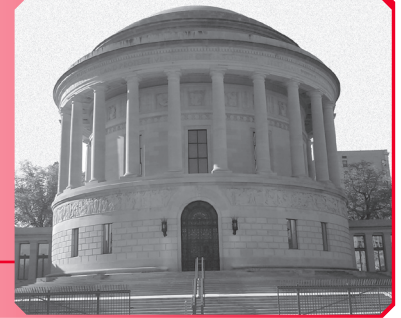




Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER



Elks Care – Elks Share

Lodges elect new Officers, honor PERs in February

Happy birthday to the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America! On February 16, we celebrate 158 years of our great organization. On a personal note, I wish everyone a happy Valentine’s Day, especially to my wife, Susan.

This month is important for Elkdom as new Officer elections should be held at your last monthly meeting. Every Officer should be dedicated to making the Lodge active and effective, both internally and in the community. Also, the current Exalted Ruler and Secretary should recognize any Member who sponsored or reinstated three Members by awarding them the Grand Exalted Ruler Award Pin. The request form is available on elks.org. Go to the Grand Exalted Ruler page within



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

the Members Only section, then click on Grand Exalted Ruler Award Forms.

It’s time to recognize and encourage a group of Members who have shown a great deal of effort and dedication to what we do as Elks, the Past Exalted Rulers. Ask them to perform the ritual during the Past Exalted Rulers Night. PERs deserve to be thanked for all they have done and for what

they continue to do for your Lodge.

The Contest “A” - All American Lodge Contest certification forms are due soon. It takes teamwork to achieve this very prestigious award. Honestly, most Lodges would qualify but don’t fill out the form properly. It is important to score your efforts on the form provided. It’s a great way for your Lodge to keep track of what you need to do.

If you need assistance, contact your Grand Lodge Area Fraternal Committee member. There are first, second and third place winners for each of the six membership divisions. Why not take the time to submit your form before the deadline?

Continue to demonstrate that you can *Be The Difference* by promoting “*Elks Care—Elks Share.*”

A busy time for Lodge Secretaries

Secretaries received the 2026-27 Lodge Committee Chairpersons Worksheet in January. Use it as a guide to fill positions and report them to Grand Lodge via CLMS2WEB by April 15, 2026. Mailed reports are not accepted.

GRAND SECRETARY
Carl T. Seibert

Remember: Lodge year-ending membership numbers are locked at midnight (Central Time) on March 31.

Ensure all additions and losses are entered correctly before then. Missing updates will trigger the dreaded “out of balance” notification.

Officer Elections Prep—before elections, review procedures for Local Lodge Nominations (Section 3.080) and Elections (Section 3.090) of the Laws of the Order.

BE THE DIFFERENCE

DRUG AWARENESS COMMISSION

Your Lodge’s DAP can be so much more

By **FRANK S. BURR**
Assistant National Director

Exalted Rulers, did you know that the DEA’s Operation Prevention website offers access to additional no-cost resources? Most of you know that the Elks National Drug Awareness Commission offers some of the best printed material available for distribution in your community, but did you know that you can expand your library of materials by accessing our partners at the DEA’s various websites?

You should check them out at operationprevention.com. There are school resources, cultural-based resources, and parent tool kits, as well as a virtual field trip and a self-paced module to supplement your Lodge’s DAP.

You might find the cultural-based resources particularly helpful, especially if you are located near or in a populated Indigenous Peoples area. These materials specifically address the Native American

population.

February is generally recognized by Elks for Valentine’s Day, but those of us involved in Drug Awareness know that February 2 has special significance. SAMHSA’s Prevention Day brings together prevention practitioners, scientists, leaders, and consumers to advance the prevention of substance use and misuse.

An event will be held on February 2 in National Harbor, MD, for attendees to explore current, emerging, and innovative strategies, policies, programs, practices, and research.

The National Directors, as well as State Chairs of the DAP, stand ready to assist your Lodges in efforts to strengthen your communities.

We encourage Lodges to thank the mental health workers and substance abuse workers in your jurisdiction. The DAP

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GRAND LODGE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Why engaging elected officials matters

By **KERRY A. RUTH**
Committee Member

Every day, federal, state, and local officials make decisions that influence our Lodges. Because of this constant change, it is essential for every Member to participate in our shared responsibility: monitoring legislation, advocating when necessary, and building strong, respectful relationships with elected officials.

One of the most effective ways to build these relationships is simple: Invite your elected officials to Lodge events and activities. Before we can ask legislators to support favorable laws or oppose harmful proposals, it is crucial that they understand who the Elks are, what we stand for, and whom we serve. Inviting officials to youth banquets, veterans programs, Flag Day ceremonies, or charitable distributions exposes them to the heart of our mission.

These personal interactions are far more effective than letters or testimony alone. When elected officials see firsthand the good works our Lodges perform, they develop an appreciation that lasts far beyond a single

legislative session.

Sharing our annual state and national charitable statistics, especially during Lodge visits, helps public officials understand the measurable impact of our programs.

While the Grand Lodge Government Relations Committee stands ready to advocate and defend the Order, we rely on every Member to monitor local developments. And when the moment comes to support or oppose legislation, Lodges with well-established relationships with their elected officials are far more effective at being heard.

State Associations are also encouraged to host capital events, open houses, and displays highlighting State Major Projects and Lodge programs. Every Member should know their elected officials at the local, state, and national levels. Understanding them helps Lodges anticipate issues and foster meaningful connections.

Just as importantly, remember to thank legislators when they support the interests of our Order. A sincere thank you today builds goodwill for tomorrow.

ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION

ENF launches new management system

To enhance the donor and volunteer experience, the Elks National Foundation is migrating to a new constituent relationship management system, leaving the platform it has used for the past 24 years.

The new system will reduce donation processing time, improve processes for recognizing and acknowledging donors, and expand the ways the Foundation supports its volunteers. The migration is set to take place in mid-March during the busiest gift processing month of the fiscal year.

The ENF team is excited to share the new possibilities with you, but they will experience some delays during the transition, and they expect the close of the 2025-26 fiscal

year to be delayed until mid-May. This means that the numbers for all fundraising metrics you see online, including Lodge per-Member giving and Gratitude Grant eligibility and bonuses, will not be finalized until mid-May. If your Lodge plans to apply for a Gratitude Grant, please wait until these numbers are finalized to ensure that you are utilizing all the funds available to you.

For details about what this transition entails and how it might impact you, visit elks.org/ENF/news.cfm?StoryID=146366.



ACTIVITIES From Page 4

At the Elks National Convention in Kansas City last July, the Grand Lodge Activities Committee had the medals out for sale and display in their booth. Every community has individuals who go above and beyond in providing emergency service

or protect us in our everyday lives. As Elks, we have an excellent opportunity to reward them. Please seek out the information to be able to present these truly deserving medals to those that give so much. Information on the Grand Lodge Activities Committee is available online and the committee members are willing to help you in any way.

GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

Quantifying success can earn your Lodge an impressive award

By **MICHAEL L. KENNEDY**
Committee Member

The All American Lodge Contest “A” stands as the most prestigious honor bestowed by the Grand Lodge, recognizing exceptional membership involvement and dedication across the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

Lodges earn points by participating in 48 categories, reflecting a wide range of activities and achievements. These include posting a gain in membership, active participation in Grand Lodge programs, and meaningful work within the communities.

The contest is designed to encourage Lodges to excel in all aspects of fraternal life, fostering a spirit of friendly competition and shared purpose.

Final entries are carefully reviewed and judged by a member of the Fraternal Committee, ensuring that the most deserving Lodges are recognized for their outstanding efforts. All Lodges can download the official application from the Grand Lodge website.

To participate, Lodge Secretaries and Exalted Rulers should complete their respective portions of the application listing the winners in each category and submit them to their District Deputy by April 1.

The District Deputy then has until April 15 to complete judging and have winners to the state chairman. Finally, the state chairman must submit their selections to the Fraternal Committee member by April 30.

Now is the time for your Lodge to shine! Take pride in your accomplishments and let your hard work be recognized at the highest level.

Download the application today, get involved in as many categories as possible, and submit your entry for a chance to earn the title of All American Lodge.

Let’s show the strength and spirit of Elkdom. Participate in the All American Lodge Contest “A” and make your Members proud. **Be The Difference** by promoting the All American Lodge Contest.

Your commemorative donations support the Veterans Memorial Restoration Trust

For a full century, the Elks National Memorial has stood as a powerful symbol of patriotism, service, and peace. As we look toward the building's 100th Anniversary on July 4, 2026, Members are invited to support the Elks Veterans Memorial Restoration Trust with a commemorative donation.

Your contribution supports the Elks Veterans Memorial Restoration Trust and the continued care and upkeep of this historic building. You may give in honor of Grand Exalted Ruler Bryan R. Klatt, or choose to honor a veteran who made a lasting impact on your life.

Donations of \$100 or more honoring a veteran will be displayed on the Veterans Video Tribute wall at the Elks National Convention. Members who make a dedication honoring a veteran at the \$500 level or above will have the veteran's photo added



Stand Proud. Donate Today for 100 Years of Service
elks.org/donate100

to the Tribute Video Wall.

Join fellow Elks in preserving this landmark. Donate at elks.org/donate100 and share on social media using hashtags such as #ElksUSA, #ElksMemorial100, and #ElksCareElksShare.



Join the Elks for a landmark event

A special ceremony will be held to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Elks National Memorial building at the 2026 Elks National Convention in Chicago.

Join us on Saturday, July 4, to celebrate this landmark and everything it means to the Order.

Elks wishing to attend the anniversary ceremony must enter the online-only ticket lottery, available through March 15, 2026.

Important ceremony details to know before you enter the lottery:

- One entry per Elk.
- Phone entries cannot be accepted.
- Lottery winners will receive two ceremony tickets and bus transportation to the event.
- This one-hour ceremony will take place outdoors, rain or shine, attendees should expect to be seated in the sun for the duration of the event.
- Seating areas will be accessed by stairs, ramps or uneven grass.
- Attendees will need their Elks National Convention credentials for entry. Credentials and tickets must be picked up at the McCormick Place - West Building on Friday, July 3.

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.

Commemorative Merchandise

Show your 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.

VETERANS From Page 4

come to town!

For the veterans who participate, these events are life changing. Take it from Jesse Lind, the 2025 Spirit of the Games winner for the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. Lind, who's been to the Games 11 times so far, reflects on the first time he participated.

"I didn't know that I was an athlete until the Games showed me I was an athlete," Lind said. "My introduction to adaptive

sports was the Wheelchair Games. It gave me a purpose."

That sense of purpose followed him home, and Lind started a wheelchair basketball program in his community. He's now an advocate and mentor for new participants. He offered advice for others considering adaptive sports: "Step out of our comfort zone. You don't know what you're capable of until you actually try it."

The Elks are proud to sponsor these events to help more veterans find their purpose.

G/L PR AND MEMBERSHIP MARKETING COMMITTEE

Every Member makes a difference to the Elks

By RICK GATHEN

Membership Marketing Director

February is a month of love—and for the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, it's also a time of celebration. On February 16, we mark 158 years of service, generosity, and dedication to our communities.

Guided by Grand Exalted Ruler Bryan Klatt's call to *Be The Difference* and the Elks National Foundation's mission of building stronger communities, we honor the spirit of Elkdom that has carried us through the decades.

From scholarships for students to aid for veterans and support for neighbors in need, our work reflects the love and care we celebrate this season.

Every Member makes a difference. Each new face strengthens our foundation, expands our reach, and ensures that Elkdom remains a vibrant force for good. To keep that heartbeat strong, it is vital that every candidate is initiated before March 31 so that your Lodge can achieve a membership gain. Growth not only secures our future but also opens the door to fresh ideas, new opportunities, and greater ways to serve.

This February, let's celebrate love, legacy, and growth by choosing to *Be The Difference*. Whether through a kind act, welcoming a new Member, or joining a Lodge event, every effort keeps Elkdom thriving. Here's to 158 years of service, love, and the enduring spirit of Elkdom!

AWARENESS From Page 1

has created certificates that acknowledge their work. These no-cost certificates will enhance your position in your community. If you would like more information on how to obtain them, contact your State Association's Chair.

Elks sponsor sports to help veterans find purpose

By **MARY MORGAN**
Commission Director

For some, sports are just a way to stay fit. For others, sports are a way to bring people together or to challenge ourselves. For veterans with disabilities, adaptive sports can help them recover, connect, and move forward.

Every year, the Elks sponsor national adaptive sports and arts events for veterans. These events serve thousands of veterans across the country.

The first of these events, the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic, takes place in early April in Colorado. As many as 400 veterans with profound disabilities

will participate in a week full of adaptive winter sports, including downhill skiing, ice hockey, fishing, and rock climbing.

Ski instructors, physical therapists, bus drivers, and a huge cohort of Colorado Elks all come together to support these veterans in their endeavors.

That's just the start of the season though: The schedule heats up in the summer with the National Veterans Wheelchair Games and the National Veterans Golden Age Games, which feature sports like basketball, swimming, archery, and cycling. Last June the annual National Veterans Golden Age

Games served a record-breaking 1,000 veterans over the age of 55! For the artistically inclined, the Elks also sponsor the

National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, which invites veterans to compete in all kinds of art categories including painting, dance, and music.

Unlike the Winter Sports Clinic, the other three events are hosted in a new location each year, to encourage veterans in different regions to participate. This also allows Elks Lodges to volunteer at the Games when they



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Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary
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GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Medals of Valor & Service recognize key first responders

By **ROGER McQUEEN**
Committee Member

Every Elks Lodge has the opportunity to pay homage and express our gratitude to our nation's heroes. The Elks Public Safety Medals of Valor and Service are both available to Lodges to honor first responders in their communities.

Sadly, far too often, tragic events result in the death of police officers, firefighters, or emergency services personnel. Many times, those who have paid the supreme sacrifice are overlooked. The Medal of Valor is an

award specifically to be presented to families of first responders who have been killed in the line of duty. The medal acknowledges their service, sacrifice, and memory, and provides the family with the gentle reminder that people in the community care, and that their loved one's sacrifice is not forgotten. The Medal of Valor is available to all Lodges and is suitable for engraving. The medals can be ordered by your Lodge Secretary.

Also available is the Medal of Service. This award is to honor first responders who have worked especially hard in the line of duty, and who put their lives on the line

every day to protect our communities. This medal is reserved for those who are still living and are outstanding in their services.

Many Elks Lodges host special nights for public safety services in their communities, and these medals can be awarded at them. The Medals can be ordered by your Lodge Secretary through the Grand Lodge Supplies/Shipping Department. Also, a Certificate is available to download at elks.org under the Activities Committee to go along with the medal.

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