



Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER

Elks Care – Elks Share



New Officers elected, PERs honored in February

A small group of actors and entertainers began this great Order on February 16, 1868. Look where we are one hundred and fifty six years later: We are still here to serve those in need, proving that *“Elks Care—Elks Share.”* What a journey!

February is a very busy month for us as Elks. Only two months remain in the Lodge year. If you still have goals you haven't met, it's not too late. Get to work on them, they can still be accomplished. Use the next two months wisely and you certainly can get a lot done. It would be quite an accomplishment to announce to all of your Members that you have successfully reached the goals you set almost one year ago.

February is when new Officers are nominated and elected for the new Lodge year. All Lodges in our Order should elect leaders who are going to be dedicated to



**Message from
the Grand
Exalted Ruler**

**RANDY P.
SHOOK**

the affairs of your Lodge and community. The success of your Lodge programs will depend upon their leadership. Lodge Secretaries should note that February is when you must upload the Lodge directory into the CLMS2 web page. This information is extremely important so that updates are done in a timely manner.

This month we recognize our Past Exalted Rulers. We must let them know their leadership and experience is invaluable to

us. A Past Exalted Rulers Night is a great way to honor them for their contributions to your Lodge. Make them feel proud of their accomplishments.

During February, we recognize American Heart Month. This is when we get our Lodges and communities together in raising awareness to prevent heart disease. Proudly wear red during this month to show Elks care about cardiovascular health.

In addition to Presidents' Day on February 19, we also celebrate Valentine's Day on February 14. We remember the people we love and those who make a difference in our lives. To my wife, Wanda, thank you for being my valentine for the past forty one years.

Remember: *“We Are THE Elks.”*

God Bless our great Order, our troops, and the United States of America.

Chairperson report due via CLMS2Web

After the election of Lodge Officers this February and before April 15, the Secretary must complete the **2024-2025 Lodge Committee Chairperson Report** in CLMS2Web and confirm acceptance.

The WORKSHEET was mailed to all Lodge Secretaries in January to assist in compiling the needed information.

GRAND SECRETARY
Bryan R. Klatt

Remember: This information is to be filed via CLMS2Web. Please, do not mail to

Grand Lodge or your District Deputy.

With the pending automatic submission of the Annual Membership Report, all membership activity must be entered in CLMS2Web by 11:59 p.m. Central on **March 31.**

What does that mean? All membership records (additions, drops, and deaths) must be finalized. If not, the Lodge membership total will be out of balance.

GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

Still time to complete Contest 'A'

By **MARK E. EATON**
Committee Member

The Contest 'A' - All American Lodge year is quickly coming to an end. There is still time to enter your submission.

It's nearing time to finish up your paperwork and get it to your District Deputy by the end of March so they have time to review and make any corrections.

Prestigious awards like this are a lot of hard work by many people. I hope your Lodge is busy preparing and completing your entry.

The Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee would like to remind you of the dates and the process. To get started go to: elks.org/grandlodge/fraternal/files/contestALodgeCertification.pdf. You will find everything you need in that PDF.

It is very important you read the entire form carefully with its requirements and descriptions. Make sure you have strong supporting documentation which

is very critical for point value. If you are not sure you qualify for something, ask the Contest Administrator, Randall Snellenberger, for a copy of the Fraternal Committee All-American Lodge Contest "A" Supplement Manual, or check with your District Deputy. Every point is extremely important! You can use a separate sheet or the back side of the form to list all your different activities.

The Lodge Secretary must verify Lodge membership as of March 31, 2023. This will determine the division you will be judged on. Also, make sure your entry is signed by the Exalted Ruler and Lodge Secretary. It is suggested to be postmarked to your District Deputy by March 15, 2024, however the deadline for submission is March 31, 2024. This will ensure your Deputy has time to review and check it before sending it on to your State Lodge Activities Chairman. The State Lodge

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GRAND LODGE RITUALISTIC COMMITTEE

Ritual remains cornerstone of Elks experience

By **MICHAEL W. IDDINGS**

Committee Chairman

What is ritual? It is a system of rites and ceremonial actions, such as an act or series of acts regularly repeated in a set precise manner.

Since the beginning, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks has been steeped in ritual. Most of the original Jolly Corks were from England and belonged to the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes and the Freemasons, whose rituals were the foundation of the early Elks ceremonies. Over time, the Elks established their own identity by developing those ceremonies to be their own.

One of the first rituals the Elks used was adopted from the Buffaloes, the 11 O'Clock Toast. This ceremony allows us to honor our departed Members and keep their memories alive. This is one of the first rituals the public may experience when visiting the Lodge as a guest when a Member gives the Toast during an event.

The Toast was originally given at 11 p.m. The Members would stop their meeting, no matter where they were in the meeting, to toast the departed members. This ritual

continued even if the meetings did not last that long into the night. When events held at the Lodge would last until 11 p.m. or later, a break is taken at the eleventh hour to present the Toast. Nowadays, the Toast might be given at any time during the night. In many Lodges or at specific Elks events, the Toast has been given at 8 p.m. or some other suitable time. Even though some Members might perceive that timing does not correspond to the clock on the wall, it has become a practical time for the majority to hear. Isn't it better to give the Toast to all in attendance than wait until everyone has left? Nothing in the Statutes Annotated states you must wait until 11 p.m. to give the Toast. Nowadays, when there are events, the crowd often leaves at 9 p.m. When the clock strikes 11, no one remains at the Lodge.

Another ceremony created by the Elks in the early years was the funeral service, known as the Lodge of Sorrow. George McDonald, the first Secretary of the Order, created it. This was the first public ceremony for the Elks in New York in 1870 when two Members passed, and the remaining Members wanted to honor and memorialize them. Like all other rituals

and ceremonies, over the past 153 years the wording evolved to the modern-day language without affecting the meaning.

Out of all the rituals, the most important is the Initiatory Ritual. It is the first of the Elks rituals that a new Member will encounter when joining the Elks. Most important, it is where the candidate is made an Elk. Everyone who is an Elk, past, present, and future, must be initiated into the Order. During the Initiation, each station in the Lodge gives instructions and tells a story. The Grand Lodge believed this ritual was so important that it created a national contest in 1930. This contest has been held every year except in 1945 due to World War II and in 2020 because of the pandemic. In 2021, the Ritualistic Committee created the 11 O'Clock Toast Contest and added the Flag Contest on the national level the following year.

Over the years, the ritual, rites, and ceremonies of the Order have adapted to modern times while holding the values of our founding fathers.

The Grand Lodge Ritualistic Committee has been, and will continue to be, a steward of the ritual.

'Word-of-mouth' includes online communication

By **RICK GATHEN**

Membership Marketing Manager

Equally crucial to growing our membership is the power of word-of-mouth marketing, amplified in the digital age by social media, e-mail, and cell phones. Humans are inherently social and respond powerfully to messages shared during social interactions. Stories from Elks proudly sharing their personal experiences and accomplishments leverage this dynamic to strengthen the Order's reputation.

To enhance Elks' ability to share their own stories, the Public Relations and Membership Marketing Committee has curated a collection of more than 1,000 shareable images, conveniently available at virtualmanuals.elks.org/shareables/. These images, categorized by themes such as holidays or Elks programs, can augment personal stories and contribute to the narrative of the Elks' positive impact in the community.

GRAND LODGE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Secretaries have critical final task

By **W. J. BRYAN**

Committee Chairman

The end of our year is near!

Lodge elections are this month. That means new Elks are eager to get in the saddle, and other Members are ready to ride off. Caught in between are the many year-end activities and requirements to make this transition a smooth one.

Lodge Secretaries are the busiest. They will be busy updating committees and Officers, dropping delinquents, preparing tax filings and year-end reports, and yes — reporting charitable contributions.

Lodge Secretaries, we appreciate you and all that you do all year long. Keep in mind, though, that you can appoint a Local Charitable Report Coordinator to assist you.

Charitable Report Coordinators are responsible for submitting local charitable event data. Charitable Report Coordinators are not allowed access to CLMS and cannot perform any other secretarial functions.

I hope everyone has had a chance to

read and download the new Government Relations Manual. Take a moment to look at what all your local, district, and state government relations chairs do to raise the image of Elkdom. Government relations activities help increase community awareness and demonstrate our dedication to service.

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Activities Chair then sends winners on to Grand Lodge with a postmark no later than April 30, 2024.

This award shows your Lodge is working as a team. Officers and Members working together is how Lodges strengthen community relationships and build stronger ties. It shows your community how Elks accomplish amazing things.

If you don't qualify this year, start planning for next year. Put a committee together, go over the form, and start recording your entries. You will be surprised at how many things you can improve and build on. Things don't just happen—you have to make them happen.

DRUG AWARENESS PROGRAM

Podcast series, Drug Take Back Day among successes in '23

By **WILLIAM J. BRYAN**

National Director
Elks Drug Awareness Commission

Well as we try to stay warm during these winter months, I want to share with you that as of this month our *Awkward Conversations* 2023 video podcasts have been viewed more than 650,000 times!

That's fantastic news, but we have fewer than 2,500 subscribers to our YouTube channel. Want to help the Elks Drug Awareness Program? Simply go to the Elks DAP YouTube channel and hit the "subscribe" button. Sounds like a commercial, doesn't it? Well, simply put, it is! It's easy to do and believe it or not, it helps the Elks by subscribing, so please take the time to do so.

Prescription drug abuse is the nation's fastest-growing drug problem and has been classified as an epidemic by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. While the fentanyl problem receives the press it deserves, we must continually warn our youth about the dangers of drugs. During the last National Prescription Drug Take Back Day in October, the efforts of communities, law enforcement, and the DEA removed 599,897 pounds of unneeded medications from more than 4,500 sites.

The DAP directors have been busy this winter putting together a new budget and program for the coming Elks year. We are asking Lodges and specifically incoming ERs to plan, in conjunction

with their State Association's Drug Awareness Chair, a year full of drug awareness activities. We are all in this fight together and we need all Lodges on board.

If you have a specific question about a certain drug or paraphernalia, here's a great website to help you learn more: getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/drugs. Simply type in the search bar what you're looking for. This is especially good for parents and grandparents to educate yourselves on what may be happening in your communities. While our mission is to educate children, we want to help parents as well. This website can also be accessed for Spanish speakers.

Thank you to all Elks who believe our children are worth it!

ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION

CIP grants make veterans feel valued

By **PATRICK ROELOFS**

ENF Communications Coordinator

Through Community Investments Program grants, the Elks National Foundation empowers Elks to serve veterans every day.

CIP grants can be used to ensure that veterans are welcomed home when they return from service; that they have access to essentials like food, clothing, and shelter when experiencing hardship; and that they have information on accessing the resources available to them through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Brigantine, NJ Lodge No. 2428 uses its Beacon, Gratitude, and Spotlight Grants to host veteran residents from nearby supportive housing for a day of food, games, and companionship.

Just down the road from the Lodge, Veterans Haven-South and the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Vineland house veterans who have experienced homelessness, many of whom struggle with substance abuse and poor mental health. An essential part of their recovery is establishing connections with those who share their experience and help them feel like part of the community. For its Fellowship Day, the Brigantine Elks arrange transportation for the veterans to the Lodge and prepare meals. High school students join in the effort as volunteers.

"In the evening, the veterans are sad to leave but they will have plenty of food,

memories, and gifts to take with them," said Grants Coordinator Karen Geller. "Hopefully, they feel refreshed and loved at the end of the day and ready to start the next day with renewed energy, motivation, and hope."

Any CIP grant can be used to serve the Lodge's local veteran population. Reach out to the local VA office or veterans service group to start planning a project of your own.

Elks Lodges celebrate 100 years of service

The following Lodges honor their 100-Year Anniversary this 2023-2024 fraternal year during GER Randy P. Shook's term.

<u>LODGE NAME & NO.</u>	<u>INSTITUTED</u>
Palo Alto, CA No. 1471	September 29, 1923
Pittsburg, CA No. 1474	October 20, 1923
Orange, CA No. 1475	November 26, 1923
Bergenfield, NJ No. 1477	December 8, 1923
Plymouth, MA No. 1476	December 20, 1923
Lancaster, NY No. 1478	December 20, 1923
Breckenridge, TX No. 1480	February 14, 1924
Westfield-West Springfield, MA 1481	March 26, 1924
Kelso/Longview, WA No. 1482	April 24, 1924
Ossining, NY No. 1486	May 8, 1924
Middlesex, NJ No. 1488	May 22, 1924
Susanville, CA No. 1487	May 24, 1924
Brookings, SD No. 1490	June 16, 1924
Whitehall, NY No. 1491	June 19, 1924
Ticonderoga, NY No. 1494	July 1, 1924

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Then, veterans and volunteers connect over the phone on a weekly basis.

Volunteers receive specific training to ensure they are prepared for the program. This training covers topics like confidentiality, privacy, customer service, empathy, and boundaries. Volunteers do not provide clinical, spiritual, or financial advice to veterans or their caregivers.

The program is a popular one. Over 80% of the veterans who participate in this program said the regular visits helped them to feel less lonely, and 77% said the experience increased their overall well being. Volunteers also said they loved having this opportunity to connect with veterans.

The VA is gradually expanding this program across the country. Veterans who would like to be matched with a volunteer can ask a clinician or advocate for a referral to get started. Volunteers who want to get involved should contact their local VA to find out when training is available.

If your area doesn't have training scheduled for Compassionate Contact Corps yet, let VA staff know you are interested in helping bring the program to your community.

However you choose to serve, remember that a few hours of your time could mean the world to a veteran in need of support.

Elks Care — Elks Share

Celebrate the National Salute to Veteran Patients

By **MARY K. MORGAN**
Commission Director

Summer is for barbecues and boat rides. Fall brings football game days and pumpkin patches. December is a time for holiday celebrations. February, on the other hand, doesn't get as much love.

Which makes it the perfect time to show your love for serving veterans. People naturally think of sharing and donating around Thanksgiving and Christmas. By February, donations and activities have dropped. For many hospitalized veterans, their spirits have also dropped.

That's one reason VA hospitals celebrate National Salute to Veteran Patients

week every year. This year, it takes place February 11-17.

Get together with your Lodge to drop off donations, schedule volunteer visits, and plan additional activities for veteran patients this month. In the past, Elks have hosted Super Bowl parties, collaborated with a classroom or Scouting troop to create Valentine's Day cards for veterans, and delivered supplies and treats to veteran patients.

If planning parties and events isn't possible, there are other ways you can connect with veterans.

Consider volunteering with the VA's

Compassionate Contact Corps program. Created by the Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE) during the pandemic, the program connects volunteers with veterans to facilitate ongoing conversation.

Veterans in the program are often given a "social prescription" by clinicians who believe the veteran may benefit from increased social connection. Volunteers are trained and carefully screened to be matched with veterans who share interests and experiences.

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BRYAN R. KLATT, Grand Secretary
**Benevolent and Protective
ORDER OF ELKS**
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February 2024

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GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Medals of Valor, Service recognize community heroes

By **DUANE D. HELDENBRAND**
Committee Member

In the spirit of camaraderie and dedication that defines our BPOE community, we as Members have an opportunity to shine a spotlight on many unsung heroes among us.

The Medals of Valor and Medals of Service are a testament to the extraordinary contributions of our first responders, emergency medical services, and law enforcement officers. Every day our Members go above and beyond, embodying the values of benevolence, patriotism, and community service that

are at the core of the BPOE.

The Medal of Valor recognizes families who have lost loved ones who showed exceptional courage, selflessness, and resilience in the face of challenges, demonstrating the true essence of Elkdome. The Medal of Service celebrates the commitment and tireless efforts of individuals who consistently dedicate themselves to the betterment of our community. It is a nod to those who understand that service is not just an action but a way of life.

By ordering and proudly awarding these distinguished medals, you not only

honor the recipients, but also inspire others to reach for new heights in their service to our communities. The medals can be obtained by your Lodge Secretary from Grand Lodge Supplies. Use code #575100 for Valor and #575200 for Service.

Your support ensures that the BPOE continues to be a beacon of hope, charity, and goodwill. Let us come together by recognizing and celebrating the courage and sacrifice made within our midst. Each medal awarded tells a story—let them be a story of honor, service, and Elkdome pride.