



# HEARTBEAT

ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION NEWS

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Carrigan Price (right), sponsored by Columbia/Middletown, Pa., Lodge No. 1074 and Eila Gress (middle), sponsored by Madison, Wis., Lodge No. 410 battled for first place in the Girls 8-9 division at the 2025 Hoop Shoot National Finals in an epic five round shoot-off.



## COUNTING FREE THROWS

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Chicago is home to impressive skyscrapers, tantalizing food, and beautiful lake views, but every spring, something else gets added to the list: the Elks Hoop Shoot National Finals.

From April 24 to 27, Hoop Shoot National Finalists, their families, and Elk fans traveled to the Windy City for the 2025 Elks Hoop Shoot National Finals. Throughout the weekend, competitors had several chances to meet one another. They swapped personalized trading cards, attended family-friendly trivia and movie nights, and even went to historic Wrigley Field for a Cubs game.

“In the first two hours we were here, I told Turner, ‘If we go home right now, this trip has been awesome,’” says Van Shea Iven, father of National Finalist Turner Iven, sponsored by Midwest City, Okla., Lodge No. 1890. “I mean, he’s getting swag like he’s in the NBA. He thinks he’s someone really important, and for the next three days, he is.”

When Saturday morning rolled around, the lights went down and the music turned up as the 8- to 9-year-old Finalists ran onto the court at Wintrust Arena, canopied by a tunnel of volunteers who made the weekend possible. It was time to step up to the line.

From the start, it was clear that this Finals would be one for the record books. Eila Gress, sponsored by Madison, Wis., Lodge No. 410, and Carrigan Price, sponsored

*see Finals, continued on page 2*



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In his last year of eligibility and his fourth trip to the National Finals, Cooper Thompson, sponsored by Claremore, Okla., Lodge No. 1230 scored a perfect 25/25 and 5/5 in a shoot-off to take home a National Championship. Then, he made 5/5 in another shoot-off to secure the Getty Powell Award.

*Finals, continued from page 1*

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**AUGUST:**  
Fidelity Club Month

**AUGUST 1:**  
Most Valuable Student Scholarship  
Application Opens

**AUGUST 15:**  
Impact Intent Deadline

**SEPTEMBER 1:**  
Legacy Awards Application Opens

**SEPTEMBER 16:**  
ENF Board of Trustees Meeting

by Columbia/Middletown, Pa., Lodge No. 1074, both made 24 free throws in regulation, necessitating a shoot-off. They went on to shoot another 25 before Carrigan was able to claim the Frank Hise National Championship.

In the Boys 8-9 division, no shoot-offs were necessary: Paxton Plourd, sponsored by Cullman, Ala., Lodge No. 1609, finished with a perfect 25/25. Paxton's perfect score earned him the championship and an Emile Brady Award, given to every competitor who achieves a rare 25/25.

Cole Cavanee, sponsored by Kearney, Neb., Lodge No. 984, and Jacinta Patel, sponsored by Des Plaines, Ill., Lodge No. 1526, claimed Frank Hise National Championships in the 10-11 divisions, missing only three free throws combined.

In the Girls 12-13 division, Grace Wilhelm, sponsored by Palmer, Alaska, Lodge No. 1842, showed that a lengthy journey is no deterrent, sinking 23/25 free throws to become Alaska's first ever Frank Hise National Champion.

As history was made on one side of the court, an intense battle unfolded on the other end. The first two competitors in the Boys 12-13 division, Brazen Smith, sponsored by Wheeling, W. Va., Lodge No. 28, and Cooper Thompson, sponsored by Claremore, Okla., Lodge No. 1230, couldn't miss—literally. They both scored 25/25 in regulation and required a shoot-off to determine who would take home the gold. After Brazen missed his final two shots, Cooper stepped up and drilled all five, clinching the victory. It was his first gold medal





After the contest, the Finalists hung up their sneakers and put on their dancing shoes to celebrate the season at the Last Ball.

in four trips to the National Finals, and duplicated his brother Caden's feat in the 2020 virtual Finals. Cooper and Caden are only the second set of sibling champions in Hoop Shoot history.

Shortly after he clinched his title, Cooper defeated Paxton in a shoot-off for the Getty Powell Award, earned by the top scorers in the boys and girls divisions. All six winners will have their names and pictures in a digital exhibit in the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame.

After a long, stressful day of competition, the National Finalists were honored with an Awards Banquet fit for champions, and Keynote speaker and retired NFL player Robbie Gould gave them advice that goes beyond the basketball court.

The Elks Hoop Shoot surely left an impact on the 72 National Finalists, and now, those National Finalists will make their own impact on the world.

"I had no idea, to be honest, how much involvement the Elks have in the community and how much they provide," says Nicole Dauphinee, mother of National Finalist Jerry Dauphinee, sponsored by Brunswick, Maine, Lodge No. 2043. "The Elks Hoop Shoot is a really cool opportunity to get involved and represent your community with pride."



The top three Finalists in each division received trophies presented by the 2025 Keynote Speaker Robbie Gould, 18-year NFL veteran, including 11 years with the Chicago Bears.

## STANDING IN THE HALL OF FAME: ELKS HOOP SHOOT NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

The 2025 Elks Hoop Shoot National Finals saw six of the best youth free-throw shooters in the country take home the title of Frank Hise National Champion. Their names and pictures will be displayed in a digital exhibit at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass. The champions are:

**Carrigan Price\***, Girls 8-9, 24/25 (21/25), Columbia/Middletown, Pa., Lodge No. 1074

**Jacinta Patel**, Girls 10-11, 23/25, Des Plaines, Ill., Lodge No. 1526

**Grace Wilhelm**, Girls 12-13, 23/25, Palmer, Alaska, Lodge No. 1842

**Paxton Plourd**, Boys 8-9, 25/25, Cullman, Ala., Lodge No. 1609

**Cole Cavenee**, Boys 10-11, 24/25, Kearney, Neb., Lodge No. 984

**Cooper Thompson\***, Boys 12-13, 25/25 (5/5), Claremore, Okla., Lodge No. 1230

*\*Getty Powell Award winners as the highest-scoring girl and boy overall.*

To learn more about the Finalists, Champions, and Elks Hoop Shoot Hall of Fame, visit [elkshoopshoot.org](http://elkshoopshoot.org).





## TOP OF THE CLASS: 2025 MVS LEADERSHIP WEEKEND

### HOOP SHOOT HALL OF FAME

**T**he Elks Hoop Shoot is no ordinary youth program. It is totally free, completely silent, and puts everyone on a level playing field.

Though these traits make the Hoop Shoot stand out, they aren't what really sets it apart: it's the people.

Established in 2022, the Elks Hoop Shoot Hall of Fame honors the volunteers who have put their hearts and souls into making the program the best it can be and the National Finalists who have stood out or gone on to do great things. Please join

*continued on facing page*

**I**n May, the Top 20 Most Valuable Student scholars experienced the #ElksFamily firsthand when they visited Chicago for the Most Valuable Student Leadership Weekend. Dedicated to service and leadership, these impressive high school seniors were selected out of 21,500 applicants to receive \$30,000 scholarships. Four hundred and eighty-two runners-up received \$4,000 awards.

The scholars started the weekend by serving at Cradles to Crayons, a nonprofit dedicated to helping end youth clothing insecurity. Sorting clothes by size, ensuring they met the organization's quality standards, and bundling them into packages was the perfect way for scholars to bond over one of their shared interests: service.

"Everyone here has the same values of wanting to better themselves and help the people around them," says Sahand Khavari, sponsored by Plano, Texas, Lodge No. 2485. "Nothing's a chore. Even doing physical labor feels fun because we're around family."

To learn more about their new Elks family, the Top 20 visited the Elks National Memorial and headquarters. After they were impressed by the grandeur of the building, the scholars went downtown for an architecture boat tour along the Chicago River, then returned to the hotel for the last activity of the day: Tell My Story.

A time-honored Leadership Weekend tradition, Tell My Story gives the scholars a chance to connect on a deeper level.



The scholars explored the Elks National Memorial and Headquarters, where they completed a scavenger hunt to learn more about the Elks.



"Coming here and listening to your stories and getting to share my story, it made me feel comfortable being myself," said Hunter Kirk, sponsored by Fairfield, Ill., Lodge No. 1631, during the weekend's final reflection. "It's okay to be embarrassed sometimes. It's okay to be different. It's okay to be yourself."

Following a day of workshops and panel discussions about maximizing college success, the scholars visited the third tallest building in the Western Hemisphere, the Willis Tower. For several, the idea of stepping out onto the glass viewing platform on the 103rd floor was terrifying, but with encouragement from their peers, the scholars overcame their fears.

"It was really touching to hear the scholars encourage each other," says Program Relations Associate Libby Willkomm. "It was symbolic of what we hope this weekend accomplishes—showing scholars there is strength in community."

During the final reflection that evening, the scholars expressed the same sentiments: They know they have a strong support system—the #ElksFamily—moving forward.

"It was an unforgettable weekend, and it'll be a memory for the rest of my life," says Ricky Lazaro, a 2025 Top 20 MVS scholar sponsored by San Antonio, Texas, Lodge No. 216. "To all the Elks—thank you. I will be able to go to college debt-free because of you...and I plan on being involved in the Elks in the future."

*For 2025–26, the Elks National Foundation allocated nearly \$3 million to fund the Most Valuable Student scholarship program, which includes 500 four-year scholarships ranging from \$4,000 to \$30,000. For more information about the Most Valuable Student scholarship program, including eligibility and deadlines, visit [elks.org/scholars](https://elks.org/scholars).*



Robert "Brownie" Brown and Meredith Starr were inducted into the Elks Hoop Shoot Hall of Fame on center court during the 2025 National Finals.

us in honoring this year's inductees: Competitors Lakyn Boltz, Chris Snopek, and Meredith Starr, and Contributor Robert "Brownie" Brown.

Claiming that Brownie has put his heart and soul into the program may be an understatement. Brownie has been involved with the Hoop Shoot since 1973. He hosts the local contest for Rochester, Minn., Lodge No. 1091, keeps score at the Region 3 contest, and helps at the contests in between wherever needed.

"Brownie has done just about everything with the Elks Hoop Shoot since the inception of the program," says Mark Johnson, Minnesota's State Hoop Shoot Director. "Although he has never held a District, State, or Regional position, he has been a vital part of the Hoop Shoot in the state of Minnesota and Region 3."

Brownie and the other 2025 inductees are joining a roster of Hoop Shoot greats. You can learn more about Brownie, Starr, and the rest of the Elks Hoop Shoot Hall of Fame online at [enf.elks.org/EHOF](https://enf.elks.org/EHOF).





Elks Scholar Service Trips allow scholars to serve a community in the name of the Elks, meet Elks at a local Lodge, and create meaningful connections with other members of their #ElksFamily.



## BONDING IN SERVICE

### A MOST VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY

Applications for the 2026 Most Valuable Student scholarship are open until November 12. The MVS scholarship is open to all high school seniors who are United States citizens.

The Top 20 applicants, selected from 500 national semi-finalists, attend the MVS Leadership Weekend and a scholarship of \$30,000. The 480 runners-up receive \$4,000 scholarships.

Spread the word! Learn more at [enf.elks.org/MVS](https://enf.elks.org/MVS).

When a student becomes an Elks scholar, they receive more than just a scholarship—they enter the vast and supportive network that is the #ElksFamily. This spring, the ENF hosted two Elks Scholar Service Trips to show just how supportive that network is.

Taking place in Detroit and Chicago, these trips brought a total of 26 Elks scholars together, who quickly bonded over their love for service and desire to make a positive difference in the lives of others.

“The highlight of my trip to Detroit was having the opportunity to further cultivate a supportive, diverse, and skilled community committed to developing our world,” says Megan Thiravong, a 2021 Most Valuable Student scholar sponsored by Dixon, Ill., Lodge No. 779. “This encompasses the scholars I connected with, the initiative leaders we learned from, and the community members we engaged with throughout the trip.”

Scholars served at a variety of nonprofit organizations throughout the two trips. Some organizations were dedicated to fighting food insecurity and promoting sustainability, and others were focused on providing children with clothing and ensuring that the community has access to the resources it needs to thrive. No matter the focus of the nonprofit, after each service opportunity, the scholars gained more than a new experience.

“This was my third service trip as an Elks scholar, and each time I have attended, I walk away not feeling like just an Elks scholar, but truly part of





While in Detroit, scholars served at WJP Urban Farms, where they learned about urban agriculture and the benefits of growing your own food. WJP Urban Farms turns abandoned lots into gardens, and the scholars helped prepare the beds for crops.

the Elks family,” says Chandler Plante, a 2023 Most Valuable Student scholar sponsored by Sedona, Ariz., Lodge No. 2291. “It’s amazing how close a group of college students become over the course of just a few days while serving the community they are in.”

Few know the importance of coming together to make a difference like the Elks, and on every Elks Scholar Service Trip, the scholars meet the friendly faces that make their scholarships possible while learning more about the Order. The scholars visited Clawson-Troy, Mich., Lodge No. 2169 and Ferndale, Mich., Lodge No. 1588, and even had the chance to explore the Elks National Memorial and Headquarters.

A highlight of these two trips occurred at the Illinois Veterans’ Home at Chicago, where scholars joined members of Chicago Northshore, Ill., Lodge No. 1316 to meet the home’s residents. The word “meaningful” doesn’t begin to describe the scholars’ experience: By the end of the afternoon, both scholars and veterans were in tears because of the genuine connections they made with each other.

“At the Illinois Veterans’ Home at Chicago, I got to connect personally with veterans, hearing their stories and sacrifices,” says Tracy Wang, a 2023 Most Valuable Student scholar sponsored by San Luis Obispo, Calif., Lodge No. 322. “It was humbling and reminded me how important compassion and respect are when serving others.”

The 26 Elks scholars who attended the Detroit and Chicago Elks Scholar Service Trips may have entered as strangers, but now, they’re bonded forever. They’re passionate about service, dedicated to making a difference, and part of the vast and supportive network that is the #ElksFamily.

## SHARING THE LEGACY

In April, 350 high school seniors received Legacy Awards, available to the children and grandchildren of Elks.

See the entire class of 2025 Legacy Awards recipients at [elks.org/scholars](https://elks.org/scholars). The 2026 contest kicks off on September 1, 2025. Visit [secure.elks.org/leg](https://secure.elks.org/leg) for more information.

*For 2025-26, the Elks National Foundation allocated more than \$1.6 million to fund the Legacy Awards program, which includes 350 Legacy Awards scholarships for the children and grandchildren of Elks. For more information, including eligibility and deadlines, visit [elks.org/scholars](https://elks.org/scholars).*



**SUPPORT THE GREAT HEART OF ELKDOM!**

Visit [enf.elks.org/donate](https://enf.elks.org/donate), and your online donation will be put to work immediately in Elks communities!



Whether they're building beds, like Santa Maria, Calif., Lodge No. 1538, or stronger communities in another way, Elks Lodges have been using CIP grants to meet the needs of their communities for 20 years.



## CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE CIP



CIP TURNS

20

See how Lodges have been using CIP grants for the last 20 years to build stronger communities! Check out the CIP Grant History report at [elks.org/cip/granthistory.cfm](https://elks.org/cip/granthistory.cfm).

All great programs start the same way: with a dream. In 1928, the delegates at the Grand Lodge Convention established the Elks National Foundation with an initial grant of \$100,000 because of a dream. Then-National President John F. Malley envisioned that the ENF would “unite the forces of the Order into a mighty army for the service of mankind.”

Malley’s dream inspired decades of charitable work through the ENF, but it wasn’t until more than 70 years later when his dream of a charitable army started to come into fruition. The very first seeds of the Community Investments Program were sewn at an ENF Board of Trustees meeting in July 2001.

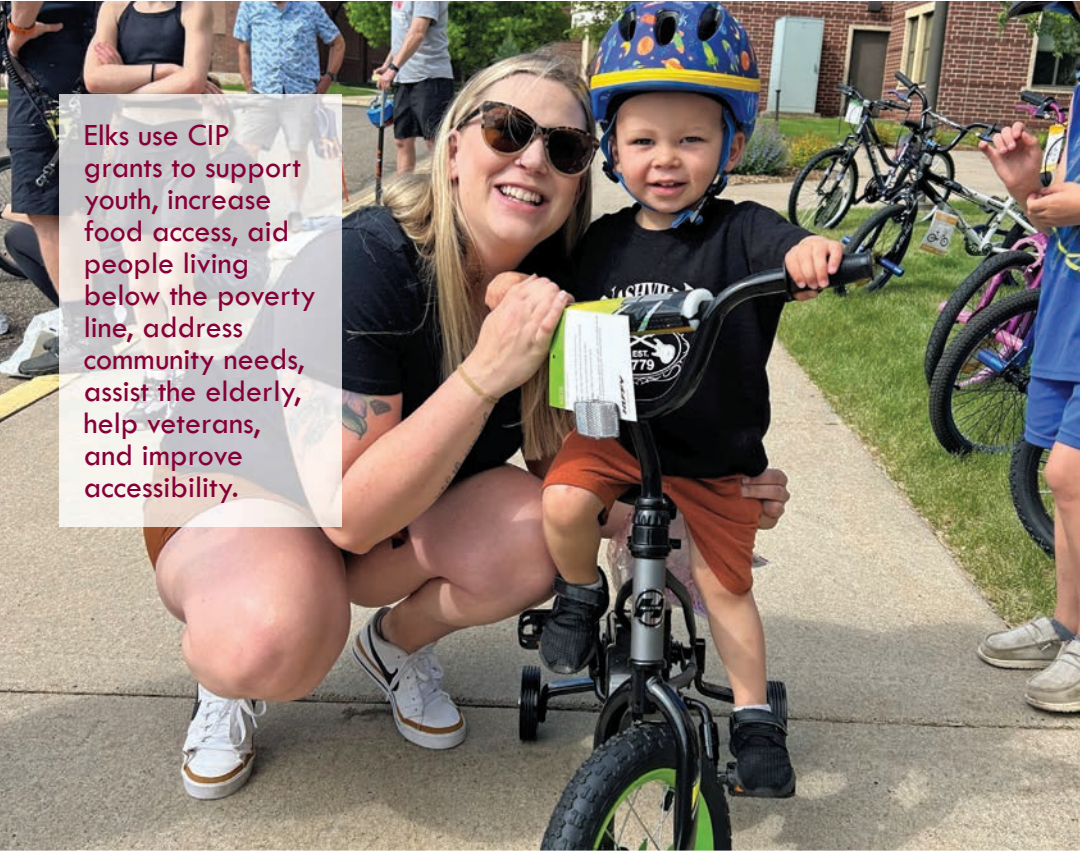
“The Foundation supports all of the national programs, and we give money back to the states, so indirectly, we are helping out locally,” said ENF Director Jim O’Kelley in his initial pitch to the board. “But, unless a Lodge has a scholarship recipient, they don’t really *see* ENF money at work locally. We need to get money back to the Lodges.”

The dream was embraced by the then-Board of Trustees, but after 9/11, everyone’s focus changed. Progress continued to stall over the next few years, until October 2004 with the arrival of new Programs Manager Debbie Kahler Doles.

“Debbie jump-started the program,” O’Kelley says. “She helped us define community and state our purpose.”

At the December 2004 board meeting in Chicago, O’Kelley presented the task





Elks use CIP grants to support youth, increase food access, aid people living below the poverty line, address community needs, assist the elderly, help veterans, and improve accessibility.

## BUILD STRONGER COMMUNITIES TODAY!

Since the Community Investments Program was established in 2005, a lot of things have changed, but two things are still certain: Elks care, and the ENF has the resources to help them build stronger communities.

The CIP is an ENF-funded program dedicated to helping Elks improve the areas where they live and work. With three grant options available—Beacon, Gratitude, and Spotlight—every Lodge can find a project (or three) that is right for them. If Lodges take advantage of every opportunity offered, they can earn up to \$11,000 in CIP grants!

But the opportunity to build stronger communities doesn't stop there—Impact Intents are open through August 15! Impact Intents are the first step a Lodge must take if it wants to be considered for an Impact Grant of up to \$10,000.

Don't miss this chance to make a significant difference in your community. Visit [elks.org/CIP](https://elks.org/CIP) and apply today!

force's plan for the new Community Investments Program, and two months later, the board approved a modest budget of \$350,000 to fund the CIP.

"It was exhilarating to be on the ground floor of something that we all believed would create lasting change," Doles says.

The Community Investments Program launched with two components worth \$200 each: the Promise Grant, which the ENF had been funding through the Drug Awareness Program since 1999, and the Gratitude Grant, which would be available to Lodges that achieved the National President's per-member-giving goal for the ENF.

It was a modest start for the program, but the CIP has grown exponentially ever since. This year, the CIP marks its 20th anniversary with a budget of nearly \$18 million, meaning the board has increased funding by more than 5,000 percent since that first year.

Additionally, in celebration of the anniversary, the board increased the base Gratitude Grant to \$3,000 from \$2,000 for the 2025-26 fiscal year.

"John F. Malley's foresight is unfathomable," O'Kelley says. "Especially in the context of that time. The stock market crashed a year after he founded the Elks National Foundation. He kept his focus through the Depression, investing money that was needed *then* so that the Elks could do much more now.

"Debbie and I, our colleagues on the staff, and the board members we've worked with, our contribution is the CIP, and it's the CIP that turned Malley's dream into reality. The CIP has united the forces of the Order into a mighty army in service of mankind."

*This year, the ENF allocated nearly \$18 million to the CIP so all the Elks who dream of bettering their community can make that a reality, too.*



# FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP

We salute the following members of the 2024-25 Foundation Fellowship who contributed \$1,000 or more to the Foundation from April 1, 2024, through March 31, 2025. To learn more about the Foundation Fellowship and to view the benefits for each level, visit [enf.elks.org/fellowship](https://enf.elks.org/fellowship).

(+ Denotes deceased member; ^ Denotes ENF Trustee; > Denotes John F. Malley Society;  
\* Denotes Fidelity Club; # Denotes Loyalty Club; < Denotes Named Scholarship donor)

## CHARITY (\$10,000)

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