



Building Better Lives for Veterans

**2021-22 ENVSC
Annual Report**

**Serving Our
Nation's Veterans**

Behind the Scenes at the ENVSC

2021-22 was a year of changes! It was John Amen's last year as Chair of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission. As Covid numbers rose and fell, restrictions at Voluntary Service facilities sometimes changed overnight, making planning even more difficult.

We expanded our Welcome Home program to two new cities, offering Elks Emergency Assistance to veterans and Focus Grants to Lodges in new locations. Our office worked to build relationships with new Social Workers and VA staff in different states, while Lodges put in the work to identify the needs of veterans experiencing homelessness and build projects that could help.

After 25 years working for the ENVSC, Department Coordinator Silvia Holman retired. "This has been a year of transition since my colleague Silvia retired," shares Programs Coordinator Hannah Graber. "She taught me so much about working with Elks volunteers and the history of our programs. Many of our volunteers have told me they miss her, and so do I!"

Amidst program expansions and updates, we worked to fill her shoes and handle the new workload for our team.

Rene Villalobos, USMC veteran, joined us halfway through the fiscal year. The only veteran on the team, he brings an invaluable perspective to our programs and our work. "Being a person who is a veteran and has dealt with a lot of issues that these veterans are currently facing, I feel a certain connection and duty to make sure we provide the best support possible."

Feeling that obligation to care for veterans is something Elks can identify with, and our whole team works hard to do the most we can with our time and resources.

"As we expand the reach of our programs, we have been building systems to make our work more efficient," shares Programs Associate Nadezh Mulholland. "This includes things like making sure the checks we mail for the Emergency Assistance Fund get to their intended recipients quickly and formalizing the onboarding process for new social work partners. It is all about streamlining the administrative elements of our work so that we can serve more veterans."

Finally, it's been a year of refining our programs and building our team's expertise. We learned much during the pandemic and worked closely with our volunteers to adapt as needed.

"Speaking directly with volunteers helps me get to know them, and their feedback gives us direction for our programs and communication. When issues arise, hearing about the situation from several perspectives is helpful for finding a solution," Graber notes.

For a volunteer-powered organization like ours, that's what it is all about.

We're so happy to share this behind the scenes look at our programs. Our goal is to be judicious with our funds and efficient with our time, so that our volunteers can focus more of their efforts on direct service to veterans in need. We're proud of what we've accomplished together with our volunteers and supporters, and we're excited to share the results.

– Mary Morgan, ENVSC Director



Lakewood, Colo., Lodge No. 1777 hit the lanes with their Freedom Grant! Elks hosted 7 different bowling nights for residents of the Valor Point housing facility. Each outing is preceded by a group therapy session, focused on suicide prevention and cutting down on social isolation.

Now that we have 75 years of meritorious service to our Veterans under our belts, we look forward to the next 75 years and beyond of dedicated service to the bravest among us.

– John Amen, PGER, ENVSC Chair

Freedom Grants

In 2021-22, we awarded 352 Freedom Grants to Lodges, each worth up to \$2,500. Those applications rushed in during the first few days of the 2021-22 fiscal year. Spring is always a busy time at our offices. As the Freedom Grant program grows, it only gets busier.

All throughout April, Programs Associate Villalobos can be found reviewing hundreds of Freedom Grant applications. Villalobos doesn't mind all the action though. "I love taking calls and hearing the different perspectives of members. I appreciate how happy they sound because they know they are doing something important for the veterans."

If our Freedom Grant statistics are anything to go by, that happiness of doing something for veterans is contagious. Lodges report that their 2021-22 Freedom Grant projects helped them gain 298 new members last year! Altogether, **5,534 Elks new and old volunteered 33,648 hours** to serve veterans through Freedom Grant projects.

Working with Lodges and reading all the Freedom Grant applications is not only exciting but educational. "I'm learning that each community has spectacular ideas for what their veterans need. Every Lodge community is different: some are urban, and others are rural. Veterans in these different communities will have different needs," Villalobos explains. "Our grant funds help meet those needs, from helping veterans pay bills to buying hygiene supplies and food to planning a day where veterans can spend time with other veterans."

Lodges served an average of 151 veterans each with their Freedom Grants, building community connections with veterans and spreading the word about the Elks' commitment to serving local veterans. In total, that equals **51,565 veterans served**. These veterans also learn about the Elks in the process.

"We know there are many transitional veterans or veterans that have never heard of the Elks. By using these grants to be out in the community and supporting these vets, we show them that we go above and beyond other organizations, that we place veterans' needs first," Villalobos shares.

It's not just Freedom Grants that Lodges use to serve veterans though. Our members take advantage of Elks National Foundation Grants to meet local veterans' needs. In fact, Lodges used an estimated additional \$2.4 million in Community Investments Program Grant funding to serve veterans and local military members.

That's impressive.

"Through these grants and our members' actions in the community, I feel that on a daily basis, we are letting veterans know that they can count on the Elks even after their service is done," Villalobos declares.

5,534

Elks Involved

51,565

total veterans served



Portsmouth, N.H., Lodge No. 97 partnered with local groups to host an adaptive kayaking event for 21 veterans with disabilities. The full-day event kicked off with a 3-mile paddle down Sagamore Creek into Little Harbor. Afterwards, veterans and instructors headed to the Lodge for a well-earned cookout.

Welcome Home



Volunteers from Vista, Calif., Lodge No. 1968 partnered with dozens of local partners to serve thousands of veterans at their local Stand Down. Here Elks serve up smiles and meals to homeless veterans and volunteers at the event.

1,948

Welcome Home Kits

There's been a nearly 50% reduction in veteran homelessness since 2010. While we still have far to go, the Elks can certainly claim a hand in helping to make that happen. One way we contribute is by helping veterans stabilize as they exit homelessness. Last year, **Lodges provided 1,948 veterans with home supplies** through the Welcome Home Kit program.

"There are many veterans out there, young or old, that may be getting their first place after being homeless or just getting out of service. They may be only making enough money to pay rent and sleeping on their floors," explains Programs Associate Rene Villalobos. "This program is here to help veterans get what they need so they can have less stress and live a better, more comfortable life."

Lodges can apply for as many Welcome Home Kits as there are veterans who need them; some Lodges submit a handful of kits a year while others deliver one each week. The combined effect is impressive and keeps our staff busy, processing an average of 37 kits each week. This entails tallying receipts, verifying project partners, and mailing checks out within days of receipt.

All that work is more than worth it, though. "I love seeing the pictures we get and all the amazing heartfelt thank you letters and emails," shares Villalobos. "Some of the best stories come from single parent veterans who are struggling. Often when they ask for essentials, they request to help their kids first."

Our programs don't just focus on home supplies though. We also provide extra resources in the 10 areas with the highest number of homeless veterans, and focus on material goods like food, social support by building connections, and resources to help prevent homelessness. (See pages 5 and 6 to learn more about these 10 cities.)

One way we do this is by empowering Lodges in these areas to run large-scale outreach projects focused on ending veteran homelessness. We awarded Focus Grants to 39 Lodges last year to serve homeless and at-risk veterans in high-need areas.

Programs Associate Nadezh Mullholland promotes the opportunity to all eligible Lodges and worked closely with these 39 Lodges to plan and execute impactful projects.

"We opened the application this year to more cities than ever. It's been a whirlwind in the best way. It's heartening and fulfilling to see how Elks have thrown themselves into this opportunity to help homeless veterans in their communities."

It takes a lot of work to review applications and help Lodges plan out the details. "I have the privilege of hearing directly from volunteers about what does and doesn't work and how they found solutions to challenging issues, and I'm always excited to share those insights to help Lodges answer questions they may not have thought to ask yet."

The projects themselves run the gamut, and Lodges are innovative in the way they connect with local veterans.

"We know that veterans experiencing homelessness have significant material needs, and Focus Grants can help meet those needs. But Focus Grant projects are unique in that they also include opportunities for engagement and connection with veterans," Mulholland explains.

"Sharing a meal, taking a veteran shopping in person, helping them put together furniture, calling or stopping by to see how they are adjusting, and asking specific questions to understand how you can help in their transition, all make an enormous difference. You might be surprised how big an impact this kind of connection can make in a veteran's life."

In addition to funding Lodge projects in these 10 cities, we also connect directly with veterans to help them prevent or exit homelessness through the Elks Emergency Assistance Fund. Veterans can apply for up to \$2,500 in assistance with housing-related expenses like rent, security deposits or utilities.

Perhaps more so than our other programs, Elks Emergency Assistance Fund focuses on preventing homelessness. "This program is essential because a lot of people, veterans included, are one hardship away from the threat of homelessness," explains Mulholland. "Our program allows us to step in during precarious moments when veterans don't have anywhere else to turn and to be the difference between becoming homeless and remaining stably housed."

Of course, it's not limited to prevention. We help veterans with an array of housing needs. "We also play a critical role in getting veterans housed after homelessness. Even veterans who are enrolled in HUD-VASH often rely on the Elks Emergency Assistance Fund to pay their security deposit," Mulholland continues.

We recently heard from such a newly housed veteran in Los Angeles, who received Elks assistance with a security deposit.

"I wish to express my overwhelming gratitude and thanks to you. I can't completely put into words how it feels to have a beautiful secure place to live and to know that there are people in the world like you and everyone you work with, who are concerned about the rest of us and are taking action to ensure their well-being."

Feedback like that is proof enough that it's all worth it. Mulholland adds, "I'm grateful that we get to be one of those critical resources. It's really rewarding when we get thank-you notes from veterans who say they didn't know where else to turn."



West Covina, Calif., Lodge No. 1966 used a Focus Grant to provide clothing and other essentials for a veterans housing facility throughout the year. Here they are whipping up a pancake breakfast for the crew.



Allegheny, Pa., Lodge No. 339 loves the Welcome Home Kit program! They go above and beyond for the veterans they serve. This veteran requested and received extra baking supplies for her new home, so she could show off her culinary skills.

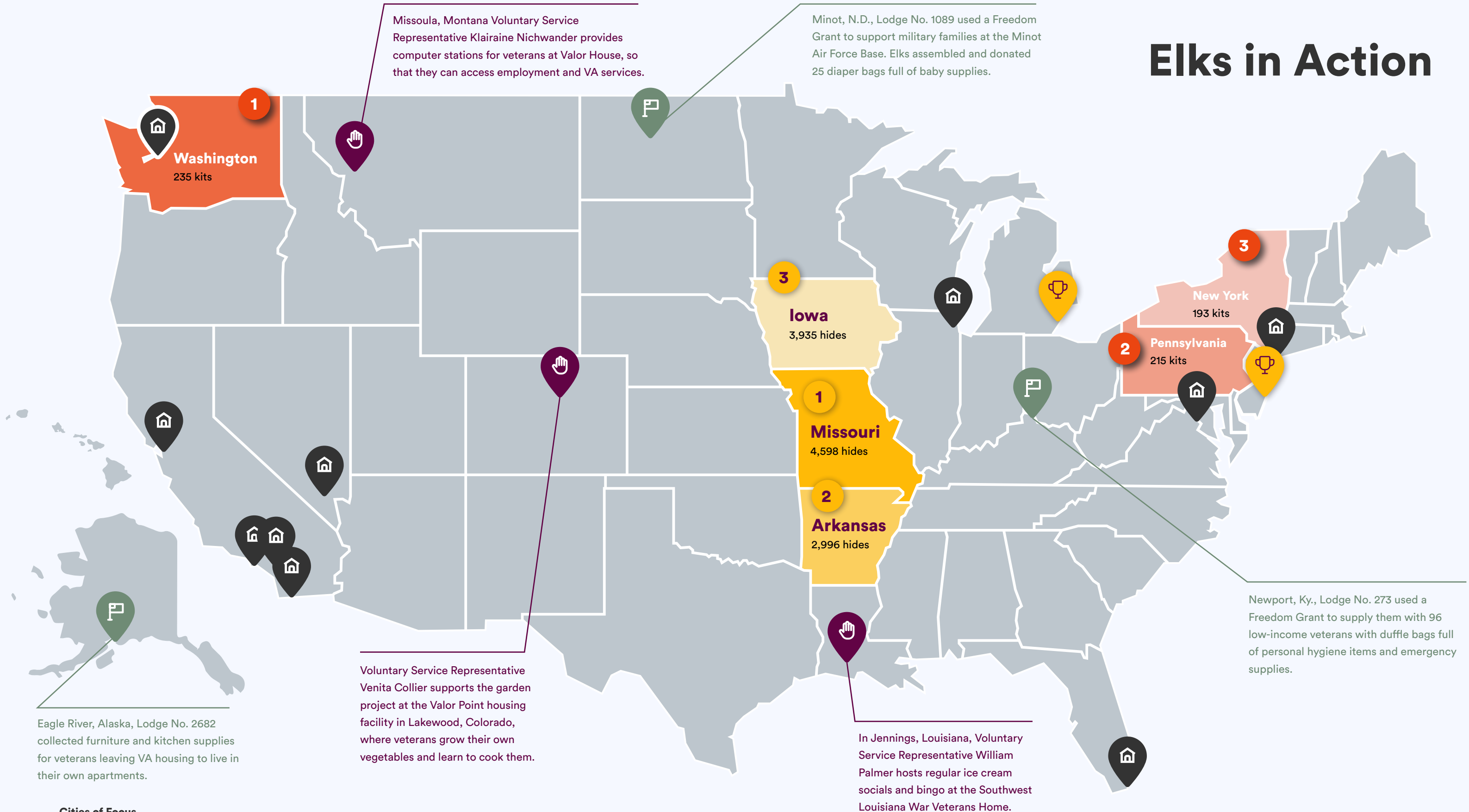
\$367,263

in Focus Grant funding

421

Veterans Housed thanks to emergency assistance

Elks in Action



Cities of Focus

Chicago, New York, Seattle,
Washington, D.C., San Diego,
Los Angeles, San Francisco, Loma
Linda, Miami, and Las Vegas.



**Home of a National Award
Winner** (see page 9)



**Featured Boost
Grant**



**Featured Freedom
Grant**

1

2

3

Welcome Home Kit Top 3 States

1

2

3

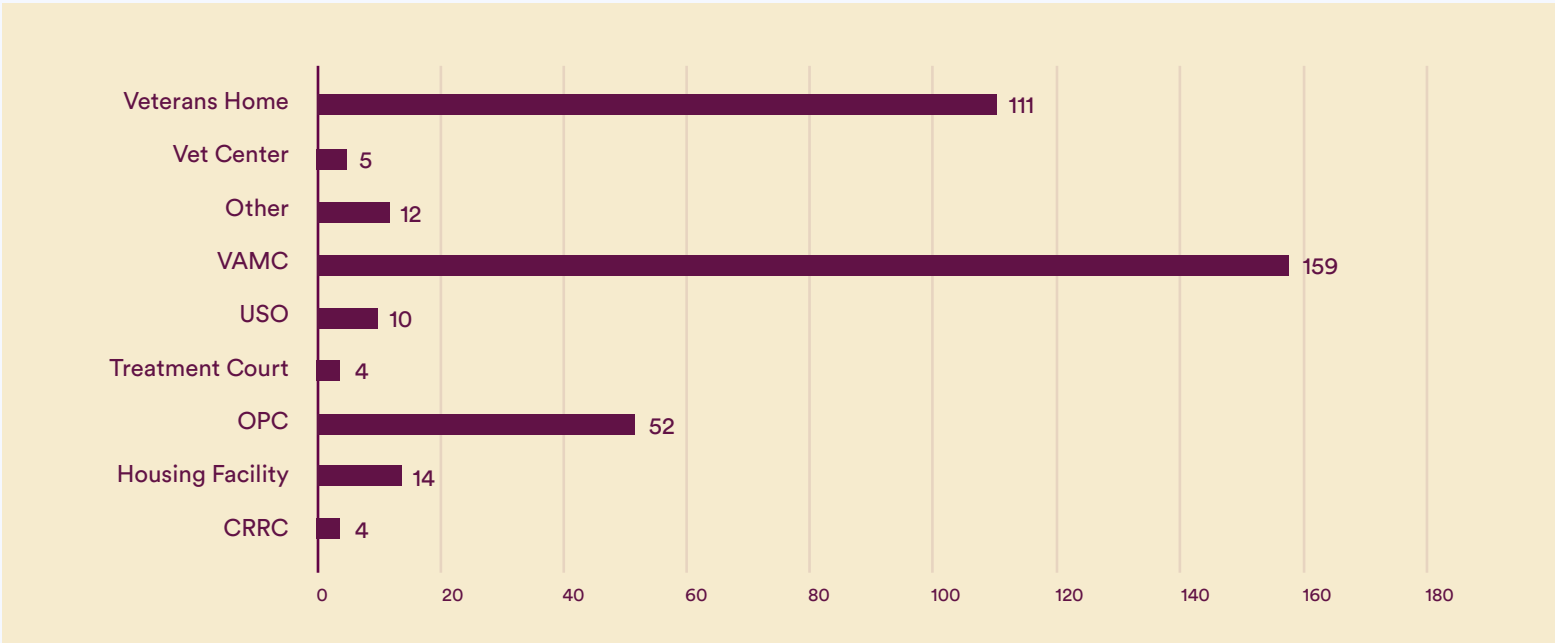
Leather Program Top 3 States

Voluntary Service



Rebecca Hutto, Voluntary Service Representative for Kerrville, Texas VAMC, delivers supplies for veterans experiencing homelessness.

Facilities Where Elks Serve



Dependability is the name of the game when it comes to the Elks Voluntary Service Program. This program stations **671 Representatives and Deputy Representatives** in veterans’ facilities across the country. These Elks are tasked with meeting the everyday needs of veterans, from offering friendship and support to hospitalized veterans to providing clean clothes to veterans leaving emergency rooms to hosting Bingo and offering canteen book prizes to veterans in long-term care.

Program Coordinator Hannah Graber runs the program out of the ENVSC office in Chicago and knows how important that dependability is to the veterans Elks serve. “Serving veterans is part of the Elks’ mission, and the feedback we receive tells us that both veterans and Elk volunteers value their participation in this program.”

Altogether, these Elks volunteers support veterans at **371 facilities**. The majority of Elks volunteer at VA Medical Centers and State Veterans Homes, but our program includes any facility where veterans go to receive care and treatment. That can include outpatient clinics, Vets Centers, and housing facilities.

“The purpose at all the facilities that ENVSC serves is to determine the needs of the veterans and do our best to meet those needs if we can. This can mean different things depending on the type of facility and the population, but we encourage Representatives and Deputy Representatives to ask questions and be flexible in the way they meet these needs.”

These Elks are our on-the-ground experts, speaking with veterans to learn about their needs, coordinating support with volunteer managers, and helping with dedicated events like Stand Downs and the National Salute to Veteran Patients. Even with some pandemic restrictions in place, these Representatives visited their facilities an average of 1.5 times a month in 2021-22.

Graber reviews hundreds of reports each month, and regularly speaks with volunteers to help them solve local problems and handle special requests. “When I review Voluntary Service reports, I check for active volunteer involvement, and make sure that the expenses match. With volunteers spread out across the country in so many different contexts, it can be difficult to keep everyone up to date and working within our guidelines.”

With hundreds of facilities, Graber spends a lot of time supporting volunteers. We also add new facilities and volunteers to the program each year, to ensure we are meeting the needs of all veterans.

“A few years ago, when all the reports were done on paper, it was overwhelming to keep things straight. Now that reports are online, they are much easier to keep track of, and we are always trying to find the best way to organize volunteer information. Reading the reports and answering questions helps me get to know our volunteers better, and that familiarity helps the entire process to go more smoothly.”

The reports aren’t all calculations and guidelines though. Together, they form a complex picture of what veterans need, and how community organizations can help veterans. And while the pandemic made big events and splashy photo opportunities difficult, the strength of this program was always the day-to-day support and the everyday dedication of our volunteers.

That dedication was put to the test again this year, with pandemic restrictions in effect in many locations. Still, our volunteers adapted and volunteered **50,626 hours**.

“I like to see all the creative activities our volunteers plan for veterans, from themed meals to axe throwing to dancing. It is always great to see direct responses from veterans themselves, and pictures of volunteers and veterans enjoying the activities together,” Graber shares.

Together, **Elks served 387,546 veterans** through this program in 2021-22. That is an impressive number, but for Graber, it’s not really about the numbers. “We hear stories all the time about veterans who don’t receive visitors outside of Elks programs, or those who don’t have an outlet where they can relate with other veterans. Voluntary Service provides a way for those veterans to connect with someone and receive the support they need.”



Voluntary Service Representative Eileen Scrivner hosts a catered lunch (with a theme) for veterans at the Columbia, Missouri VAMC.

371

Facilities

387,546

Veterans Served

Congratulations to the 2021-2022 State Veteran Volunteer of the Year Award Winners!

ALABAMA

Michael Jerrell

ALASKA

Gary Washburn

ARIZONA

Sherree Svoboda

CALIFORNIA-HAWAII

Henry A. Sanchez, Jr.

Michelle VanLerberghe

COLORADO

Leonard “Clayton” Huffman

Gina M. Frank

CONNECTICUT

Dennis Buden

Debra Scarlett

FLORIDA

Rita M. Smith

ILLINOIS

Michael Embrey

KANSAS

Janie R. Bishop

Judy K. Denton

KENTUCKY

James Matthew Rodman

Jonathan Red Beatson

LOUISIANA

Randolph E. Bergeron

Brandi Wendt

MAINE

Randy M. Ellis

Darlana Bugbee

MASSACHUSETTS

Gerald E. Clark

Laura K. O’Connor

MICHIGAN

Daniel L. Smith

Jolane Grossbauer

MINNESOTA

Timothy O. Johnson

Cheri Johnson

MISSOURI

William K. Morris

Diana L. Hughes

MONTANA

Joe J. Stark

NEBRASKA

James Wilson

Diane Kelly

NEW HAMPSHIRE

George A. Remick

Kelly Dorgan Cote

NEW JERSEY

Danny Larsen

Sharon McGovern

NEW YORK

Carl Oken

Melinda Moniz

NORTH CAROLINA

James Tate, Jr.

Gail Childers

OHIO

Melodie Rickard

OREGON

Adam Tom Britto, Jr.

Shirley Stapleton

SOUTH CAROLINA

Corbett B. “CB” Anderson

Gail Jones

TENNESSEE

Robby McDaniel

TEXAS

Michael D. Clark

George Lee Sandlin

WASHINGTON

C. Richard Garrison

WEST VIRGINIA

Stephen Barlow

Carley B. Barlow

WISCONSIN

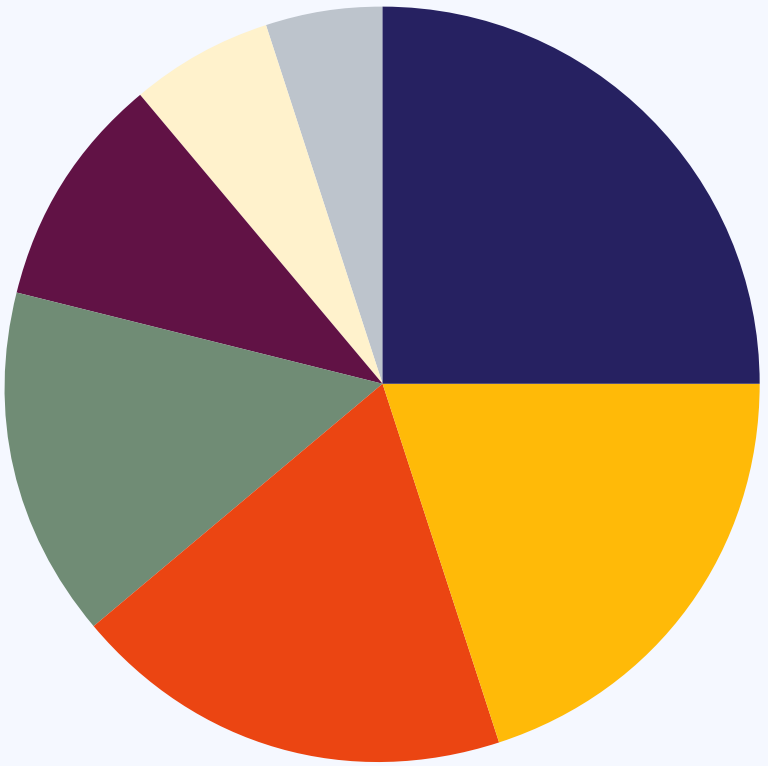
Thomas Widzinski

Congratulations to two award-winning Elks this year!

Don Tonachio of Lacey, N.J. Lodge No. 2518, was awarded the Elks National Veteran Volunteer of the Year Award, in recognition of outstanding service to veterans. Tonachio and a crew of New Jersey Elks run an impressive outreach program, helping more than 1,200 veterans to exit homelessness by offering them furniture and supplies, community connection and the ongoing support of the Elks. “The state of New Jersey looks to Don for his leadership ability and guidance to recognize our homeless veterans and provide them with a new chance for a better life,” writes PGER Malcolm McPherson, Jr.

Stewart Israel of Plymouth-Ann Arbor, Mich., Lodge No. 325 was selected as the VA National Advisory Committee Male Volunteer of the Year! This award is given annually to one man and one woman who provide outstanding volunteer service to veterans at VA facilities. Israel has been volunteering to serve veterans for more than 45 years, and he stepped up his already impressive work during the pandemic, serving at both the Ann Arbor and the Detroit VAMC. “Stew is an outstanding Elk, truly living our Elk motto. He always finds time for veterans and leads by example, encouraging and inspiring others,” writes PGER Ron Hicks.

Financials



- 25% Freedom Grants
- 20% Elks Emergency Assistance
- 19% Voluntary Service
- 15% Welcome Home Kits
- 10% Focus Grants
- 6% Leather Program
- 5% Re-Creation & Sponsorships

Financial highlights for 2021-22 were summarized from the Financial Statements of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission, with the Independent Auditor’s Report prepared by FK Advisors. The audit covered the period beginning April 1, 2021 and ending March 31, 2022. Complete financial statements, including all notes, may be obtained by contacting the Elks National Veterans Service Commission.

Revenue & Support

\$4,441,380
appropriation from The Elks National Foundation, Inc.

\$136,894
other contributions

\$4,578,274
total revenue and support

Elks Total Impact

Elks State Associations, Districts, Lodges and members from all over the country contributed to local projects. Altogether, 228,070 Elks and community members volunteered 794,954 hours of service to veterans and/or military members and their families in Elks communities.

In 2021-22, the value of this service, including time, in-kind and fiscal donations equals **\$39,030,690.**

IN MEMORY

of the Volunteers We Have Lost | 2021-2022

LEO W. BERTHELOT

New Orleans, La., Lodge No. 30
Deputy Representative, Reserve, La. State Home

BRIAN BRANTLEY, PER

Tampa, Fla., Lodge No. 708
Representative, Tampa VAMC

ROBERT COUSINO

Flat Rock, Mich., Lodge No. 1731
Deputy Representative, Ann Arbor VAMC

FELICIANO FREITAS, PDDGER

Fall River, Mass., Lodge No. 118
Deputy Representative, Brockton VAMC

LEAH GERGAL

Santee-Lakeside, Calif., Lodge No. 2698
Deputy Representative, San Diego VAMC

LARRY D. HARDIN

Oklahoma City, Okla., Lodge No. 417
Representative, Oklahoma City VAMC

JOHN KINGSLEY

Northampton, Mass., Lodge No. 887
Deputy Representative, Northampton VAMC

JOSEPH LANCASTER, PER

Towson, Md., Lodge No. 469
Representative, Baltimore VAMC

GEORGE E. LARKINS

Laurel, Md., Lodge No. 2283
Deputy Representative, Baltimore VAMC

KRISTIE MATTHEWS

Tampa, Fla., Lodge No. 708
Deputy Representative, Tampa VAMC

JOSEPH FRANK ROMERO

Alamosa, Colo., Lodge No. 1297
Representative, Alamosa VA Clinic

FLORENCE R. ROONEY

Brookfield, Ill., Lodge No. 1510
Deputy Representative, Hines VAMC

MILLEDGE SMITH

Anderson, S.C., Lodge No. 1206
Deputy Representative, Richard Campbell Veterans Home

WALTER THOMAS

Smithtown, N.Y., Lodge No. 2036
Representative, Long Island State Veterans Home

KAREN VAN HORN

Flat Rock, Mich., Lodge No. 1731
Representative, Ann Arbor VAMC

R. MARK LOZANO

Duarte, Calif., Lodge No. 1427
Deputy Representative, El Monte Veterans Village

LINDA VAN HOEK

St. George "Dixie", Utah, Lodge No. 1743
Deputy Representative, Ivins Veterans Home, Utah

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