is proud of its pledge to never forget the veterans in our hospitals. We also honor our servicemen and women whose sacrifices have preserved the freedoms we all enjoy. They are the heroes of our country. Let us also never forget the volunteers who make our programs so successful. The men and women who donate their time to make our Elks Veterans Program work are also heroes. Be sure to recognize and thank them.

E – Election Day – November is also significant because November 8 is Election Day. We as Elks have a duty to vote for and support candidates who hopefully share our dreams, morals, love of country, our pledge of allegiance and our American flag. Let us all remember that there are not just blue or red states, but red, white and blue United States.

Do you know your government officials? Do you set aside an evening when you honor your police officers and firefighters? Do you invite your government officials to your Lodge? Do you hold a legislative day at your capital? After the election, do you send a congratulatory letter to the newly elected and re-elected legislators, and city and county officials? Along with your letter, don’t forget to include your state and national Survey of Volunteer, Youth, Charitable and Community Service Programs.

T – Thanksgiving Day – This day is a time to give thanks to our Creator for the blessings bestowed on our families, the Elks and America. It’s time to thank our servicemen and women who are still in harms way while protecting our freedom. When we gather with friends and family may we be thankful this and every day for the many blessings of family, the fellowship of friends, Lodge Members and our beloved American heritage. Invite and welcome a veteran to your Thanksgiving celebration.

S – Support our military families – At tables nationwide, we will share our gratitude toward our men and women in uniform and their families for their sacrifices to keep our nation safe. Our military families offer strength and encouragement to our service members while managing the household, caring for children and putting the country and the military’s mission in front of their own desires and dreams.

The holidays can be very stressful for many of these families. Consider adopting a family and invite them to your Thanksgiving dinner or supply and deliver dinner to a family. Let’s not forget them during this holiday season, and please always remember that “Elks Care – Elks Share.”

The Grand Lodge Government Relations Committee wishes all Elks, your family and all the military families a happy and safe Thanksgiving.
Actions of Elks’ Veterans Service speak louder than words

By MARY K. MORGAN
Commission Director

In the non-profit world, the word support is often used and rarely defined. It’s a catch-all verb, and its casual use sometimes denotes a lack of action. People are content to share things on social media, slap a bumper sticker on their car or proudly declare their support, all without ever actually doing anything to advance that cause or solve that problem. The world of veterans’ service is no exception in this regard.

However, the Elks are part of an important program that counteracts this trend. Through the Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service program, or VAVS, hundreds of Elks are stationed in VA facilities across the nation, providing consistent, tangible service to the veterans who seek care there.

That’s no small feat. In the United States today, there are more than 21 million veterans, more than 9 million of whom receive health care at the VA. In a typical year, more than 6 million of those veterans visit a facility.

Nearly 60 years ago, the VA chose the words of Abraham Lincoln as their motto and mission, taken from a speech he’d given just weeks before his assassination. Lincoln charged the country with the responsibility “to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan.” That responsibility stands today. All kinds of veterans pass through the VA: young and old, male and female, rich and poor. They go seeking traditional healthcare, mental health treatment, physical therapy, assistance finding a home or even to learn an adaptive sport.

Through the VAVS program, Elks are stationed in places like VA Medical Centers, State Veterans Homes and even a few USOs across the country. These Elks host barbecues, organize job fairs, partner on Stand Downs, provide weekly recreation opportunities, offer much-

Americanism Essay Contest theme asks ‘Why vote?’

By ROBERT E. DRISKO
Committee Member

Voting, once a dream of our ancestors, was only available to white males after the War of Independence. Since then all adult citizens have the right to vote. The 14th and 15th constitutional amendments were passed after the Civil War to guarantee African Americans the right to vote, and the 19th amendment gave women that right. Many American citizens fought and gave their lives for the right to vote.

This year’s Americanism Essay Contest theme – “Why is it Important to Vote?” – asks the youth of America for their thoughts on exercising the right to vote in national, state or municipal elections. It should be very interesting to read the thoughts of our youth, who will become our leaders in future generations.

Now is the time for Lodges to ask schools to place the contest into their curriculum, and provide the schools with contest applications and all pertinent rules and deadlines, etc. Show that you are proud and patriotic Elks by offering the opportunity for students to express their thoughts on voting. Doing so will again show those in our communities that “Elks Care – Elks Share”!


Plaques for placing first, second and third will be awarded in Division I (fifth and sixth grades) and Division II (seventh and eighth grades). Winners will be announced at the Grand Lodge Session in Reno, Nevada, July 16-19, 2017.

ADOPT-A-VETERAN
to share your
Happy Thanksgiving
Veterans Day/Remembrance Month