



Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER

Elks Care — Elks Share



May calendar has events for moms, military, youth

May is a busy month for the Elks. There are several different opportunities to show our communities that “*Elks Care—Elks Share*” and “*We Are THE Elks.*”

The Elks National Youth Week is celebrated May 1–7. This is an excellent time to show our support for the many programs dedicated to our youth such as scholarships, Hoop Shoot, Drug Awareness, and the Dictionary Project, just to name a few. They demonstrate to our communities the dedication we have for the youth of today and our commitment to helping them become the leaders of tomorrow.

The second Sunday in May is Mother’s Day, a time to honor mothers and grandmothers. Our mothers spent endless hours teaching and guiding us, shaping who we are. They inspired us,



Message from the Grand Exalted Ruler

**RANDY P.
SHOOK**

protected us, taught us about devotion to family, and loved us unconditionally. We give them gifts, take them to dinner, cook them a special dinner, or send them flowers— anything to make them feel as special as they are. To them, Mother’s Day is a day to be surrounded by loving family. **Happy Mother’s Day.**

This is also the month we celebrate Armed Forces Day, on Saturday, May 18. This is the day to say **thank you** to

all men and women in all branches of the military. These individuals protect and defend this great country of ours. Please show them that **Elks Care** and appreciate their service to our country.

Memorial Day, on May 27, is a time to demonstrate patriotism for our great country, exhibit pride in our flag, and show our commitment and appreciation for those veterans who made the ultimate sacrifice so we can live free. There are many services that honor these deceased military men and women. Please take the time to hold a ceremony or participate in a community remembrance for the heroes who served.

Finally, remember GER Award for DDs deadline is on the 15th. The Annual Report and Annual Charity Report are due May 1.

Pre-register and acquire badges for convention

Pre-registration for the Austin Grand Lodge Convention is available at elks.org/convention/prereg.cfm through June 26.

The online pre-registration fee is \$50 for all Members, while the on-site registration fee will be \$60. A current credit card for PayPal will be needed.

GRAND SECRETARY
Bryan R. Klatt

There is no fee for a non-Elk spouse or guest.

On-site registration will open on Friday, June 28, from noon to 4 p.m. When you arrive at the Austin Convention Center, go to the designated pre-registration line in the Registration area. You will need your e-mail confirmation and current membership card to receive credentials (and voting credentials, if qualified) for you and your spouse or guest. A registration badge will be required to enter the exhibit hall and all

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G/L PR AND MEMBERSHIP MARKETING COMMITTEE

Elkdom celebrates major milestone

By RICK GATHEN
Membership Marketing Manager

In an era where organizations often struggle to maintain their memberships, it is with great pride and excitement that we announce the Order’s remarkable achievement: three consecutive years of membership growth.

This milestone, reached for the first time in 45 years, stands as a testament to the dedication, hard work, and collective spirit of everyone involved in the BPOE.

The significance of this accomplishment cannot be overstated. Amidst a landscape of shifting priorities, evolving interests, and competing commitments, the sustained growth of our membership speaks volumes about the enduring relevance and appeal of the Order’s mission and values. It reflects the trust and confidence placed in us by our Members and the wider community alike.

Each year of growth signifies the

expansion of our Elks family, the strengthening of our bonds, and the widening of our impact. It is a validation of the efforts invested in fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment where individuals from all walks of life find meaning, purpose, and belonging.

Behind this success lies the dedication and hard work of countless individuals — from our tireless volunteers and dedicated staff to our passionate and engaged Members. It is their commitment to our shared vision and their unwavering belief in the transformative power of community that has propelled us forward, year after year.

Moreover, our achievement of three consecutive years of growth serves as an inspiration and a source of encouragement for the future. It demonstrates that even in the face of challenges and uncertainties, progress is not only possible but achievable through perseverance,

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DRUG AWARENESS PROGRAM

Structure, communication help to discourage drug use

By **WILLIAM J. BRYAN**
National Director

For nearly four years now, the Elks Drug Awareness Program and the Drug Enforcement Agency have teamed up to provide parents and grandparents with tools on how to talk with kids through our *Awkward Conversations* podcast and video series. There's more to come later this year, but now is the time to talk to your children and grandchildren.

Without a doubt, you still might have some reservations: *"Will my children think I am too strict if I tell them not to smoke, drink, and use drugs?"* Developing a strong bond with your children at an early age is important, but as the parent or grandparent, it is your job to provide the rules, structure, and discipline to raise a healthy child. Be a parent, not a pal. Set rules and consequences for breaking

those rules. Your children will surely test you by pushing the boundaries. This is to be expected. Stay strong and follow through with the consequences previously set. Children and grandchildren of Elks need to know that without establishing these boundaries, kids will be lost.

"Will my kids listen?" Adolescents who have a good bond with an adult are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Tell your children you don't want them drinking or using drugs. Explain to them how you feel and what you expect from them. For example, you might say: "I know you may be tempted to try drugs, but I also know you're really smart. That's why I expect you to avoid drugs—no matter what your friends do. Agreed?" or "It worries me to know how easily you could damage your brain or develop an addiction. Will you promise me you

won't try things just because the people you hang out with try them?"

Spend time with your kids and learn what is going on in their lives. If they think you will be there for them, they will be more likely to talk to you about drugs or situations that make them feel uncomfortable. This is especially important during times of change—such as a new school, a move, or a divorce—when they may feel anxious.

As awkward as it may be... now is the time. Have the conversation.

In other news, the directors of the Elks Drug Awareness Commission are busy planning a two-day training for all State Chairs as well as an open house for all attendees to the Grand Lodge Convention in Austin, Texas. We hope to see you there and at our booth in the convention center.

GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Celebrating student achievement validates hard work

By **LANCE C. KNIGHT**
Committee Member

Congratulations to all recently installed Exalted Rulers and Lodge Officers! You should be proud that the Members of your Lodge selected you to serve in a leadership role for the 2024-2025 Lodge year. All of you possess attributes, which when combined, will help you to work as a team for the coming year in making a difference in your community and Lodge.

As the school year is ending, now is the right time to contact the schools in your area to review or start a youth recognition program such as the Student of the Month/Year and/or Teenager of the Month/Year. The Lodge Activities Committee would work with your local school officials to administer the youth recognition program so it's ready to begin the new school year.

The focus of this program is to acknowledge outstanding young men and women for achievements in school and community life — fine arts, hobbies, athletics, classwork, church, community service, industry, farming, and more. Their accomplishments should be praised. Working in conjunction with school administrators, a student nominating committee may be named. This committee would be responsible for screening Teenager and/or Student of the Month

nominees in both junior and senior high schools, selecting an outstanding boy and girl each month, and then yearly, giving them awards and publicizing their accomplishments.

Fillable certificates, signed by the Local Lodge Exalted Ruler and Youth Activities Chairman, may be downloaded in the Grand Lodge Activities Committee section of elks.org. If you have this program in place, honor those award winners in all categories with a special recognition activity at the Lodge.

The Grand Lodge Activities Committee page on elks.org has all the materials needed to implement a successful Youth Recognition Program in all areas. All the certificates, guidelines, nomination forms,

posters, news releases and multimedia videos are available to all Local Lodges, districts, and state Youth Activities Chairs to download. It includes the contact information for all Grand Lodge Activities Committee members and their areas of responsibility, plus those states they are assisting during the fraternal year. This is an excellent way to let our communities know **"We Are THE Elks!"**

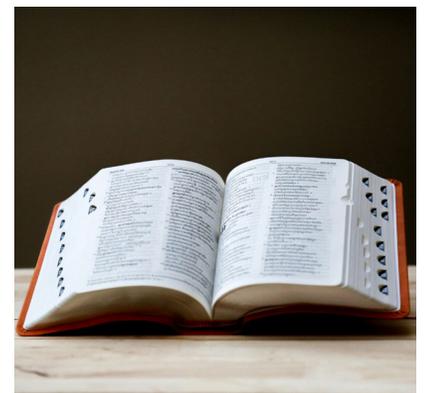
Your GL Activities Committee looks forward to assisting you and your Lodge to promote all the programs in your community. Be sure to visit the Activities Committee booth at the 2024 Grand Lodge Convention in Austin. **"Elks Care — Elks Share"** exemplifies the commitment to our youth recognition programs.

The Elks have successfully completed another year with the Dictionary Project.

Since 2003, 1,257 Lodges have participated in this program providing 4,426,142 students with dictionaries. This school year alone, the Elks were able to provide 85,628 dictionaries to our third graders.

That means we were able to get our name out to more than 80,000 families and let them know **We Are THE Elks!**

— Tracy Leopold,
Activities Committee Member



GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

Contest theme centers on patriotism

By **MARK E. EATON**
Committee Member

The Fraternal committee has chosen this year's Americanism theme: *"What does patriotism mean to me?"*

This should prove to bring a wide variety of essays. We look forward to reading the different interpretations of this year's subject.

The contest has separate divisions for fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. For each division, first place wins \$1,000, second place earns \$500, and third place gets \$250.

There are some important dates to remember. If you miss your deadline, your essay will be ineligible to win. Keep in mind all initial essays should go to the Local Lodge first for judging. It is important to communicate this information to your schools and teachers.

Also, you should send your essay to the Elks Lodge nearest to your home, and only to one Lodge! Each level of judging will send the top three in each division to be judged on the next level.

Deadlines

- Student/teacher sends essays to Local Lodge: No later than December 15, 2024.
- Local Lodge sends to District Chair: No later than January 31, 2025.
- District Chairman sends to State Chair: No later than February 28, 2025.
- State Chair sends to Contest Administrator: No later than March 31, 2025.

Rules

1. No more than 300 words. Essays must be typed or legibly printed in ink (by the entrant).
2. Must be submitted to the Lodge nearest their address.
3. The participant must be identified by name, grade, school attending, and the sponsoring Elks Lodge on the essay itself.
4. The cover page provided on our website must be attached to the essay. This cover sheet will follow the essay through each level of judging.

Judging and Scoring

1. **Originality.** Avoid the use of clichés and worn-out words and phrases. *30 points.*
2. **Development of the theme.** Stay focused on ideas and thoughts. Don't ramble. *40 points.*
3. **Mechanics and neatness.** Use proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. *30 points.*

Publicize your contest via social media, newsletters, and e-mail blasts, as well as through local newspapers and radio. Prizes at the local level are also a good idea for increasing participation.

National winners of first, second, and third place in each division will be announced in our spring newsletter. Awards can be picked up at the Fraternal Committee booth at the 2025 Grand Lodge Convention in Kansas City, MO at the conclusion of session.

14 states lauded for informative, vibrant bulletins

By **THOMAS W. FRAKER**
Committee Member

Contest I – State Bulletin Contest recognizes the best State Association bulletins.

Today's various forms of media have increased the pressure on the editors to create eye-catching publications.

Judging is based on four categories: **Content, Layout & Typography, Pictorial, and General.** Thank you to the many State Associations and their editors who entered.

5 Star ★★★★★ Awards

State	Editor
Arizona	David G. Dean
Florida	Rachael A. King
Georgia	Linda Lewis
Illinois	Elizabeth Conaway
Kansas	Carl E. Lindsey, Jr.
Louisiana	Buddy Hartle
MD, DE, DC	Janie Swigert
Michigan	Jean Chapdelaine
Missouri	Joy Clarkson
New York	Timothy Welpé
New Jersey	Kelly Miller

4 Star ★★★★★ Awards

Colorado	Cynthia Wyszynski
North Carolina	Ashley Buckwell
Washington	Jen Steele

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supporting a veterans housing facility in Chicago and has built a real sense of community with the residents. On special occasions and throughout the year, Elks are there to host events and donate needed supplies. From buying school supplies for the veteran's children and hosting summer barbecues to providing winter clothes and bus passes, the veterans and their families know they can count on the Elks.

Project manager Sharlene Huske said, "The veterans and their families can't thank the Elks enough for what we do for them. They always want to do something for us. We tell them that they have already. They served our country. Now it's our turn to serve them."

Visit elks.org/vets to learn how your Lodge can do more for veterans with Welcome Home Kits, grants, and more.

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innovation, and collaboration.

As we celebrate this milestone, let us also reflect on the journey that brought us here and the lessons we have learned along the way. Let us acknowledge the importance of adaptability, resilience, and a willingness to embrace change. And let us renew our commitment to serving our Members and our community with passion and integrity, and empathy.

We are filled with optimism and excitement for what the future holds. With the momentum of three consecutive years of growth, we stand ready to embark on new initiatives, pursue new opportunities, and continue making a positive difference in the lives of those we serve.

I congratulate everyone throughout the Order on this remarkable achievement. Together, we have demonstrated the

power of unity, the strength of purpose, and the resilience of the human spirit. Let us carry forward this momentum with pride and determination as we chart the course for a future filled with promise and possibility.

CONVENTION From Page 1

business sessions.

All non-Elk guests, including widows and widowers of Elks, **must** register at the Guest Registration Station at the convention center to obtain registration badges. Guests need a badge to enter the exhibit hall, see the Installation of Grand Lodge Officers, or attend any other events where they are permitted. Be advised exhibits and vendors will not open until 8:00 a.m. Saturday.

Grand Lodge registration and its required fee are **not** included in any State Association's "package" arrangement.

Going the extra mile to support local veterans

By **MARY K. MORGAN**
Commission Director

It's a new fiscal year. To our most dedicated volunteers, that means it's time to plan community projects and apply for grants. For many Lodges, a grant application is just the beginning. Here are a couple of Lodges that go the extra mile for the veterans they serve.

Salem, IL Lodge No.1678 applied for a Freedom Grant to support the food bank onsite at the Marion VA Medical Center. After coordinating with food bank organizers, the Lodge purchased canned food, meat, and other shelf stable food. The food bank, run solely by veterans

for veterans, relies on donations like these to get by. The donation inspired Elks to do more. Project manager Michael Hooe said, "This was very popular with our Lodge and was especially appreciated by our veteran members. As a result of this project, several of our veteran Members are planning a canned food drive at the Lodge to provide additional high protein foods for this pantry!"

Elks at Jacksonville, FL Lodge No. 221 put in extra time to deliver personalized Welcome Home Kits to veterans. Kits include beds, special requests, furniture,

and items donated by Lodge Members. They partner with a local quilting group to include patriotic quilts. Recently, the Lodge delivered a kit to a grateful veteran and asked if there was anything else they could do. When the veteran shared that he hadn't eaten all day and needed a bit of food to tide him over until payday, they sprang into action to bring canned food and meals right from the Lodge to help the veteran get through the rest of the week.

Elgin, IL Lodge No. 737 has spent years
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BRYAN R. KLATT, Grand Secretary
**Benevolent and Protective
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May 2024

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GRAND LODGE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Your charitable works matter—especially when reported

By **STEVEN L. JOHNSON**
Committee Member

The Government Relations Committee would like to congratulate all the newly installed Elks officers. You have the privilege of helping make this year one of the best yet for our organization.

Spring is here and summer is coming. By now you should have sent your charity reports 2023-24 to Grand Lodge. In 2022-23 we reported approximately \$500 million, and we believe only a portion of the actual information is being reported. We also believe in 2024-25 we can make it to \$1 billion if all the actual

volunteer hours and miles, etc., we give for our Lodges, states, and communities are reported.

We remind our Lodge and state volunteers and chairpersons to distribute the charitable work forms for tracking their events, hours, round trip miles, and other monetary contributions in a timely manner. Remember, this includes committee meetings, maintenance and repairs completed by volunteers, and more.

Submitting the Charitable Reports monthly to your secretary or the person responsible for entering the reports into CLMS, the national database, keeps us on track throughout the year. This

information is shared with our government officials, which in turn helps the Elks keep its tax-exempt classification status.

The success of our Order, whether at the national, state, district, or local level, depends on the success of our programs. We have a great organization promoting patriotism, community service, and programs for kids and veterans, individuals with disabilities, and others in need. Combined with our social activities and fundraising events, we have an amazing and successful organization we can all be proud of. Let's continue working together to make this a record year for the Elks.