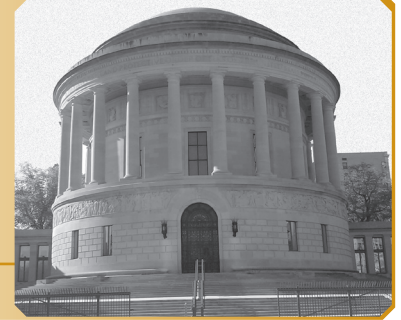




Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER

Elks Care — Elks Share



New rally cry reminds us to give back to community

Sandy and I are honored and humbled to represent the Order as First Lady and Grand Exalted Ruler for the 2026-2027 fraternal year. My first thank you is to my wife Sandy, for her ongoing support and for always keeping me grounded as we embark on this journey together.

We owe a great deal of gratitude to our friends, family, and fellow Elks—thank you for everything. The tremendous support we received from so many individuals throughout the years has given us the confidence and drive to perform our roles.

My theme for this year is **READY ELKS—LET'S GO!** You will be hearing more about this theme throughout the year as you attend District Deputy clinics. We also shared some of the reasons behind the theme during our discussions at the Grand Lodge Convention and in the Program Manual.



Message from the Grand Exalted Ruler

**TIMOTHY F.
JAEGER**

The Elks have always been among the first to respond when we see others in need. This ready-to-share attitude is the basis of my theme. When Elks hear about an issue, the rally cry *Ready Elks?* rings out, and we respond *Let's Go!*

This *Let's Go!* attitude carries through to our desire to give back to our local communities. A primary source of funding for many of these programs is the Elks National Foundation, which is known as the *Great Heart of Elkdom*. The ENF

helps build stronger communities through programs that support youth, serve veterans, and meet needs in the areas where we live and work.

The funding for scholarships has been set at almost \$6 million for 2026-2027. Youth programs have been set at almost \$3 million, and veterans programs have been set at over \$7 million.

The Community Investments Program, a series of grants that have been meeting specific local needs, turns 21 years old in 2026-2027. The CIP grant allocation total has been boosted to \$18.8 million.

The funding for state grants, which help our State Major Projects, is set at almost \$12 million. This level of funding allows the Elks to be a major difference in our communities. The support we provide makes the Foundation's work possible.

Please see GER, Page 2

Elks continue to work hard after convention

The Chicago Grand Lodge Convention was truly a memorable event. The Memorial Building was especially impressive, an inspiring testament to the virtues of peace over war. I trust it instilled a sense of pride in being an Elk and a commitment

GRAND SECRETARY

Carl T. Seibert

to preserving this historic landmark for future generations to appreciate.

Lodge tax returns must be filed with the IRS by August 15. In addition, a copy of the return must be uploaded to the Grand Lodge Auditing & Accounting Committee at: elks.org/grandlodge/auditing/lodgeForms.cfm. Please **do not** send a copy directly to the Grand Lodge or through grandlodge@elks.org as submissions are accepted only through this link.

Please see SECRETARY, Page 2

G/L GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Reporting is our obligation to the nation

By **RICHARD SHEPARDSON**
Committee Member

As Elks, we care, we share, and we report with purpose. Our nation recently marked its 250th anniversary.

For 158 of those years, the Elks have served communities across the country.

The preamble to the United States Constitution reflects on the commitments we uphold as Elks.

It calls on us to support a strong home front for our military, those who serve today and those who have served in the past—while also caring for our youth, our elders, people facing poverty, and those with special needs.

The Elks honor the dedication of those who came before us and created the roadmap for success and service to others, as preserved in the statutes and

manuals of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks.

The Elks' impact is seen in programs such as the Veterans Commission, Drug Awareness, Hoop Shoot, Scholarships, Camps, and other State Association efforts nationwide.

These efforts are possible because Elks faithfully report and preserve the history of their daily service. Each Lodge and State Association should already have four months of service recorded in its Charity Reporting System.

It is our obligation to continue to write history by reporting, recording, and documenting the cherished moments and activities of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks.

Let us be **Elk Proud** in our commitment to God, country, and citizens.

GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Dictionary Project a powerful resource

By **NICHOLAS BETTENCOURT**
Committee Member

One of the Elks' most effective partnerships is with The Dictionary Project, a 501(c)(3) that provides children with dictionaries to help them become better writers, active readers, and creative thinkers. This program is a simple and, at as low as \$3.75 per book, cost-effective way to reach children, parents, and educators.

For your Lodge, participating in the program can bring positive publicity in the community, and it can become a gateway for more youth activities with the school in the future. Fundraising outings for the project can foster camaraderie among Lodge Member volunteers.

Visit dictionaryproject.org for all the tools you might need. An interactive map displays schools that are, and are not yet, participating in the program. Sample letters and dictionaries are available to explain the project and your Lodge's involvement to superintendents, principals, and parents. Planning guides help with preparation, fundraising, book distribution, and notifying local media.

Consider including the Dictionary Project in your community projects this year. School starts soon, but there's time to identify a local school, reach out, and raise money. If you are unable to partner with a school, the local library may host an event. Or, hold it in the Lodge or in conjunction with another youth event.

We want your stories for the next B.P.O.E. time capsule!

To celebrate 100 years of the Elks National Memorial and the opening of the centenary time capsule, we are creating a new time capsule with the intention that it be opened in 2126 for the Memorial's 200th anniversary.

We are requesting that Members from around the country send us a message sharing their story.

Follow the QR code or go to forms.office.com/r/DJzELSBgvn to tell us: **What's one of your best or favorite memories with the Elks?**



GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

Elks initiative promotes organ donation

By **DAVID EDWARDS**
Committee Member

The B.P.O.E. Organ Donation Program is a nationwide initiative conducted in partnership with Donate Life to raise awareness of organ, eye, and tissue donation and to encourage donor registration.

- More than 100,000 people are currently waiting for life-saving organ transplants, and another person is added to the national waiting list every eight minutes.

- About 5,600 people in the United States die each year while waiting for a transplant.

- One in three deceased donors is over age 50.

- Living donation is possible for kidney, liver, and birth tissue.

- In 2025, more than 23,000 donors gave recipients and their families a renewed chance at life.

- In 2022, the United States reached a historic milestone of 1 million organ

transplants—more than any other country in the world.

A single organ donor can save up to eight lives. Cornea donation can restore sight to two people, and tissue donation can help heal up to 75 others. Donation truly is the gift of life.

The Grand Lodge Fraternal Committee encourages Local Lodges to educate Members and their communities about the life-saving impact of donation and to support donor registration. Members may register online through the Donate Life website at donatelife.net. Lodges may also download a Donate Life poster from the Grand Lodge website under GL Fraternal Committee, Programs, Organ Donor Program.

We encourage you to show that “Elks Give from the Heart.” Talk with your family, register your decision, and encourage fellow Members to do the same. Few gifts are greater than the gift of life.

GER From Page 1

The goal we have established for the 2026–2027 fraternal year is \$5.25 per Member. When you consider the outstanding achievements of this program, I think you will agree this is a small price. I know I feel

good doing my part for these programs.

Thank you for your continued efforts as we grow and improve our Lodges and the great works you are doing for your communities. I know you will all be quick to respond when you hear the call: **READY ELKS—LET'S GO!**

SECRETARY From Page 1

You will soon receive several copies of the Elks Daily Reminder Booklet, also known as the pocket calendar. This publication is also available for download on elks.org under the Grand Lodge Manuals, within the Secretaries section.

While August is typically quieter, the work of the Elks continues. Our communities remain in need, and our Lodges depend on continued membership growth. Focus on recruiting new Members and planning membership initiatives throughout the year. Recruiting and retaining Members is an ongoing responsibility—there is no better time to begin than now.

Grand Lodge will no longer provide printed membership applications. Lodges may print applications as needed or work with a local printer.

Applications are available on elks.org. After logging in, navigate to “Members

Only,” select Membership Toolkit, then Membership Application, upper left menu. Please make use of these resources regularly.

As of March 31, 2026: The Order ended the year with a total membership of 794,273, a net gain of 2,730, or .34 percent. This compares to last year's 2,002 net gain, a .25 percent gain.

The Order's annual Charity Report reflects total contributions of \$544,593,961 in volunteer time, mileage, and in-kind support—an increase from last year's \$531,435,344. We will continue working to ensure every Lodge and State Association reports its contributions, so our communities clearly see Elks being the difference. **Ready Elks? Let's Go!**

Many thanks to the Chicago-area Local Host Committee, their volunteers, and Past Grand Exalted Ruler Lou Sulsberger for providing the manpower for another great convention.

G/L PR AND MEMBERSHIP MARKETING COMMITTEE

Elks achieved membership growth last year

By RICK GATHEN

Membership Marketing Director

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks has reached another historic milestone—five consecutive years of national membership growth.

When the books closed on the 2025-2026 Lodge year, the Elks recorded a net membership gain of nearly 65,000 Members over the past five years. What once seemed unattainable has now become reality. Together, we have reversed decades of membership decline and established a new culture of growth throughout Elkdom.

Strong membership creates stronger Lodges, stronger charitable programs, and a stronger future for the Elks. After all, the Elks are in the people business!

Over the past five years, our Lodges have welcomed new Members, reconnected with former Members, improved Member engagement, modernized processes, and focused on creating positive experiences that encourage people to join and remain active. The results speak for themselves. Now, we set our sights on an even greater goal:

Six in a Row—Let's Grow!

GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

Elks should celebrate Patriotism Week

By JARED WANLASS

Committee Member

At the 1982 Grand Lodge Convention the Elks passed a resolution for B.P.O.E. National Patriotism Week. This year, the Elks are proud to announce September 7-13 as Elks National Patriotism Week.

We have an opportunity to express our gratitude for the sacrifices made by our armed forces, who work tirelessly to protect our freedoms every day. The Elks take great pride in honoring and supporting our veterans, and we strive to live by our pledge: "So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them."

We invite all citizens to celebrate U.S. patriotism. Let's display the U.S. flag or wear an U.S. flag lapel pin. Local Lodges

can spearhead events, such as ceremonies to honor the victims and heroes of the September 11 attacks.

Additionally, we can recognize POW/MIA Recognition Day on the third Friday in September. Constitution Day and Citizenship Day, celebrated September 17, provide us with an occasion to reflect on the rights we cherish.

We encourage you to speak to your mayor about National Patriotism Week. Share your Lodge's plans and invite them to join in. Download the National Patriotism Week proclamation at elks.org, have your mayor sign it, and help declare National Patriotism Week in your community. Together, we can create a spirit of unity and appreciation that honors our nation and its ideals.

ACTIVITIES From Page 4

This would be a great relationship to promote this Youth Program while introducing and promoting golf at the same time.

The Elks still do recognize Scouting. Your Lodge can host Scout meetings, or Lodges can make donations to local troops. Eagle Scout and Gold-Star Certificates are still available for Scouts who have earned this great achievement.

These are just few programs your Lodge can implement. When you end your Lodge year, you will be proud of these accomplishments.

Lastly, before you leave office, do not forget to submit an entry for the Community Project Contest. Be proud of your Lodge's accomplishments, and show others, too.

For more information on these programs and others, please go to the Activities Committee webpage on the elks.org website.

VETERANS From Page 4

This year, Iowa contributed 3,825 hides, an increase from last year and the most of any state. Missouri came in second place with 2,933 hides, also collecting more hides than last year.

Finally, Oklahoma, which didn't participate at all last year, landed at third place this year, with 1,050 hides. Congratulations to all our winners!

A big thanks goes to Veterans Leather Program Chair Chuck Mudge and Vice-Chair Curtis Blystone for lending their expertise, guiding volunteers, transporting hides, and making the program a success.

DRUG AWARENESS COMMISSION

Promote Overdose Awareness, other activities in August

By WILLIAM J. BRYAN

Drug Awareness Commission

The Drug Awareness Program hopes that all Elks Members are enjoying these summer days. We've just returned from the Grand Lodge Session in Chicago, and I can assure you that your State Chairs have been prepared and refreshed as the result of a two-day training session held in conjunction with the Session.

We'd like to congratulate Grand Exalted Ruler Tim Jaeger on his installation. Tim

was a past DAP Chairman from California and served as a DAP Assistant Director for several years before becoming a trustee of our organization.

Now is a time for Lodges to begin thinking about organizing Red Ribbon activities, submitting a nomination for the DAC's Enrique S. Camarena Award, and working with schools and churches to participate in our contests. Check with your State Chairs for all the details about these activities.

August happens to be Overdose

Awareness Month. How can you support overdose awareness?

- Encourage participation in events and share information about overdose issues.
 - Send the message to current and former people who use drugs that they are valued and stimulate discussion about overdose prevention and drug policy.
 - Provide information on available support services and inform those around you.
- As always, you can find answers by visiting our website: training.elksdap.org.

Volunteers make Veterans Leather Program a success

By **MARY MORGAN**
Program Director

It was an exciting year for the Elks Veterans Leather Program! Mainstay Lodges, states, and volunteers came through like usual, and a few newcomers got in the game, helping to spread the word about the Elks to new community members along the way.

In 2025-26, Elks and volunteers in nine states collected and prepared 9,460 leather hides. After doing all that work, more volunteers transported hides across their states so we could collect them all. Once consolidated, leather hides are brought

to the tannery and finished.

Much of the finished leather is sent to our glovemaking in New York. Each pair of gloves is handmade, and an Elks patch is sewn on the front. In total, Elks distributed 2,252 pairs of wheelchair gloves to veterans last year. Elks also attend adaptive sports events and distribute gloves to the veterans competing.

A small amount of leather is used by VA recreation therapists, who design craft projects around Elks leather every year.

But most of the leather that doesn't go to gloves is donated to our longtime

partner organization Help Heal Veterans, which produces and gives free craft kits to veterans across the country.

This past year, Elks donated 31,509 square feet of leather to HHV to make craft kits for veterans. In return, HHV helped Elks volunteers in State Veterans Homes and elsewhere hand out 14,570 craft kits directly to veterans. These kits help with physical therapy, foster improved concentration, and offer veterans a sense of accomplishment.



Please see **VETERANS**, Page 3

Carl T. Seibert, Grand Secretary
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GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

Let your Local Lodge have community impact

By **TERENCE P. FORD**
Committee Chairman

There is no better time to start a new project or two to show your community that *Elks Care, Elks Share*.

This is a great time to implement Soccer Shoot in your Lodge. Now that this program is recognized under Youth Activities, every Lodge should be planning a Soccer Shoot. Ride the wave from the World Cup!

Consider the Medal of Service and the Medal of Valor programs. The Service

medals are for local EMS, firefighting, and law enforcement representatives for exemplary service in the performance of their work. The Medal of Valor is for the families of first responders who have lost their lives performing their duties.

The JROTC Award Program is to recognize outstanding JROTC cadets for their leadership and community service. This award is now recognized by the U.S. Military, and the cadets can wear the medal and ribbon on their uniforms.

The Youth Recognition awards

recognizes outstanding young men and women for achievements in school and community life.

An Antlers Program offers the chance for young people in our communities to get involved with the Elks in the service-related projects your Lodge sponsors.

Start up a Jr. Golf Project. For example, your Lodge could host a Drive, Pitch, and Putt Contest. Reach out to your local golf course's pro.

Please see **ACTIVITIES**, Page 3