



# Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER

*Elks Care – Elks Share*



## Deadlines approach for awards, financial filings

Happy 2026 to all our Elks family! January starts the last quarter of the Lodge year. Be sure to have your membership retention program working on achieving a +1 membership gain for 2026! Have your membership committee and delinquent Member sponsor reach out to those lapsed Members. This personal contact could very well bring these Members back on to our rolls. Our delinquent Members had a reason for joining and they are worth keeping as active Members. Find out why they are delinquent.

As the Lodge year is nearing the end, there is no better way to recognize those Members and citizens who have gone beyond the call of duty in their service to Elksdom than to award them with “Elk of the Year,” “Officer of the Year,” and “Citizen of the Year.” The awards request



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

form can be accessed in the Members Only section of [elks.org](http://elks.org) and needs to be submitted prior to March 31 so that the certificates can be printed and sent back to the Lodge for Officer installations or year-end award gatherings.

Also, the Legacy Award scholarship is available until February 2, 2026. It provides \$4,000 scholarships to the children and grandchildren of Elks Members. Details of

the scholarship can be found on the Elks National Foundation website.

The end of the Lodge fraternal year will be here soon. With the Financial Reporting System (FRS), your Lodge needs to ensure all entries are current. A bonus of having the FRS system is that your Lodge no longer needs to have the annual audit completed. However, you still must submit your 990 and 990T for each corporation in your Lodge. Have them completed by a qualified individual (e.g., CPA) and filed with the IRS and uploaded on [elks.org](http://elks.org).

Membership... Membership... Membership: There are three months left in this year. Initiate all your candidates and work on the delinquent list!

To *Be The Difference* means searching for ways to improve what we have while looking forward to the future.

## There’s no time like the present

**Lodge Secretaries:** The Order’s fifth consecutive membership gain might just rest on your shoulders!

Last check there were more than 10,000 candidates awaiting acceptance into a Lodge. We depend on you to manage

**GRAND SECRETARY  
Carl T. Seibert**

the sometimes time-consuming onboarding process and ask that you give this your undivided attention

as we enter the final quarter of our fiscal year. You are no doubt our unsung heroes and we can never thank you enough for everything you do!

Please also pay attention to those Members in the transfer portal. For a transfer into or out of your Lodge to be successfully counted, it must be approved and completed before March 31. The transfer procedure must be precisely followed and any variance

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## Anniversary lottery is now open

The new year has arrived and with it comes an exciting milestone: the lottery is officially open for the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Elks National Memorial.

The building has stood for a century as a remarkable tribute to the service and sacrifice of the nation’s veterans and the enduring spirit of Elksdom. In 2026, as part of the Elks National Convention in Chicago, we will honor this landmark with a special anniversary ceremony on Saturday, July 4.

### Enter the Lottery Today

Elks wishing to attend the anniversary ceremony may now enter the online-only ticket lottery, available January 1 through March 15, 2026. Please remember:

- One entry per Elk.
- Phone entries cannot be accepted.
- Lottery winners will receive two ceremony tickets and bus transportation to the event.
- The ceremony will feature a one-hour outdoor program and guided tours of the Memorial Building.



This once-in-a-lifetime celebration is expected to draw interest from across the country—don’t delay your entry. Full details and the lottery link are available at: [elks.org/memorial/Anniversary.cfm](http://elks.org/memorial/Anniversary.cfm).

### Commemorative Merchandise Still Available

As we move deeper into this anniversary year, Members can continue to show their Elks pride with official 100th Anniversary Memorial merchandise. Shirts, hats, pins, and additional items may be purchased at: [dturin.com/elks-usa/100th-anniversary-national-memorial-merchandise](http://dturin.com/elks-usa/100th-anniversary-national-memorial-merchandise).

Let us begin 2026 with gratitude for our history, pride in our traditions, and excitement for the memorable celebration ahead.

## GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

# How to honor the difference makers in your Lodge

By JARED WANLASS

Committee Member

With the start of a new year, it is fitting to reflect on the past year's accomplishments. Exalted Rulers are encouraged to express appreciation to Lodge Members who have demonstrated leadership and made a positive impact by being the difference within their Lodges and communities.

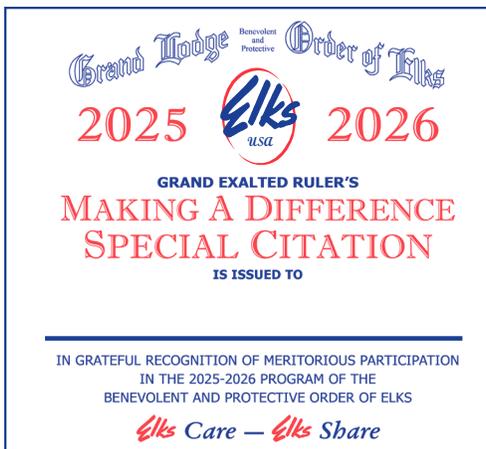
Application requests for the following three awards can be downloaded at [elks.org/grandlodge/fraternal](https://elks.org/grandlodge/fraternal) under the Forms and Contests menu. All forms must be post-marked or emailed to the Grand Secretary's Office by March 31, 2026.

The "Elk of the Year" award recognizes a Member, excluding Officers, who has shown devotion, dedication, and loyalty to the Lodge.

The "Officer of the Year" award honors a current Officer who has exceeded their duties by providing leadership and voluntary service to the Lodge.

The "Citizen of the Year" award is open to any outstanding community member, not just Elks. This award helps Lodges build community relationships and may encourage future membership.

Application requests for the following



citations and awards can be downloaded at [elks.org/grandlodge/ger/files/GERAward-CertificationForms.pdf](https://elks.org/grandlodge/ger/files/GERAward-CertificationForms.pdf). Materials must be postmarked or emailed to your Area Member of the Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee by **March 31, 2026**.

The GER "Special Citation Award" recognizes Members who have performed outstanding work during the year. Exalted Rulers can select up to two Members of their Lodge to receive this award for exceptional efforts in promoting Grand Lodge, State Association, and Local Lodge programs.

The "Making a Difference" Special Citation is available for both ERs and

Lodges. For ERs, it is given to those who participated in six of the nine listed programs and contests during their year. For Lodges, participating in six of the 11 listed programs earns the award.

Additional info on the GER Special Citation and Making the Difference citation can be found at [elks.org/grandlodge/manuals/downloadPDF.cfm?thepdfID=1](https://elks.org/grandlodge/manuals/downloadPDF.cfm?thepdfID=1).

The "GER Membership Citation" is an additional award for Members who lead membership recruiting in your Lodge. It includes a personal message of thanks and a GER Award Pin, issued by the Grand Exalted Ruler to Members who bring in three new or reinstated Members. This request form must be submitted to the Grand Secretary's Office by June 15.

The "GER Lapsation Award" will be awarded to each Lodge with a lapsation rate of two percent or less as of March 31. Qualification for this award is automatically determined by the Grand Secretary based on the Lodge's final membership report.

As Exalted Ruler, now is the time to show your leadership by recognizing your Members for their hard work and great accomplishments this year. **Be The Difference** by rewarding those who made a difference.

## GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

## New challenge: Resolve to start one program this year

By RICHARD W. THREADGILL

Committee Member

For many of us, the turn of the calendar year often marks a time of reflection, which can often spur a desire to improve, grow, or just maybe, in 2026, make a commitment to **Be The Difference** in our communities.

One way to do this is to start a new program in your Lodge. The Grand Lodge Activities Committee has numerous structured programs available to all Lodges with minimal cost impact and a range of target audiences.

Medals of Service & Valor for first responders, Soccer Shoot, Junior Golf, JROTC awards, Scouting awards, Antlers Program, Dictionary Project, and Student/Teenager of the Month/Year are just some of the established programs available to all Lodges.

Let's challenge each other to start just one new program in our Lodge this year. Don't kick the can to the next Lodge year.

Let's get started now! The work we do in the next 90 days will set a strong foundation for a successful program the following Lodge year and well beyond.

Do you have any current or former educators who are Members in your Lodge? If so, *ask* them to help start a Student/Teenager of the Month/Year program with the local high school or a Dictionary Program in a local elementary school.

Do you have any current or former police officers, fire fighters, or medics who are Members in your Lodge? If so, *ask* them to help with the first responders awards.

Do you have any veterans or active military members in your Lodge? If so, *ask* them to help connect with the local JROTC units in your community.

Do you have any Members who are parents of kids who play organized soccer? If so, *ask* them to help start a Soccer Shoot at their child's school or club.

Does your Lodge have a golf league? If

so, *ask* your golf league commissioner to help start a Junior Golf program in your Lodge with the local golf pro at the course your league plays at.

Does your Lodge want to attract younger Members—many of whom might have kids—and create a more family-oriented atmosphere? If so, *ask* your Lodge PER Association to help establish an Antlers Program.

Think about the amazing range of Members in your Lodge. Approach them personally and ask if they will help. Most Elks want to help their Lodge, and many will say "no one ever asked me," even though your Lodge's newsletter has asked Members for help for months (or years!).

If your Lodge is already doing every program Grand Lodge has to offer, great! But if not, let's resolve to start just one new program, right here, right now, so we can **Be The Difference** in our communities today and tomorrow!

## DRUG AWARENESS COMMISSION

# Be aware of two emerging illicit drugs

By **FRANK S. BURR**

Assistant National Director

Fentanyl seems to be getting most of the press these days, but the Drug Enforcement Administration has asked us to warn the public about an emerging threat posed by **nitazenes** and **bromazolam** in illicit drugs entering the United States.

**Nitazenes** are synthetic opioids similar to fentanyl but can match or surpass the potency of fentanyl. When combined with fentanyl, the effects of both drugs are compounded, which significantly increases the chances of a fatal overdose. Similar to other synthetic opioids, nitazenes can only be properly identified in a sample after laboratory testing. Users will not realize they are buying nitazenes until it is too late.

While nitazenes are a dangerous class of synthetic substances, the current threat is relatively small compared to fentanyl, which dominates the U.S. opioid market. Since January 2020, DEA forensic laboratories have analyzed 1,048 drug exhibits that contained some type of nitazene. During the same time frame, by comparison, DEA has analyzed approximately 36,000 fentanyl powder exhibits and 24,000 fentanyl tablet exhibits.

Chemical suppliers, mainly from overseas, introduce new nitazenes or analogues when the currently used ones become riskier to produce due to regulatory actions and drug scheduling, or when users look for novel substances that are not yet illegal. Nitazenes

are most likely being shipped as finished substances in small amounts in mail parcels from vendors in China to distributors or end users in the United States.

**Bromazolam**, most commonly used as an active ingredient in counterfeit Xanax tablets, is also used as an adulterant for fentanyl. Bromazolam and other benzodiazepines act on nonopioid neuroreceptors in the brain, which can complicate overdose reversal measures, according to the National Institutes of Health. Bromazolam may be added to fentanyl because its sedative effect on other neuroreceptors gives users the perception of a longer high, according to the Center for Forensic Science Research and Education. Unlike other benzodiazepine class medications, bromazolam has never been approved for medical use in the United States or any other country.

Of the 1,400 DEA drug exhibits seized between January 2019 and January 2025, 260 exhibits were powder that contained fentanyl and bromazolam and 15 exhibits were counterfeit tablets that contained fentanyl and bromazolam.

Bromazolam abused in the United States is most likely supplied by overseas drug vendors. As of January 2025, an open web search returned the websites of business-to-business platforms, where multiple foreign chemical suppliers offer to sell kilogram quantities of bromazolam powder. According to DEA reporting from 2024, a China-based

## VETERANS From Page 4

of the many Elks serving veterans every day. Make sure the volunteers in your Lodge know you appreciate them.

Nominations for the Veteran Volunteer of the Year Awards are due by January 31, 2026. To nominate someone from your Lodge, please visit our website to fill out a form and send it to your State Veterans Chair at [elks.org/vets/volunteerawards](https://elks.org/vets/volunteerawards).

## SEIBERT From Page 1

from that protocol may cause your membership totals to be out of balance. If you are having trouble with a transfer, reach out to your counterpart at the other Lodge and work to get the conflict resolved.

Your membership numbers are automatically locked in when the clock strikes midnight Central Time on March 31. Please do your part in our campaign to strive for five... five consecutive years of an Elks membership gain!

vendor advertised bromazolam on the open web, communicated with customers through encrypted smartphone messaging applications, accepted cryptocurrency for payment, and delivered the bromazolam to U.S. customers through the U.S. Postal Service.

Being informed means being aware and the Elks Drug Awareness Commission is at the forefront of making our communities safer.

On behalf of the directors of the Elks DAP, we wish to extend to all of you a happy, and drug-free, new year.

## GRAND LODGE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

# Manual has tools for planning a successful year

By **JOHNNY L. JONES**

Committee Member

A new year, for many, means making resolutions, setting goals, and attempting to be “better” than we were the previous year. As our Lodges prepare for the election of Officers next month, it is a great time to try to become a “better” Lodge. One way we can accomplish this is by proper planning.

There are tools available to us that will help us plan for a successful Lodge year. For example, the Exalted Rulers, Lodge Officers, and Committee Members Manual, found at [elks.org/grandlodge/manuals/downloadPDF.cfm?thepdfID=83](https://elks.org/grandlodge/manuals/downloadPDF.cfm?thepdfID=83), contains information, sorted by month, to help us plan. The material in Exhibits G1-G7, Monthly Checklist—Reporting and Activity

Calendar, provides detailed information for Officers and Committee Members about activities that are mandatory each month. Exhibit H, Local Lodge Contests, gives a breakdown of every contest open to Local Lodges with due dates and helpful links to more information on individual contests.

Once your new Officers have been elected, they should meet and look at the exhibits listed above to begin the basics of planning for their Lodge Year. Once the new Exalted Ruler has appointed all the committees, the Exalted Ruler, Officers, and Committee Chairs can meet to begin adding activities to the calendar. There can also be notations made for committee reporting at each Lodge meeting that follows a planned event.

And speaking of reporting! When your

committees meet to plan their activities for the year, this is a perfect time for the Lodge Secretary to give Charitable Reporting Forms to each Chair. The requirements for reporting can be explained and the importance can be emphasized. Exalted Rulers, when your Committee Chairs are reporting their events to the Lodge, have them also read their Charitable Report. After the meeting, this can be given to the Secretary to be entered in the Lodge’s Charitable Reporting to the Grand Lodge.

It is so easy to forget to log these very important charitable hours that our Members give. Let’s make this part of our normal planning and reporting. We think you will be surprised by just how many hours, miles, and dollars your Members give each month.

# Volunteers are selfless—but they would enjoy recognition

By **HANNAH GRABER**  
**ENVSC Programs Associate**

Do you know an outstanding volunteer at your Lodge? Nominate them for your state's Elks National Veterans Service Veteran Volunteer of the Year! This award recognizes excellent Members who serve veterans in their communities throughout the year. This honor is given to two individuals from each State Association, usually one man and one woman. The winners are selected from nominations sent to each State ENVSC Chair—and now is the time to send in your nominations.

Veteran service has always been an

important part of being an Elk, from last century to this one. As 2024-25 Volunteer of the Year winner from Arkansas, Joy Gunter, explained, “The Elks are continuously thinking of new things that we can do for our veterans.”

Gunter serves as the Voluntary Service Representative at the VA Medical Center in North Little Rock, Arkansas. She visits the hospital several times each month, consistently providing activities like bingo with snacks, and special events that give veterans something to look forward to. Recently, she and her fellow Elks cooked hot dogs and

hamburgers for a fishing derby at the VA. Another Volunteer of the Year award winner who is making a difference for veterans is Judith Wutzke from Lewiston, Idaho. Judith supports programs at the Idaho Veterans Home like meals for sporting events, craft making, and the Bakes and Bites program, which allows veterans to create their own dishes and share memories. These activities help veterans stay connected with each other.

Volunteers like these are just two examples

Please see **VETERANS**, Page 3



Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary  
**Benevolent and Protective  
 ORDER OF ELKS**  
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## G/L PR AND MEMBERSHIP MARKETING COMMITTEE

# Thrive with Five: Momentum builds for membership growth

By **RICK GATHEN**  
**Membership Marketing Director**

Last year, we achieved our fourth consecutive year of growth—a milestone that speaks not just to effort, but to belief. Belief in our mission. Belief in our Lodges. Belief in the power of Elkdom to strengthen communities and change lives.

That success is our launching pad for this year's challenge: *Thrive with Five in 2025–2026*. The bar is higher. The mission is bigger. And the momentum is unmistakable.

As we enter the final stretch of the Lodge

year, with official numbers closing on May 31, projections show that we are on pace to welcome 92,000 new Members to our Order — an extraordinary achievement by any measure.

But real, lasting success rests on one essential cornerstone: Retention.

Every new and returning Member adds strength to the story we're writing. A story of resilience, purpose, and pride.

What we do today will shape who we become tomorrow.

Let's seize this moment, initiate with urgency, and push together toward a future

worthy of the Elks.

To stay on pace and keep this momentum strong, please remember to initiate all candidates by March 31, 2026.

Every candidate initiated is one more spark fueling a thriving and successful year.

Famed writer Charles Caleb Colton reminded us, “Nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm.”

Right now, Elkdom needs enthusiasm—your enthusiasm—more than ever. Let's harness it. Let's drive the mission forward. And let's Thrive with Five like never before.

**All Gas. No Brakes!**