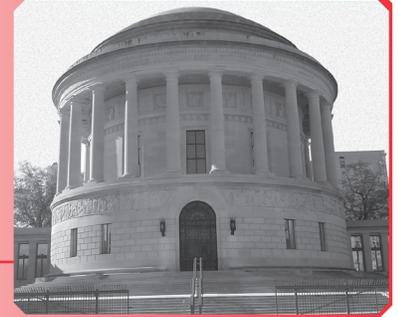




Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER

Elks Care – Elks Share



Be the Difference this holiday season

Season's greetings and happy holidays! Remember to be kind and compassionate to one another as you attend social events at your Lodges. It must be a time when we can be the best of who we are. Think of ways to serve your community by donating food or presents to less fortunate children and families, or giving veterans a gift or holiday card. What about hosting a breakfast with Santa? Keep in mind, giving is always better than receiving because at the end of the day, it's truly about putting our hearts toward enjoying family, friends, and service to others.

The Elks Memorial Service is to be held on the first Sunday of December. The ceremony is an occasion to honor all Elks



**Message from
the Grand
Exalted Ruler
BRYAN R.
KLATT**

who have passed away. It's a time to cherish the memory of those who recently left us, as well as rekindle the thoughts of those who left us long ago and remember how each served our Order.

An integral part of the ceremony and assisting us in remembering those Members

who have left us is our Eleven O'Clock Toast. The Toast symbolizes how we feel about our departed Elks. *"To our absent Members."* Does your Lodge do the Toast regularly?

**Membership! Membership!
Membership!**

The current Lodge year has less than four months until it's over. Have you achieved the membership goals you set at the start of your year? The goal of every Lodge is simple: a plus-1 in membership. It's not too late to form a committee to contact delinquent Members and ask them to re-up. How about one or two last efforts to get

Please see GER, Page 3

Per capita and fees set for 2026-2027

The Grand Lodge per capita and fees (GL dues) are now set for 2026-2027. These amounts are paid by Members along with their Lodge dues and are considered past-due on April 1, 2026.

The amounts are \$6.50 for GL Expenses & Operations, \$5.50 for Elks Magazine, and the Master Liability Insurance Program assessment remains a variable of \$17 to \$25 based on the Lodge's claim history and exposure. All total between \$29 to \$37 per Member.

**GRAND SECRETARY
Carl T. Seibert**

All Lodge Secretaries are required to have their Lodge dues and assessments updated in the dues and fees section of CLMS2 no later than December 23, 2025. Please ensure that your fraternal year 2026-2027 Lodge budget includes the correct amount for your Lodge.

The Memorial is closed to the public during the winter, but if you or someone you know plans to be in Chicago, email the Grand

Please see SECRETARY, Page 3

GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Small acts can make big impressions

By NICK BETTENCOURT
Committee Member

A young man asked me recently if I remembered giving him a pin when he was little. I did remember giving Lodge pins to the fifth graders that helped us with our Flag Day ceremony when I was serving as Exalted Ruler in 2008, but never thought much of it. But he remembers it as a big deal because an adult gave him something as a thank you, which had never happened before. He still has that pin to this day. That little pin made a difference that has lasted seventeen years so far.

With the challenge to *"Be The Difference,"* one begins to think: What can I do to make a difference, and what makes a difference? We can always make big swings for big impact but surprisingly, it is the smallest thing that makes the largest impression "for the influence of a good deed, honestly and promptly performed will continue forever."

The Grand Lodge Activities Committee has so many programs and great activities, especially for youth. Just including these

children and young adults into your day or taking the time as an adult to care, listen, and help can make an incredible impact.

When a child receives a dictionary through the Dictionary Project, it can be the first time ever that someone outside of their family gave them anything that they get to keep. Advice given to a young adult about honesty and integrity while learning the game of golf can stay with them forever. The expectation comes from someone who doesn't know them, their family, or their history. It is just a chance to live up to an expectation, not a challenge. Recognition of success and support through disappointments are just good and right and every kid deserves that.

Don't forget to make a difference with adults as well. While their child participates, take the opportunity to tell them about the many programs the Elks facilitate.

Perhaps one little thing will turn into many big things. Just because it isn't "your" program doesn't mean we can't promote others. What's

Please see ACTIVITIES, Page 3

GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

Take note of properly displayed flags for honor award

By JARED WANLASS
Committee Member

This year, the Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee is continuing the Certificate of Honor program. This award recognizes local businesses that demonstrate respect for our country by displaying and properly lighting the U.S. flag.

We encourage Lodges to give this award to businesses, neighbors, and merchants who show their patriotism. Discuss with your Members the proper way to display the flag and ask them to look for local businesses that do so as they move around the community. Members can then let the Lodge know about businesses that deserve a certificate.

As the 250th anniversary of the United States approaches on July 4, 2026,

communities everywhere will proudly display the flag. We encourage Members to connect with their neighbors, thank local businesses for their patriotism, and recognize those who always display the flag correctly.

You can fly the flag on a flagpole outside from sunrise to sunset. If a business wants to keep the flag up at night, it needs to be well lit. If the weather is bad, the flag should come down to prevent damage and show respect, unless it is an all-weather flag.

Once a flag is displayed correctly, the Lodge can initiate the process to recognize the business. You can find instructions and the certificate at elks.org.

The certificate is provided as a fillable PDF, allowing you to add the recipient's name and address. You can present the award at the

location where the flag is displayed or at a special ceremony at the Local Lodge. This recognition not only honors businesses and organizations for their patriotism but also helps build stronger community ties.

As Elks, we should lead by example by flying our flag and promoting patriotism by following the Flag Code. The U.S. flag should always be displayed above all others, properly lit, and retired with respect when it becomes too worn, ideally in a dignified manner, such as through a flag-burning ceremony.

Additional information about our nation's flag and other flags displayed in our Lodges can be found at elks.org, as well as usc.house.gov.

G/L PR AND MEMBERSHIP MARKETING COMMITTEE

Elks membership inspires a sense of belonging

By RICK GATHEN
Membership Marketing Director

The holidays bring light, warmth, and gratitude—but inside every Elks Lodge, the true glow comes from our Members. This season, we see what it really means to *Be The Difference* as Elks across the country deliver food baskets, visit veterans, and make sure no one spends the holidays alone.

Every act of kindness—big or small—reflects what makes the Elks so special: generosity, compassion, and belonging. Belonging to a place where you're known. Belonging to a cause bigger than yourself. Belonging to a family that stands together in service and friendship.

That sense of belonging is the greatest gift we can give or receive—and it's the foundation for growing strong Lodges. When we share what it means to be an Elk, we invite others to join a community of purpose and pride.

So, as we celebrate this season of giving, let's also renew our promise to each other and to the mission that binds us.

Be The Difference. Share the gift of belonging. Renew. Reinstate. Recruit. Initiate.

DRUG AWARENESS COMMISSION

Many drug awareness resources available

By FRANK J. BURR
Assistant National Director

On behalf of the Directors, Commissioners, State Chairs, Lodge Chairs, and all those Elks involved in the Drug Awareness Program, I want to wish you all the happiest of holiday seasons and a prosperous and healthy new year!

The Elks Drug Awareness Program has a treasure trove of resources for parents and grandparents. Our current Season 5 *Awkward Conversations* podcast, available on YouTube, is just an example. We also offer plenty of printed materials.

As the school year is in full swing across the nation, our partners at the DEA are proud to share an updated version of "Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Substance Use Prevention." Although this guide is now a year old, it is jam-packed with great information.

This guide, which was developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education, offers information that can help you raise children who understand the

risks of substance use. It includes:

- an overview of substance use among youth;
- descriptions of some substances;
- a look at risk factors and protective factors that help offset those risks;
- suggestions for how to talk to young people about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs, tailored to their age group; and
- tips on what to do if you suspect your child is using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs.

Great resources for families, schools, and community organizations are available at no charge at getsmartaboutdrugs.gov.

If you want hard copies of this guide for an event, please contact the Community Outreach Specialist for your DEA Field Division or your State Drug Awareness Chair.

My wife Cheryl, our National Director Bill Bryan and his wife Judy, Assistant Director Eddie Camarzan and his wife Molly, Assistant Director Henry Farnum and his wife Sandy, and I wish you all a very happy holiday season. Thanks for all that you do.

GOVERNMENT From Page 4

Remember, charitable reporting is essential and one of the keys to the survival of our great Order. The compiled statistics are used to make local, state, and

federal officials aware of the tremendous positive impact Elks have on their states, communities, and constituents.

Be The Difference in your state, district, and Lodge with timely, accurate charitable reports—it does matter!

GER From Page 1

those new applicants onto the membership rolls? Can you *Be The Difference* and show a membership gain this year?

In closing, Sue and I wish you and your family a very merry holiday season and a joyous new year, always keeping in mind that you can *Be The Difference* by promoting “*Elks Care—Elks Share.*”

SECRETARY From Page 1

Secretary's office to arrange a personal tour of the Memorial and Headquarters building. Season's greetings and happy holidays from your Grand Lodge staff.

MEMORIAL ANNIVERSARY

Since it was first dedicated in 1926, the Elks National Memorial Building and Headquarters has stood as a stunning symbol of the peace and patriotism of the Elks. Rising 96 feet above the shores of Lake Michigan, the awe-inspiring building is a distinctively American interpretation

of classical greatness, and a reminder of all who have come before us.

At the 2026 Elks National

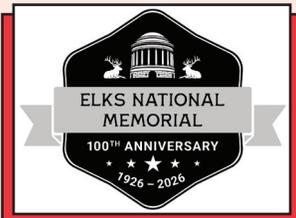
Convention, we will have a special opportunity to celebrate the 100th anniversary of this building and everything it means to the Order.

Join us in Chicago on Saturday, July 4, for a once-in-a-lifetime, ticketed anniversary celebration honoring this historic milestone. This one-hour outdoor event will include a special ceremony and tours of the building, bringing together Elks from across the nation. Seating is limited, and access will be managed through an online-only, digital ticket lottery.

Elks wishing to attend the ceremony must complete the online lottery entry between January 1–March 15, 2026. Phone calls will not be accepted as lottery entries. One entry per Elk. Lottery winners will receive two ceremony tickets and bus transportation.

Don't miss your chance to witness history! Enter the lottery and learn more about the ceremony at:

elks.org/memorial/Anniversary.cfm

**ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION****Spreading holiday cheer with CIP grants**

By **PATRICK ROELOFS**

ENF Communications Coordinator

Around the holidays, it's easy to imagine being in a town like Whoville: a place where every lamppost is dressed and the band marches in their Christmasy best, where holiday cheer and whimsy are a way of life. While this town from *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* may be fictional, one Elks Lodge is turning its own version of Whoville into a reality.

Using a Beacon Grant from the Community Investments Program worth \$4,000, Westminster, MD Lodge No. 2277 partners with a local nonprofit organization to host a Christmas giving event. The organization, Live Hope Laugh, is dedicated to making an impact on the lives of children and teenagers who live with chronic illnesses. Together, the two have hosted the event at the Westminster Lodge for 10 years.

When community members enter the Lodge's backyard, they step into another

world: a Christmas town with lights, wrapping paper, inflatables, s'mores, Santa Claus—even the Grinch! They are also treated to a magic show, a DJ set, and delicious holiday food.

But the magic of the Christmas town isn't the only way the Lodge helps spread holiday cheer. While the children keep the Grinch at bay, Lodge Members sneak away to the parking lot and load every car with gift baskets. Including food and presents from each family's individualized wish list, like sheets, bedding, socks, clothes, and school supplies, these gift baskets are the perfect way to send families home with hearts that have grown three sizes.

Last year, more than 300 people from 100 families were served at the event. This year, the Lodge expects to help even more people with the help of approximately 50 Lodge Members. Not every Lodge can create their own Christmas town, but no matter the project or the time of year, Elks are always there for their community.

ACTIVITIES From Page 1

good for the Elks is good for us all.

Remember, you don't have to be in the schools to run a program. You can have a youth day at a community field. Host the Soccer Shoot, set up a Drug Awareness table, hand out scholarship materials for the older kids and membership applications to the adults. Have Youth Nights at the Lodge and participate in the Americanism Essay

Contest, an indoor putting contest in the winter, and information for the parents about getting an Antlers program started—all at the same event. Reach out to 4-H clubs, church groups, after school programs, Members, and grandparents.

Make that little connection and engage the participants. It can grow into full-fledged, stand-alone events put on with the help of your brand-new Antlers Program. Do the little things and *Be The Difference!*

VETERANS From Page 4

In Canandaigua, New York, Voluntary Service Representative Michael Morrisey volunteers as a Red Coat Ambassador at the VA Medical Center. Red Coat Ambassadors help direct patients, providing information

and support to facilitate a good hospital experience. In addition to this work, Morrisey provides meals for the Psychosocial Rehab and Recovery Center, and delivers food to jump-start a recently established food pantry.

Finally, Elks at the Temple, TX Lodge No. 138 hosted veterans from the Temple VA Hospital for a Veterans Day lunch. Voluntary Service Representative Bonnie Wilson reported that the veterans were grateful for the outing and enjoyed the home-cooked meal. They also got to socialize with games like cornhole, horseshoes, dominos, and cards with Elks Members, including one Member who is also a WWII veteran.

Whether they're providing material needs or showing up as a friend, Elks continue to prove that the Voluntary Service program can meet veteran needs in multiple ways.

**100TH ANNIVERSARY
MERCHANDISE NOW AVAILABLE**

Celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Elks National Memorial by showing your Elks pride. Whether it's a shirt, hat or pin, your passion for the Elks will shine through.

dturin.com/elks-usa/100th-anniversary-national-memorial-merchandise

Volunteers share stories from VA service program events

By HANNAH GRABER
Programs Associate

Every month throughout the year, the ENVSC office reads reports from more than 400 voluntary service representatives across the country.

Some of these reports include photos, quotes, and lots of detail, while others will sum up hours of planning and volunteer time with short sentences like “Took veterans fishing and hosted bingo.” We know that for all our volunteers, whether they write a lot or a little, their main focus is serving our nation’s veterans.

Much like our volunteers, the program

itself is varied and adaptable to different regions and contexts. While the VA Voluntary Service program, now called the Center for Development and Civic Engagement, was the inspiration for the Elks program, our volunteers serve at all kinds of facilities. In fact, 44% of our volunteers serve in non-VA facilities like state Veterans’ Homes, vet centers, housing facilities for veterans, and rehabilitation centers.

Wherever veterans gather to access health-care and receive needed services, Elks are there to provide everyday events, holiday fun, and ongoing support. Here are a few stories

of our volunteers in action. Last Christmas season, Voluntary Service Representative Klairaine Nichwander was keeping busy in Missoula, Montana. After assisting a veteran and his family with their move to Missoula, she prepared to help with the Housing Montana Heroes Christmas dinner. One veteran named Mark asked if he could make a marzipan dessert for the event. Nichwander took him along on the grocery shopping trip so that he could pick out what he needed for his recipe.



Please see **VETERANS**, Page 3

Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary
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GRAND LODGE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Remember to submit fiscal reports, track charitable giving

By ROBERT COLIE
Committee Member

Here we are, almost done with three quarters of our Elks fiscal year, and you’re wondering how we’re doing in charitable reporting. Remember that our annual charitable giving goal for 2025-2026 is \$600 million. That seems like a large number, given that the Grand Lodge charitable giving reached just over \$520 million in 2024-2025.

Most states and Lodges are doing very well, so give yourselves a pat on the back. Contact your state chairperson to see up-to-date data

on where your Lodge stands. A review of the October Elks Magazine shows us 140 examples of the great charitable events our Lodges are doing in their communities.

However, there still is much to do as we look forward to closing out Fiscal Year 2025-2026. 114 Lodges have not submitted reports in the Grand Lodge Charitable Records System.

Most of these Lodges have data that can be seen in the system, but the final step to submit has not been taken by the Secretary or their delegate. State/district chairs and Exalted Rulers, please follow up to make sure your Lodges are compliant with our

reporting requirements. If you’re unsure of what is to be reported and where, please review the October 2025 Grand Lodge Newsletter. In the Grand Lodge Government Relations Committee article, Area 7 Committee Member Richard Stone gives a quick guide to what goes into each column of the charitable report. If you didn’t keep your hard copy, you can log into elks.org and go to the Grand Lodge section in the left column. You’ll find a listing of all the most recent newsletters there.

Please see **GOVERNMENT**, Page 2