



Florence Elks Lodge 611

February 2026 Volume 4 Number 21

Exalted Ruler

Happy New Year to all of you. I hope your new year has started off well. We have so many events coming up this year. Please remember to look at our monthly calendar. We are always appreciative of help. If you would like to volunteer please ask any of the officers and we will help find something for you to help out with. February is the month for love. Be kind to yourself and to others.

Tara Wojciechowski Exalted Ruler

Thrive with Five: Momentum builds for membership growth

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!

A WORD FROM BRIAN KLATT, GRAND EXALTED RULER



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.

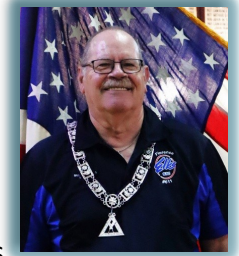
This month is important for Elkdom as new Officer elections should be held at your last monthly meeting. Every Officer should be dedicated to making the Lodge active and effective, both internally and in the community. Also, the current Exalted Ruler and Secretary should recognize any Member who sponsored 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 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?

A WORD FROM BILL HARTLESS, SECRETARY



At our Lodge Meeting February 12, 2026. Our PER's will be running the meeting and opening nominations for the officers for 2026/2027. This is the one time of the year that that the PER's get show off their stuff. We are still looking for members who are interested in becoming an officer. If you are interested please let any PER or officer know. Dues notices have been sent out, please remit your dues as soon as you can. Regular dues are \$93.50 and Life Member dues is \$53.00. If you need help with your dues please contact the Secretary and see if we can help. "Elks are never forgotten or forsaken". We are having a Superbowl Party on February 8 starting at 3:00 pm. There will be lots of fun and drink specials. Visit our Lodge website at www.elks.org/lodges/home.cfm?LodgeNumber=611



Bill Hartless Secretary

Opportunity to Volunteer

Are you wanting to help the lodge but not sure how? **BINGO** is in need of helpers. We need ticket sales, callers, food runners. One Tuesday a month would be great. We feed you dinner and it's a great opportunity to help the lodge and meet some really great people. If you are interested just let Kara Averhoff know.



Our 'heart' is love, legacy, and growth

By RICK GATHEN Membership Marketing Manager

Along with Valentine's Day, a celebration of love and connection, February also marks a significant milestone for our Order. On February 16, we observe the birthday of the Elks—a testament to 157 years of generosity and unwavering dedication to our communities.

This month, we honor the Great Heart of Elkdome that has guided us through the years. The love we celebrate on Valentine's Day is mirrored in the Elks' commitment to caring for others.

Our legacy of service is only possible because of our Members. As we commemorate 157 years of Elkdome, let us remember that every new Member strengthens our foundation and extends our reach. Membership growth is vital to ensuring that the Elks continue to be a vibrant force for good in the years ahead. By inviting others to join our mission, we open the door to new opportunities, ideas, and ways to serve.

Let's celebrate love, legacy, and growth. Whether it's a heartfelt act of kindness, recruiting a new Member, or participating in a Lodge event, every effort contributes to the enduring heartbeat of Elkdome. Together, we can honor our proud history while building an even brighter future.

COA Awareness Week reaches vulnerable children

By WILLIAM J. BRYAN National Director

The shortest month of the year has many days to remember. Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, Groundhog Day, and Black History Month occur in February each year—as does the BPOE's birthday. In many years, Mardi Gras and Lunar New Year are commemorated during this month as well. One lesser-known observance during February is Children of Alcoholics Awareness Week, which is taking place from February 9-15, 2026. This campaign shines a light on the often-overlooked challenges faced by kids growing up with a parent struggling with alcohol addiction. It's a time to raise awareness, offer support, and remind these children that they're not alone. The week promotes understanding, encourages healing, and Lodges may want to consider having virtual presentations instead of in-person presentations. Virtual engagements allow Lodges to reach schools at absolutely no cost and relatively little work for them. Again, the best resource for you is your State Chair. Reach out to them for more information if you'd like to have one of our talented speakers come to your community. connects families with resources to break the cycle of addiction and build healthier futures. If you want more information, contact your State Chair. In the Drug Awareness Program, the month of February is a time where we can reflect upon the year and begin to plan for the coming year. Lodges can be proud of what they have accomplished, but also must be vigilant because our work is never done. Our contests will be ending in a month, so now is the time to ask yourselves: did we participate this year? If you didn't, why not? The essay contest, video contests, and poster contests are simple and fun, and are a great way to show your community that you care. If in doubt as to what to do, simply contact your State Chair. The DAP's Speaking Tour has reached a record number of schools and students. George Washington, who we celebrate this month, said: "A primary object should be the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important? And what duty more pressing than communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of the

Veteran patients appreciate the love in February

By MARY K. MORGAN Commission Director

It's February and that means VA's National Salute to Veteran Patients Week is here! The annual VA National Salute to Veteran Patients program began in 1978 when VA took over sponsorship of a program started a few years earlier by the humanitarian organization, No Greater Love, Inc. The program has grown since. Today, Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) staff at the VA administer local events and activities to honor hospitalized and outpatient veterans. The National Salute to Veteran Patients Week is observed annually during the week of Valentine's Day, a day of caring and sharing, which mirrors the Salute's expression of honor and appreciation. February can be a difficult time for those who are hospitalized or living away from family. The holidays are over, the weather can be rough, and volunteer levels tend to be lower than other times of the year. This makes it a great time for representatives to plan extra activities, for Lodge Members to volunteer, and for Elks and their families to help out at VA and other veterans' facilities. There are plenty of ways to celebrate! Last year, Alaska State Veterans Chair Joel Hembach passed out hot chocolate and Valentine's cards at the Anchorage VA Clinic. Representative Bill Curlin hosted two February Bingo nights at the Connecticut Veterans Home. Representative John Phelan took veterans from the Hot Springs VA Medical Center to lunch and a visit to the Crazy Horse Memorial. Other ways to help include dropping off food and gifts, arranging live music, and donating crafts and games. You might even find out you like volunteering for veterans and want to come back in March. Visit elks.org/vets/vavs.cfm to connect with your local Elks Voluntary Service Representatives and Deputy Representatives and get started.



On February 16, 2026, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will celebrate its 158th anniversary, marking over a century of service, generosity, and dedication to communities. This organization, founded in 1868, has grown to include nearly 800,000 members across 1,857 lodges nationwide, contributing over \$12 billion in charitable donations and supporting veterans, students, and various community initiatives. The Elks continue to uphold their mission of charity, justice, brotherly love, and fidelity, fostering a spirit of community and service.

The Elks National Veterans Memorial (officially the Elks National Memorial and Headquarters Building) is a Beaux Arts-style domed building at 2750 North Lakeview Avenue in Chicago, Illinois. It is across from Lincoln Park and close to the park's Goethe Monument and statue of Alexander Hamilton.

The structure was planned by the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, who wished to honor members of their order who had served in World War I. A design competition was administered by the American Institute of Architects. Architect Egerton Swartwout's design was selected for the building, which was constructed between 1924 and 1926. Fine marble was imported from Greece, Austria, France, Belgium and Italy, as well as from Vermont, Tennessee, Alabama and Missouri. ...



OFFICERS FOR THE 2025-2026 YEAR	
EXALTED RULER.....	TARA WOJCIECHOWSKI
ESTEEMED LEADING KNIGHT.....	MATT MARTINEZ
ESTEEMED LOYAL KNIGHT.....	KIM BUNGARD
ESTEEMED LECTURING KNIGHT	DAVID BURROUS
ESQUIRE.....	JB BATULIS
CHAPLAIN	CHARLETT BURROUS
SECRETARY.....	BILL HARTLESS
TREASURER.....	KARA AVERHOFF
TRUSTEE, 1 YEAR.....	BARBARA BATULIS
TRUSTEE, 2 YEAR.. ..	JIMMY VIGIL
TRUSTEE, 3 YEAR	VACANT
INNER GUARD	CORY BUNGARD
TILER.....	JOHN BERNAL

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING TO DO ON TUESDAY NIGHTS?

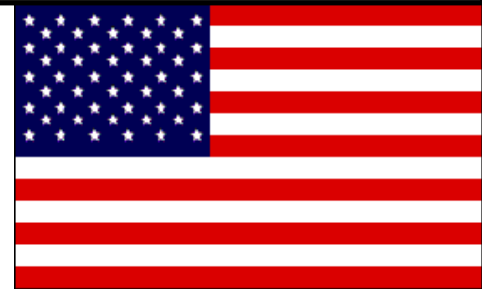
COME JOIN US AT THE ELKS LODGE EVERY TUESDAY FROM 5:30 - 9

Food served until 8

Doors open at 5:30pm
Early Bird game 6:45pm
Bingo at 7:00pm

Open to the public

131 E Front Street
Florence
719-784-3892





Superbowl Party at the Lodge
starting at 3:00 PM
Come watch the game at the
Lodge with members.
Enjoy football pools and
drink specials
Bring a potluck dish to share!



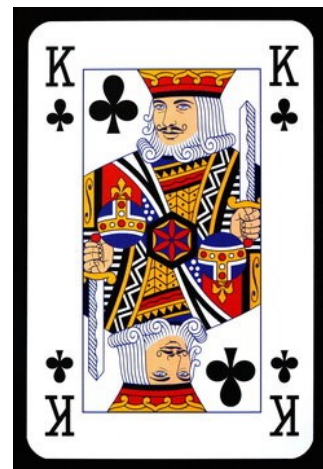


Our lodge received a big thank you from the Stringer Family. With the help of a local business owner and the Clem and Evelyn Audin fund we were able to make Christmas morning a little brighter for 6 girls and their Grandma!



Come on down to the Lodge on Sundays!

We have potluck, camaraderie and poker every week! Our King of Klubs jackpot is growing and a winner is coming soon! It could be you!
Club Room opens at 2:00pm



See ya at the Elks



February 2026



Sun

Mon


Tue

Wed

Thu

Fri

Sat

<p>1 King of Klubs Poker and Pot-luck</p>  <p>POTLUCK DINNER</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3 BINGO 5:30</p> 	<p>4 TACOS 4:30</p> 	<p>5 Club Bingo 6:00</p>	<p>6 Quilters</p>	<p>7</p>
<p>8 King of Klubs Poker and Pot-luck Superbowl Party 3-?</p> 	<p>9 Trustee Meeting 5:00</p>	<p>10 BINGO 5:30</p> 	<p>11 TACOS 4:30 Union Meeting</p> 	<p>12 Lodge Meeting 7:00 PER Night First nominations of Officers 26/27</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14 Valentines Day</p> 
<p>15 King of Klubs Poker and Pot-luck Chili Cookoff \$5.00 entry 2-4 pm</p>	<p>16 Activities 6:00 BOD 7:00 Presidents Day Elks Birth-day</p>	<p>17 BINGO 5:30</p> 	<p>18 TACOS 4:30</p> 	<p>19</p>	<p>20 Quilters</p>	<p>21</p>
<p>22 King of Klubs Poker and Pot-luck</p>  <p>POTLUCK DINNER</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24 BINGO 5:30</p> 	<p>25 TACOS 4:30 PER Meeting 6:30</p> 	<p>26 Lodge Meeting 7:00</p>	<p>27 Club Trivia</p>	<p>28</p>

Delinquent Members to be dropped in March

Anthony, John	Langley, Sharon S
Archer, Jerry	Martine, Barry
Burger, Beth	Martine, Debra
Burger, Dean	McCulloch, John
Burns, Daniel	Meacham, William
Caffey, Coleman	Miller-Weissenberger, Michelle
Daffron, Miles Lee	Nabors, Kathryn Johanna
Dennison, Steven G	Pricket, Timothy
Dutton, Kim A	Rice, John
Fagan, Cheale	Simpleman, Mica
Franco, Katrina	Stricklett, Elaine
Franco, Shanoa	Trogden, Brandon
Glisson, Paul D	Unsold, Michael R
Hadley, Brenda K	Webb, Benton R
Hadley, John O	Webster, Rose
Hess, Barry Steve	Weissenberger, Marc
Hill, Brian	Wilson, Tina
Hunt, Walter David	
Huppe, Cortlyne	
Keeler, Tommie	
Koch, Jeff	

Elks work toward membership growth

Over the past four years, the Elks have achieved something remarkable—a net membership gain of more than 62,000 Members. Together, under the rallying cry “Soar with Four,” we reversed decades of decline and proved that growth is possible.

But this success is about more than numbers. Every new Member has amplified our charitable reach, helping drive more than \$520 million in reported community impact—uplifting veterans, supporting youth, strengthening communities, and building Lodges that feel like home.

Now, we’re raising the bar with our new campaign: Thrive with Five.

The goal is bold yet simple—five straight years of membership growth, fueled by purpose and service. To get there, we must stay focused on the fundamentals:

- Schedule your Initiations early and often to welcome candidates.
- Reduce delinquency by engaging Members and encouraging renewals.
- Establish an active, working Membership Committee in every Lodge.

When we perform the basics well, we grow stronger. Every new and renewed Member strengthens our ability to serve. We’ve shown we can soar. Now, together, we will thrive.

Elks membership inspires a sense of belonging

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.

Every Member makes a difference to the Elks

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!



Membership/ Lapsation Report

Beginning Membership Total 4/1/2025: 329

Increases

Initiated	25
Affiliated:	7
Reinstated:	3
Subtotal:	35

Decreases

Dropped:	0
Transferred Out:	4
Absolute Dimit:	0
Deaths:	6
Expelled:	1
Subtotal:	11

Calculated Membership Total: 353

CLMS Active Members: 352

Average Age: 62.97

Gain/Loss: 24

Delinquency

Six Months:	0
One Year:	38
Over One Year:	0

Total: 38

Lapsation Rate: 11.55%

Applications on Hand

Waiting to read at next lodge meeting:	1
In the hands of the investigating committee:	0
Ready for balloting:	0
Ready for Orientation:	0
Ready for Initiation:	0
Ready for Affiliation:	0
Ready for Reinstatement:	1
Other:	0

Total: 2

Life Members

Life Members:	61
Honorary Life Members:	0
Total:	61
Life Percentage:	18.54%



February 15, 2026

Florence Elks Annual Chili Cook-off!

Red and Green Chili Categories

Surprise Judges!

Cash prizes!

\$5 Entry fee

All entries must be at the lodge by 2:30pm



Volunteers requested to help with
Friday Night Dinners!

It doesn't have to be fancy. Bring your
favorite casserole or crockpot meal
and member serve themselves!

Contact any officer to schedule your
Friday night!



Elks Care - Elks Share

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.



**OBTAINED A
NEW MEMBER ?**

Be aware of two emerging illicit drugs

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.

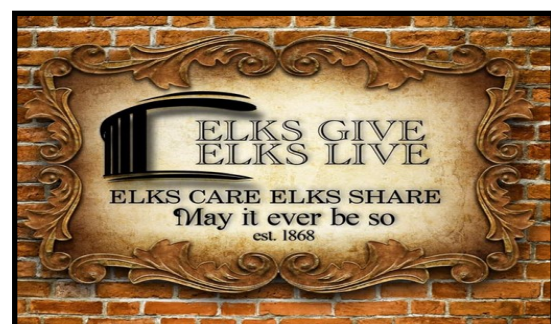
Nitazenes are synthetic opioids similar to fentanyl but can match or surpass the potency of fentanyl. When combined with fentanyl, the effects of both drugs are compounded, which significantly increases the chances of a fatal overdose. Similar to other synthetic opioids, nitazenes can only be properly 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.



Business Hours:

Monday—Closed

Tuesday—BINGO 5:30-9:00

Wednesday—Tacos 4:30pm–9:00

Thursday—2nd & 4th—Lodge Nights

Thursday—1st, 3rd & 5th—Club Bingo 6:00

Friday—4:00–9:00

Saturday—2:00–9:00

Sunday—Bar Opens 2:00-9:00

Lodge Mailing Address:

Florence Elks Lodge #611

P. O. Box 662

Lodge Address:

131 E Front Street

Florence, CO 81226

Lodge Contact Information:

Telephone: (719) 784-3892 (Lodge)

E-Mail: treasurer611@bpoe611.com (Lodge)

Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday and Friday

9:00 am–1:00pm

Call for an appointment

Lodge Meetings:

Meets 2nd and 4th Thursdays.

(Exceptions: July and August meets only the 4th Thursday. November the 2nd Thursday only.)

Greetings All,

BE THE DIFFERENCE



Return Address Requested

BPOE Elks Lodge #611
P. O. Box 662
131 East Front Street
Florence, CO 81226

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. Postage PAID
Florence, CO
Permit No. 4