



Elks accomplished a remarkable amount in service to veterans last year, and we’re so excited to share those accomplishments with you. From supporting the children of deployed National Guard members to providing friendship and care for Veterans Home residents, veterans and their families know that they can count on the Elks, no matter what stage of their life they are in.

This report is focused on telling the stories of veterans and of the people on the ground serving those veterans. To bring you this report, we spoke with Welcome Home Kit recipients, VA Social Workers, and shelter staff on the front lines of the fight against veteran homelessness. We connected with volunteer award winners, new Elks members, and longtime Voluntary Service Representatives.

As you flip through these pages, you’ll hear from veterans competing at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games, veterans experiencing homelessness, and veterans working hard to regain stability after overcoming addiction.

These are just a few of the stories from a year of Elks’ service to veterans, but they are an accurate representation of what goes on in Elks communities across the country every day.

Behind each grant project, each hour volunteered, and each veteran served is a story just like this.

Here are some statistics that Elks can be proud of.

3,142

Elks delivered 3,412 Welcome Home Kits to veterans exiting homelessness.

“These are people who served this country, and now they’re able to cook for themselves, they’re able to bathe, they’re able to create a sense of normalcy.”

- Jim Mulvihill,  
Lake Norman, N.C., Lodge No. 392

477,763

In 2023-24, Voluntary Service Representatives and Deputy Representatives served 477,763 veterans in 390 facilities.

“One of the things I like about the Elks Voluntary Service is the consistency. Every month, we go back to the same facility, and we’re able to see the same veterans. It gives them someone to reach out to.”

- Martin Harbolt,  
Kentucky State Veterans Chair

538

Elks helped 538 veterans exit or prevent homelessness with the Emergency Assistance Fund.

“Working with veterans is an incredibly fulfilling experience. Their resilience and strength inspire me every day. The Emergency Assistance Fund, particularly, has been a lifeline for so many veterans, and I feel privileged to be a part of such an important initiative.”

- Miriam Barrios,  
HUD-VASH Program Assistant

93,376

Elks volunteered 70,727 hours to serve 93,376 veterans with Freedom and Focus Grants.

“Being a part of this organization, the Elks, has brought new friendships, partners with common interest, and a zeal for wanting to help others. This past year has been a learning curve and we feel we are making a difference in others’ lives and our own. We want to continue to grow and share our blessings with others.”

- Sherry Clarke and Morgan Whaley,  
members of Statesville, Pa., Lodge No. 1823

\$55,654,802

In total, the Elks’ time and support of veterans is valued at \$55,654,802 for the 2023-24 year.

“People who served in the military dedicated themselves to defending our freedoms and way of life. The Elks provide the platform and resources to recognize what they have done in a meaningful way, and honor that service and commitment.

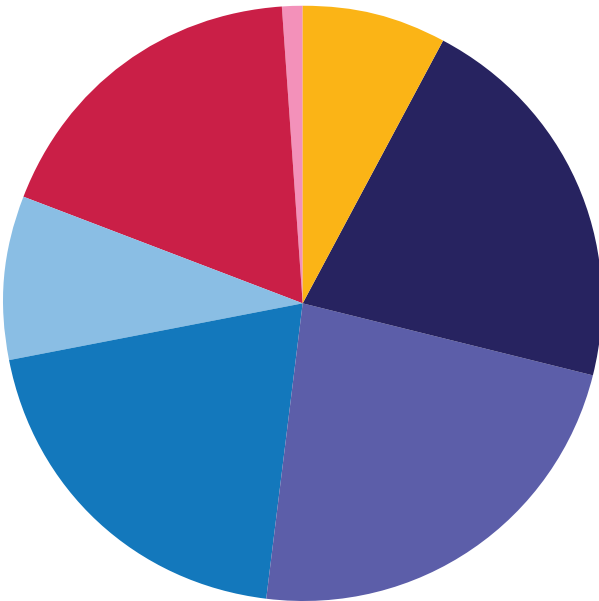
It all comes full circle. Elks help veterans get on their feet, take pride in themselves, and develop a plan for a successful future. In doing so the Elks also take pride in themselves, and in knowing they are making a positive difference in people’s lives.”

- Robert Duitsman,  
2023-24 Elks National Veterans Service  
Commission Chair



# Financials

Financial highlights for 2023-24 were summarized from the Financial Statements of the Elks National Veterans Service Commission, with the Independent Auditor’s Report prepared by CJBS Accounting. The audit covered the period beginning April 1, 2023 and ending March 31, 2024. Complete financial statements, including all notes, may be obtained by contacting the Elks National Veterans Service Commission.



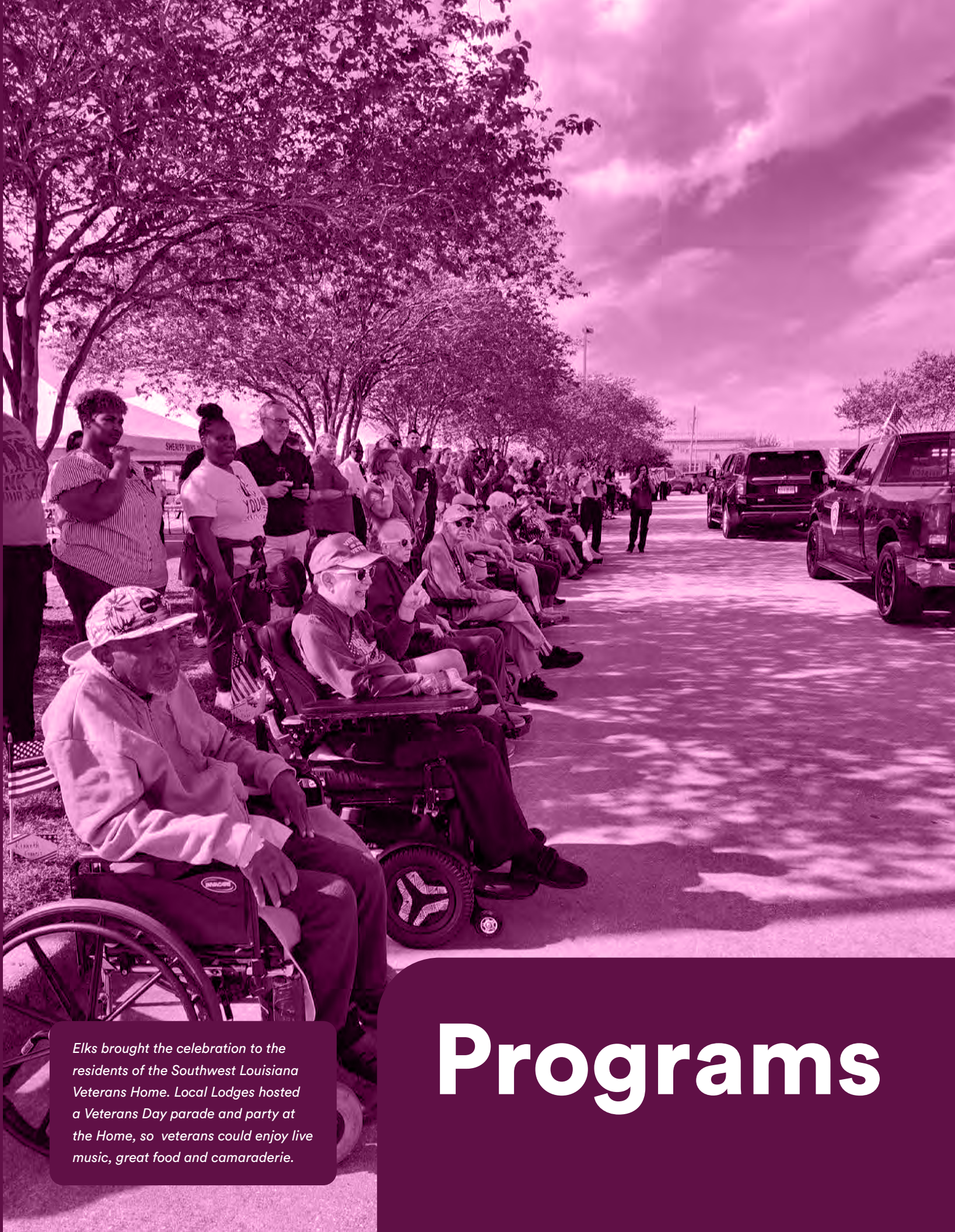
## Revenue & Support

**\$5,041,240**  
appropriation from The Elks National Foundation, Inc.

**\$140,519**  
other contributions

**\$5,181,759**  
total revenue and support

- Leather Program, 8%
- Freedom Grants, 21%
- Welcome Home Kits, 23%
- Emergency Assistance Fund, 20%
- Focus Grants, 9%
- Elks Voluntary Service, 18%
- Sponsorships & Playing Cards, 1%



Elks brought the celebration to the residents of the Southwest Louisiana Veterans Home. Local Lodges hosted a Veterans Day parade and party at the Home, so veterans could enjoy live music, great food and camaraderie.

# Programs



# Welcome Home Kits

Ten years ago, at the National Convention, the Elks National Veterans Service Commission officially joined the fight to end veteran homelessness. Since then, veteran homelessness has decreased by 25%. It's a complicated problem, and every unhoused veteran represents a challenge to be met.

But, every veteran housed is also a success. Every veteran welcomed into a home and a community is something to be celebrated. And by that measure, the Elks also have something to celebrate.

The Welcome Home Kit program had another record-breaking year last year, as Elks helped 3,412 veterans exiting homelessness establish their new homes. This is a 41% increase over the previous year, and a testament to the remarkable dedication of Elks volunteers.

Those big numbers are thanks to Lodges like Lake Norman, N.C., Lodge No. 392. Lake Norman Elks have delivered more than 470 Welcome Home Kits to newly housed veterans since the program began.

This includes veterans like Ashley Antoine, a veteran who received a kit from the Lake Norman Elks in spring of 2024.

*“I’m very proud that I served in the Marine Corps, but coming back into the civilian world was a roller coaster ride,” she shares. “The longest I was homeless for is four months. It was really tough.”*



*Elks from East Stroudsburg, Pa., Lodge No. 319 provided a bed, a couch and home supplies to a veteran recovering from a car accident that left him with metal rods in his back and knee. Previously, he'd been living in an empty apartment and sleeping on a borrowed air mattress.*

Thanks to the help of community partners , Ashley found a home and moved her few belongings in. That’s when the Elks arrived with everything she needed to set up her new place.

“The supplies that they provided such as the broom, the toaster. The coffee maker! To see that they had things that I was considering buying in the future, it was more than I could ask for.”



*Ashley Antoine meets with Lake Norman Elk members Anne and Bob Burke as they deliver a Welcome Home Kit to her new home.*



*A Maine veteran poses with his home supplies. Members of Gardiner, Maine, Lodge No. 1293 go shopping with veterans so they can choose their own items.*


It’s thoughtfulness like this that makes this program so special. Elks National Veterans Service Commission Chair Robert Duitsman agrees and shares why he appreciates the program.

*“A personal touch has meaning, and for that reason the Welcome Home Kits in my mind are the premier way that the Elks can support veterans in need and for a relatively small investment create opportunity for a bright and productive future for those who have served our country.”*

 **3,412 kits**

 **21% of kits included beds**

 **41% participation increase over last year**

 **Elks spent \$1.071 million on kits for veterans through this program**



# Freedom Grants

Elks know their own communities, and that’s what makes the Freedom Grant program shine. In 2023-24, we awarded Freedom Grants to Lodges in all 50 states: in urban and rural areas, to do things like serve military families, support food insecure veterans, help veterans recovering from PTSD, and support aging veterans.

Saratoga-Wilton, N.Y., Lodge No. 161 used its Freedom Grant to co-host the longstanding Veterans Stand Down in conjunction with other veterans groups and community providers. Veterans in attendance had access to housing resources and benefit information as well as haircuts, hot meals, hygiene supplies, winter clothes and more.

Thirty-one Elks volunteered more than 300 hours to make the event a success.

*“We hope that by providing them with an opportunity to socialize, receive much needed items, and be exposed to local vendors they will know that our Lodge and the community support them and care about their well being,” says Project Manager Kendall Hicks.*

Elk involvement is a feature of successful Freedom Grants, and last year 9,333 Elks volunteered a total of 52,479 hours.

That figure includes members of Osawatomie, Kan., Lodge No. 921, who volunteered their time and used Freedom Grant funds to hold a support event for families of deployed National Guard members.

Elks invited the families to the Lodge a few days before their Guard members returned. The Lodge provided enough poster boards, markers and stickers to make welcome signs for 71 deployed members. Families shared dinner and left with board games to take home to play together.



A young Kansan prepares a sign that says “Welcome Home Dad!”

*“The families were able to connect with people that experience the same hardships of maintaining a family unit with a member gone for periods of time,” shares Project Manager Cynthia Forsberg. “They really were grateful that we enabled this meeting.”*



**595 Freedom Grants to Lodges in all 50 states**



**86,673 veterans served**



**9,333 Elks involved**



**Elks volunteered a total of 52,479 hours**

# Focus Grants

In 2023-24, we awarded nearly \$400,000 in Focus Grant funds to Lodges in the 12 areas with the highest number of veterans experiencing homelessness.

Focus Grants are specifically for serving veterans at risk or experiencing homelessness, and projects range from running food pantries at veterans’ shelters, to hosting meals and educational events at veterans’ housing units, to helping with emergency housing and bringing supplies directly to unhoused veterans.

Westchester Lodge has received a Focus Grant for the last six years. Elks provide quarterly dinners, regular social outings, educational resources, and material support to veterans at a US Vets transitional home.

*“It is hard work but extremely rewarding, The vets are so grateful for what we do for them,” shares Fiona Engler, Focus Grant Project Manager for Westchester, Calif, Lodge No. 2050. “After a dinner at the Lodge one of the quieter vets came up to us at the door to shake hands with us and tell us how he felt like he was treated like gold at our events. Another veteran shared how US Vets and the Elks have helped him change after he was incarcerated.”*

Many of these Lodges have spent years building relationships and finding ways they can help veterans gain access to housing and stability. As a result, veterans and their advocates know they can turn to the Elks when there’s a crisis.

Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota, Fla., Lodge No. 2855 uses its Focus Grant to partner with Veterans Village, a transitional home for veterans. They provide Welcome Home Kits, hygiene supplies, and host regular meals with the residents. When Hurricane Idalia hit, Veterans Village called the Elks to help secure food and water for the veterans.



*“The luncheons are a huge success,” says Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota Focus Grant Project Manager JoAnn Reddy. “Our members can mingle with the veterans and find out their many needs. By getting involved, we can understand their challenges and help veterans succeed.”*

*“The Elks go above and beyond to ensure our veterans have what is needed to successfully get through our program, and assist them once they locate housing,” shares Latoya Pendergrass, a Volunteers of American Program Specialist. “Their partnership ensures that all the veterans serving within our program and the community can live in a safe and secure environment.”*



**40 Focus Grants**



**Elks served 6,703 veterans experiencing homelessness**



**18,248 Elk hours**



**1,371 Elks involved**



# Voluntary Service

Often called the cornerstone of the Elks outreach to veterans, the Voluntary Service Program engages 670 volunteers across the country to serve veterans on a monthly basis.

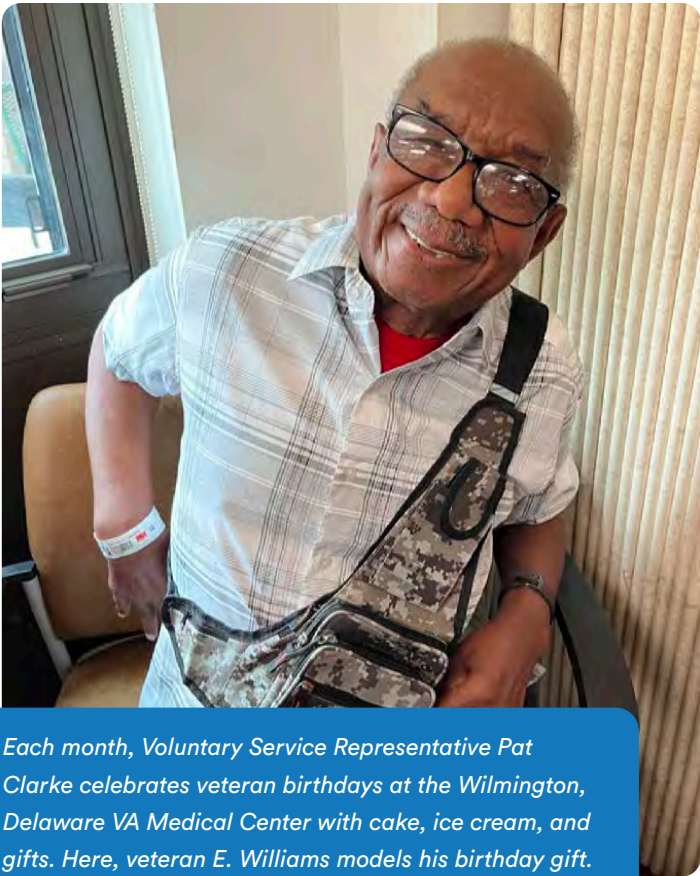
We station these volunteers, called Representatives and Deputy Representatives, wherever veterans gather to access resources and receive care. The majority are stationed in VA Medical Centers and State Veterans Homes, to help veterans access healthcare, and to improve community access for veterans residing in Homes. Support can range from buying clothes and hygiene items to hosting monthly events and being a friend.

*“I’ve learned that every veteran we encounter on our visits basically wants the same things: someone to care for them, someone to talk with, and someone to spend time with them,” shares Don Baye, Louisiana State Veterans Chair.*

A Vietnam Veteran himself, Baye started volunteering at the VA after visiting an uncle there and interacting with other veterans on the ward. “Most of them were from out of town and had no family to check on them, so when I walked in every one of the veterans wanted to talk. I spent three hours that day talking and listening to all of them.”

Elks like Don care for veterans in 390 facilities in all 50 states, Washington D.C., and the Philippines. They bring in musical performers, plan movie nights, throw summer barbecues and host always-popular bingo games.

The mainstay of the program is its consistency, with Elks Representatives visiting an average of 2.3 times each month to host activities and drop off supplies. When one Elk steps down, another steps up, ensuring that veterans can always count on the Elks.



Each month, Voluntary Service Representative Pat Clarke celebrates veteran birthdays at the Wilmington, Delaware VA Medical Center with cake, ice cream, and gifts. Here, veteran E. Williams models his birthday gift.

*“For the last 23 years, I have prepared and served a Christmas lunch for homeless veterans in New Orleans,” Baye says. “Three years ago, one veteran returned to the counter and asked if he could have seconds. He stated that this was the first hot meal he’d had in two weeks. After serving him seconds, I made him a to-go plate. He looked at me with tears flowing from his eyes and said, ‘I can’t believe someone cares about us.’ That statement made my 20 years of serving meals worth every minute.”*

The Voluntary Service program is also designed to be receptive to the needs of veterans, and over the years we’ve added new types of facilities to the program to ensure we’re meeting the needs of all veterans. From veteran’s housing facilities to rehabilitation centers, we work closely with volunteers to ensure that veterans receive support.

Over the past few years, we’ve added 7 Veterans Treatment Courts to the program, thanks to advocacy and engagement from our volunteers.

One of those Veterans Treatment Court Representatives is Bob Keyser. “Veterans Courts are a bit unique. The veterans are in a bit of trouble, and it takes a while to build up rapport,” Keyser explains. “We work with a mentor group, we’ve got a very good relationship with the courts. Graduating vets are sharing some of the experiences with the Elks to the new participants.”

Like any placement, volunteers need to take time to get to know the veterans and the staff. In 2023-24, Elks volunteered 106,000 hours in support of this program, building relationships with veterans and meeting their needs. The monthly allocation from our office helps, but many volunteers network with the Lodge and the community to do even more.

“We do barbecues for them, breakfasts four times a year, or we go to those pro-sober events. Lodge members go out and have fun and support the veterans,” Keyser continues.

Any volunteer knows that you often gain more through volunteering than you give.

*“Every day I learn something new,” Keyser reflects. “I think, the one thing about these veterans, they understand they’ve messed up. They understand that there’s a lot of support out there for them to reach out to, and the Elks are a part of that. So, I would say if there’s anything I’ve learned over time, it’s compassion.”*

 **670 Representatives and Deputy Representatives**

 **390 facilities**

 **2.3 visits per month**

 **477,763 veterans served**



Elks repaired and installed garden boxes at the Bruce McCandless Veterans Community Living Center in Florence, Colorado. No veterans can plant their own flowers and vegetables as part of the new gardening program.



# Emergency Assistance Fund

While other programs mainly serve veterans experiencing homelessness, the Elks Emergency Assistance Fund also works to prevent veterans from losing their housing.

This fund primarily covers rent, utilities and security deposits. ENVSC staff partner directly with HUD-VASH\* Social Workers to provide assistance directly to veterans at risk of losing their housing, and those seeking to gain housing.

\*(HUD-VASH is a partnership between the U.S. Department of Housing Urban Development, and the Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing program.)

In 2023-24, Elks helped 538 veterans prevent or exit homelessness with direct financial assistance up to \$2,500. Veterans request only what they need and on average, receive \$1,719.38 in assistance.

That may seem like a small amount of money, but for many veterans, it's the difference between keeping and losing their housing.

*“For our low-income Veterans, the high rental rates and utilities make it difficult for Veterans to gain stability, even with a VASH voucher,” explains Nita Martinez, Social Worker and VASH Case Manager at the San Diego VA. “Once a Veteran misses one rent payment, it is so difficult for them to continue with everyday housing costs and figure out a way to pay what was missed.”*

Martinez and her husband are both veterans, so she understands the unique challenges that veterans face, and how programs like this function as part of a larger network of support. It also makes the process more personal.


*“Helping these veterans get housed when they would not be able to navigate it by themselves is like no other feeling,” Martinez continues. “It’s not magic though. It takes work, hard work. And sometimes things happen, life happens, and they get in a bind. Being able to reach out to the Elks and help these veterans when they thought there was no way out is amazing.”*

**“Historically, programs have addressed crisis homelessness less often than chronic homelessness. Because Elks programs are available to and support individuals experiencing crisis homelessness (and in some cases prevent crisis homelessness), the Welcome Home Initiative addresses an often-overlooked area of homelessness prevention.”**

- D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families

 **538 veterans**

 **Average amount given was \$1,719**

 **81% went to prevention of homelessness**

 **19% went to security deposits for veterans exiting homelessness**

# Veterans Leather Program

Every year, our Veterans Leather Program volunteers mobilize to spread the word about this unique program. Hundreds of volunteers spend hours collecting, preparing and transporting hides so they can be used to serve veterans.

The 2023-24 year was no different, except perhaps that it was the last year with Program Chair Dennis McAleese at the reins.

For more than 20 years, McAleese has volunteered with this program, putting in a remarkable amount of time to ensure that veterans receive the support they earned.

*“A lot of people don’t know all the work that goes into it,” says National Veterans Program Chair Stewart Israel. “I know firsthand the amount of work Dennis does. It’s a lot of work. It’s an awesome job. it’s a physical job, it’s a mental job.”*

And that’s true not just for the man at the top but the volunteers who collect and prepare hides all over the country. Last year, those volunteers donated 11,916 hides. These were made into thousands of wheelchair gloves and crafts kits, which are so appreciated by the veterans who receive them. Voluntary Service Representatives distribute these at facilities across the county. Elks also attend adaptive sports events every year to give gloves to the veteran athletes in attendance.

Louisiana State Veterans Chair Don Baye volunteered alongside a big group of Elks to pull off the National Veterans Wheelchair Games in New Orleans in 2024. In addition to cooking and serving hundreds of meals to the athletes, Elks distributed wheelchair gloves at the event.



Veterans competing at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games show off their Elks wheelchair gloves!

*“The veterans were ecstatic to receive the gloves,” Baye recounts. “Numerous veterans informed us that they look forward to the games because they know the Elks will be there distributing the leather gloves, and these are the only gloves that hold up under the constant abuse they are put through.”*

*“One veteran came up with a worn-out pair from previous Games. We gave him a replacement pair and he declared, ‘Nothing is better than these Elks leather gloves. I want to thank the Elks for making my life better.’”*

 **8 states donated 11,916 hides last year**

 **Elks distributed 928 wheelchair gloves**

 **Elks distributed 14,188 kits**





Boyd received his award at the Elks National Convention in July 2024.

# Volunteer of the Year

For his constant, steady, and expert work in service to his fellow veterans, we are proud to call Howard Boyd the 2024 Elks Veterans Service National Volunteer of the Year.

*“You could say that I have been a veterans advocate since 1966 when I enlisted in the Marine Corps, served a tour in Viet Nam, and upon getting out of the service, started working for the Department of Veterans Affairs for 35 years,” Boyd says. “Serving veterans has been my career, and I couldn’t be prouder in doing so.”*

For many, working for the VA would be enough, but not for Boyd. Though his career with the VA moved him and his family to different locations, he found and joined an Elks Lodge in each one. At these Lodges, he also found a group of people who shared his commitment to serving veterans. In 1991, he was asked to serve as State Veterans Chair for the West Virginia Elks Association. He accepted the challenge and has remained in the role ever since.

Within West Virginia, Boyd worked with the state to establish the Adopt-a-Veteran Committee, and built the program up to provide thousands of dollars a year to veterans in need of support. He helped establish strong support for the Veterans Leather Program within the state, rallying the huge amount of volunteer support needed to keep this program running.

With his experience at the VA, he guided West Virginia volunteers to make the most of their Voluntary Service positions. Nationally, his connections and expertise helped guide the Elks to expand and improve Elks participation in the Voluntary Service program.

Upon Boyd’s retirement from the VA, he received a Distinguished Career Award from then VA Secretary Anthony Principi. With the Elks Veterans Service Volunteer of the Year Award, we honor Boyd for his time outside of work, building connections, recruiting and supporting volunteers, and always staying true to his mission of service to veterans.



Florida Volunteer of the Year Captain Fred Jaca (center) delivers supplies to the VA, as part of his Lodge’s Focus Grant project.

ALASKA	Robert M. Jones		
ARIZONA	Linda Seggie	Barry Carlile, Jr.	
ARKANSAS	LeRoy Dunham	Susan Mattix	
CALIFORNIA-HAWAII	Samantha Arrieta	Stanley R. Huls	
COLORADO	Clifford Fejfar	Trudy Gagas	
CONNECTICUT	Peter DePaola	Jamie DePaola	
FLORIDA	Carol A. Barkalow	Federico Jaca	
IDAHO	Lawrince D. Hovorka	Patricia L. Truden	
ILLINOIS	Alice F. Beck	Bobby J. Edwards	Robert Kane
IOWA	Nina K. Steele	Michael Goodwin	
KANSAS	Stanley Willis	Linda Stelzer	
LOUISIANA	Francis Berthelot	Mark Moody	
MAINE	Darelyn Kearns	Barry Robertson	
MD-DE-DC	Tim Perri	Robert Trafton	
MASSACHUSETTS	Sheryl A. Grabon	Mark Ellis	
MICHIGAN	Robert Hook	Cynthia Ross	
MINNESOTA	David Hamalainen	Melanie Hamalainen	
MISSOURI	Samantha Barrett	Paul Sells	
MONTANA	Barrie L. Boulds		
NEVADA	Timothy Murray	Karen Murray	
NEBRASKA	Eva Drabek	Dwayne Drabek	
NEW HAMPSHIRE	Robert R. Gravel	Elyse Gallo	
NEW JERSEY	Margaret Williams	Martin Hickey	
NEW MEXICO	Michael Kurimski		
NEW YORK	Denise Grudzinski	Jack Hall	
NORTH CAROLINA	Joseph Elko	Frances Quigley	
NORTH DAKOTA	Marge Gourde		
OHIO	John Wade	Gerold Wilkins	
OKLAHOMA	Tom Shotwell	John Mayes	
PENNSYLVANIA	Kelly K. Kelley	Dolores Dunstan	
SOUTH CAROLINA	Antinea Martin Alexander	Melinda Woodhurst	
TENNESSEE	Tracie Wells	Angelika Lamie	
TEXAS	Rachel Sanderson	Gordon Stellpflug	
UTAH	Richard Wilson, Jr.		
VIRGINIA	David R. Brooks	Erin Strickland	
WASHINGTON	Patricia Gow	Darold R. Stayton	
WEST VIRGINIA	Sandi McEowen	Michael McGuffin	Howard Boyd
WYOMING	Pete Kendzior		



# In Memory of the Volunteers We've Lost



Robert A. Barbour	Middleton, Conn., Lodge No. 771 Deputy Representative at Montrose VAMC
John O. Butler	Hot Springs, Ark., Lodge No. 380 Representative at Hot Springs VA CBOC
Carol J. Bonura	New Brunswick, N.J., Lodge No. 324 Representative at New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home, Menlo Park
William D. Boudreaux	New Orleans, La., Lodge No. 30 Representative at New Orleans VAMC
Raymond M. Garrity	Nashua, N.H., Lodge No. 720 Deputy Representative at Dalianis House
Jesse Hoch	Reno, Nev., Lodge No. 597 Deputy Representative at Reno VAMC
Horace E. Jones, Jr.	Front Royal, Va., Lodge No. 2382 Deputy Representative at Martinsburg VAMC
Francis Lorenz	Atchison, Kan., Lodge No. 647 Deputy Representative at Leavenworth VAMC
William Mayer	Haverstraw, N.Y., Lodge No. 877 Deputy Representative at Montrose VAMC
Cantalicio Mestas	Pueblo, Colo., Lodge No. 90 Representative at Pueblo CBOC
Jim McLain	Kinston, N.C., Lodge No. 740 Deputy Representative at North Carolina State Veterans Home, Kinston
C. Larry Nichols	Sumter, S.C., Lodge No. 855 Representative at Columbia VAMC
Renee Petito	Harrison-East Newark, N.J., Lodge No. 2326 Deputy Representative at Lyons VAMC
Joseph E. Romano	Vineland, N.J., Lodge No. 1422 Representative at New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home, Vineland
William A. Schindele	Willmar, Minn., Lodge No. 952 Deputy Representative at St. Cloud VAMC
Robert W. Shulda	Westerly, R.I., Lodge No. 678 Deputy Representative at Providence VAMC
Robert D. Streeter	Iowa Falls, Iowa, Lodge No. 1674 Representative at Iowa Veterans Home, Marshalltown
Patricia L. Tabb	Watertown-Beaver Dam, Wis., Lodge No. 666 Deputy Representative at Beaver Dam CBOC
Keith Wilson	Elk City, Okla., Lodge No. 2343 Representative at Oklahoma Veterans Home, Clinton
Elizabeth A. Waltenbaugh	Indiana, Pa., Lodge No. 931 Deputy Representative at Aspinwall VAMC