

IN THIS ISSUE

Important Dates	2
CIP Turns 20	3
Live from Your Lodge, It's the National Finals!	3
CIP 2024-25 Immediate Reactions	4
Ask the ENF	5
Through the Stomach	6
Fidelity Club	7

 \mathbf{F} or nearly 100 years, the sound of a train whistle and the consistent thrum of wheels on steel signaled the approach of goods and people in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Though the last passenger train left Chattanooga in 1970, the historical significance of the Choo-Choo is still evident, as is the town's ability to bring people together.

In early January, 18 Elks scholars gathered in Chattanooga for the 2025 Winter Elks Scholar Service Trip. Though they arrived by plane and car, the scholars were guided by the Chattanooga Choo Choo. The sign, sitting atop a historic downtown building, served as a landmark to guide the scholars back to their hostel at the end of each day.

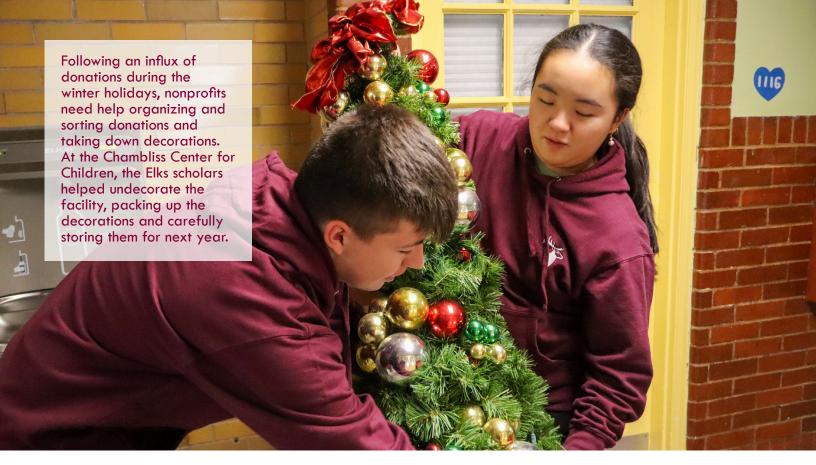
Regardless of the track their life has traveled, Elks scholars have one thing in common: a love for service.

On the first full day of the trip, the scholars served at the CHATT Foundation, a local organization that seeks to meet the needs of people experiencing hunger and homelessness.

"Seeing just how much manpower it takes to get these organizations running means a lot," said Jed Quiaoit, a 2021 Most Valuable Student scholar sponsored by Vista, Calif., Lodge No. 1968 and member of the Elks Scholar Advisory Board. "It's the little things that make a big difference, like cleaning and sorting donations."

see Scholars, continued on page 2





Scholars, continued from page 1

IMPORTANT DATES

MARCH 31: Fiscal Year end

APRIL 1: Beacon, Gratitude, and Spotlight Grant applications open

APRIL 24-27: **Hoop Shoot National Finals**

MAY 1-4: Most Valuable Student Leadership Weekend

At most service sites, the scholars finished their assigned tasks so quickly they could do more than what the organizers initially planned. How do they complete their tasks so fast? Teamwork.

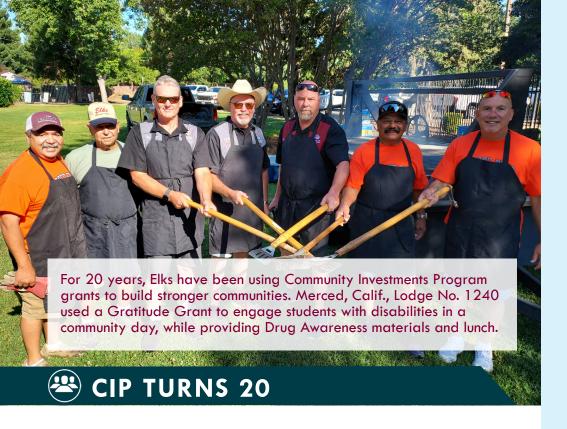
This teamwork was on full display when the scholars went to the Chattanooga Area Food Bank, Habitat for Humanity ReStore, and the Chambliss Center for Children. At the Food Bank, the scholars packed 375 emergency food boxes and labeled 4,020 cans. The scholars completely reorganized the thrift store's inventory at Habitat for Humanity, and they helped pack Christmas decorations at the children's center.

No Elks Scholar Service Trip is complete without a trip to an Elks Lodge. Chattanooga Lodge No. 91 treated the scholars to a taco bar, photo booth, and tunes spun by the Elks' own DJ, The Bob.

"That is exactly what the Elks is about," says Shani Tursunova, a 2024 Most Valuable Student scholar sponsored by Florence, Ky., Lodge No. 314. "Having a family and giving back to communities that have a need. Being able to do that with your family is very special to the Elks."

Though passenger trains no longer bring people to Chattanooga, the mountain town—and the Elks who call it home—are still experts at bringing people together.

The Elks National Foundation offers three Elks Scholar Service Trips annually. These trips provide scholars the opportunity to learn about societal issues, serve those in need in the name of the Elks, and connect with their #ElksFamily from across the country. For more information about the trips, visit enf.elks.org/ScholarServiceTrips.



wenty years ago, Carrie Underwood gained national fame by winning ⚠ American Idol, Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith ended the Star Wars franchise for good (or so we thought), the Chicago White Sox took home their first World Series title in 88 years, and the Community Investments Program was born.

When the CIP debuted in 2005, each grant was worth \$200, and we approved applications from 695 Lodges. A lot has changed since then (see next page), but one thing remains the same: the CIP's commitment to helping you build stronger communities.

This year, to commemorate the CIP's anniversary, the base level of the Gratitude Grant will increase from \$2,000 to \$3,000. Every Lodge that meets the per-member-giving goal of \$5 will have \$1,000 more to support community needs; Lodges will be eligible to receive a total of up to \$5,000 through additional bonuses.

With the Beacon, Spotlight, and Gratitude Grants, Lodges can receive up to \$11,000 to use in their community to help fight hunger, prevent veteran homelessness, or address other needs.

Now that's a reason to celebrate! Follow the ENF on social media, and be on the lookout for more as we celebrate 20 years of the CIP.



SUPPORT THE GREAT HEART OF ELKDOM!

Visit enf.elks.org/donate, and your online donation will be put to work immediately in Elks communities!

LIVE FROM YOUR LODGE, IT'S THE NATIONAL FINALS!

here is nothing like the Hoop Shoot National Finals. The 10,000-seat Wintrust Arena is pin drop silent as 72 of the best youth free throwers in the nation vie for the six National Championships. All you can hear is your heart pounding and the soft scratch of pencils on paper as the people around you keep score.

If you can't make it to Chicago on April 26 to catch the action in person, we've got you covered! We'll be streaming the entire contest live through the ENF's YouTube channel, complete with commentary from Hoop Shoot experts. For more information and links to the livestreams on the day, visit enf.elks.org/HS25Live.

The Finalists advanced undefeated through multiple rounds of increasingly difficult competition to unleash their grit and compete on the national stage—and that's something to celebrate. Consider hosting a viewing party at your Lodge! Bring your favorite snacks, wear the Hoop Shoot colors, and show your community the importance of the Hoop Shoot! Feel free to cheer to your heart's content!



With Community Investments Program Grants, Lodges built stronger Elks communities.

2024-25 CIP PROGRAM IMPACT

Beacon Grant \$7,480,500

Gratitude Grant \$3,585,000

Spotlight Grant \$1,718,000

\$12,783,500

Closing the Loop

Due 30 days after the completion of a CIP project, a Final Report is required for each grant received. More than 1,000 Final Reports have been submitted, revealing that Lodges have served more than 1.2 million people in their communities.



2.7 grants were approved per participating Lodge.

\$8,095.95 was granted per participating Lodge.



No. 1154 used a Beacon
Grant to continue operating their community garden for the 13th year. Lodge members harvest over 2000 pounds of fresh produce annually to support three local food pantries and sustain a Little Food Pantry box outside of their Lodge.

In 2024-25, the **\$16.3** million to ENF allocated **\$16.3** the CIP. ENF allocated

Lodges meet local needs through CIP grants that offer Elks opportunities to serve their community in ways that:



- raise the Lodge's profile.
- energize membership.
- encourage former members to return. 3
- gain the notice of people who want to be part of an organization doing great things.

To learn more about the CIP, visit elks.org/CIP or email LodgeGrants@elks.org to speak to CIP office staff.

ASK THE ENF...

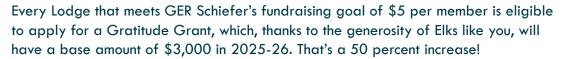


Why is my Lodge's Gratitude Grant amount different from my friend's Lodge? —Interested in Indiana

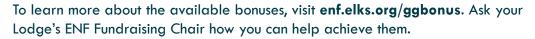




Hi Interested!



In addition, Lodges can earn up to four \$500 bonuses for their Gratitude Grant, so amounts can range from \$3,000 to \$5,000.





Have a question for the ENF? Email us at enf@elks.org.







pparently, the stomach can also lead the way to the Great Heart. Twenty-five years ago, Marysville, Ohio, Lodge No. 1130 had earned a reputation for having one of the best chefs in town, and that's all the encouragement Kermit Morse needed to give the Elks a try.

"We joined just to be social members," Kermit acknowledges. "Well, that didn't last long. Within five years, I was Exalted Ruler."

Becoming an active member opened his eyes to the work of the Elks National Foundation. By the time the Community Investments Program debuted in 2005, Kermit was feasting on more than just the daily special. But volunteering isn't the only way Kermit gives back.

As a donor, Kermit gives back through the Fidelity Club, Named Scholarship Program, and the John F. Malley Society. His generosity empowers Elks' communities and helps Kermit meet his personal giving and recognition goals each year. In fact, Kermit's recent decision to join the Malley society, a recognition program for donors who choose to include the ENF in their estate plans, qualifies him for an invitation to our annual donor event at the Elks National Convention.

The Malley Society gets its name from ENF founder and Past National President John F. Malley, whose call to service inspired Convention delegates to establish the Elks National Foundation with an initial \$100,000 grant in 1928. This initial grant ensured the Elks' legacy

would live on for decades to come, just as Malley Society donors ensure the future of ENF-funded programs with a planned gift.

"As you get older, you start thinking about what's going to happen," says Kermit. "If we're not here, and there's money left over, what do we want that money to do? My wife and I decided that we want part of that to go to the ENF."

Kermit knows that his support will continue to fund programs where Elks live and work, like his hometown, Marysville.

"I grew up in Marysville, so being able to provide funds provide things—for the community is really exciting," says Kermit.

For the past four years, Kermit has been Ohio's ENF Fundraising Chair, which gives him a platform for sharing his obvious passion for the Foundation. As a social member who got involved and has been giving back ever since, he has all the ingredients to whip up a recipe that will help others find the way to the Great Heart of Elkdom.

Like Kermit, you can help Elks programs thrive for generations to come. For more information on how you can include the ENF in your estate plans, visit enfplannedgiving.org or contact the ENF's Development Manager Kate Keating Edsey at Katee@elks.org or at 773/755-4762.

FIDELITY CLUB

As of February 2025, these sustaining donors have given 200, 150, or 100 Fidelity Club gifts to the Foundation. To learn more, visit **enf.elks.org/FidelityClub**.

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