

# Hollywood Elks Lodge celebrates 50 years

**Helen Wolt - Contact Reporter**

South Florida Sun-Sentinel

The Hollywood West Elks Lodge marked its 50th anniversary with a gala celebration.



During the evening, couples swirled on the dance floor to live music and enjoyed a catered dinner.

Membership at Lodge #2365 located at 7190 Davie Road Extension has climbed to 315. After recent membership drives, 75 new members joined this past year.

"One of the reasons I joined the Elks is their program for veterans is unbelievable," said Telly Sands, herself

an Air Force veteran. "It's really neat to see the women [veterans] come together."

The Loyal Order maintains its pledge to "never forget" those who have served in the Armed Forces, she said.

"We try to emphasize veterans," said the lodge's exalted ruler Paul Houser who served in the Navy during the Viet Nam era. Overall, the lodge offers members comradery through ongoing dinners, parties and social functions, he said.

"But community service is an important aspect," Houser said.

To support its projects, the Veterans Committee puts on a quarter auction and a monthly outdoor flea market (except in the summer months).

Outreach activities include putting on a free brunch for veterans from the Alexander "Sandy" Nininger nursing home in Pembroke Pines.

Additionally, members volunteer as chaperones for local Honor Flight excursions, the charitable trips to visit Washington, D.C. memorials.

Elder vets who are in wheelchairs need one-on-one attention, Sands said.

"They pay tribute to their friends who have fallen and see the monument for the wars they've served in.

Some are World War II, some are Viet Nam and Korean vets. A lot are wounded and have mobility issues," she said.

Youth programs are another Elks' focus. The Hoop Shoot, in partnership with the Marti Huizenga Boys &

Girls Club, is a basketball free throw for kids ages 8 to 13. Winners have the opportunity to compete in regional and national tournaments.

"During the holidays we have parties for veteran's families and children in the community," Sands said. Santa arrives on a Southwest Ranches fire truck to handout gifts.

With the Boy Scouts, the lodge operates an old flag rendering service and puts on a Flag Day ceremony. The Hollywood lodge is open to anyone who is community oriented, Houser said.

"Check us out," he said.

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