Kaylee Zayner: How the HOPE Scholarship Impacted one Student’s Life

2020-2021 Endorsed Officers: Meet the President, VPAL and District Vice Presidents

State Hoop Shoot Winners
Celebrate and Focus as we Begin our New Year

We have made so many positive strides in our order this past year. We all should be very proud that the preliminary year-end membership figures reflect our great state at a gain! The final adjusted numbers will be available the beginning of June. Congratulations, Florida State Elks Association. The state and lodges have the momentum to excel to even greater achievements during the year to come and I want to welcome and challenge our newly elected officers to raise the benchmark and exceed expectations.

Our Florida Elks Youth Camp continues to improve in all aspects. We hosted 2,333 children during our summer camp. We have seen many improvements in our facility and have continuing plans to improve. Nick Miller, Camp Director, and his staff are highly skilled to provide maximum enjoyment to our campers. Thank you, Nick and staff.

Our Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services led by Colleen Gallant, Director, and her staff continue to serve and grow. We are now treating approximately 540 children per week. We have 28 therapists and are planning to add two more in the very near future. Thank you, Colleen and staff.

The Smith Conference Center is fast-tracking as far as hosting corporate groups and other organizations for retreats and team building. Shannan Wilburn is constantly marketing the center. We hosted 42 groups this past year and look to see that number increase sharply once the renovations are complete in May 2020. If you or someone you know has business retreats or organizations who have retreats, give Shannan a call or email.

Most of our lodges are being “Loud, Proud and Visible” with the assistance of our marketing manager and website administrator, Laz Suarez. Laz was instrumental in getting the lodges the outdoor banners highlighting your community service donations. Thank you, Laz, and keep marketing.

We have lots of opportunities starting off the new lodge year. The Florida State Elks golf tournament was postponed to May 30-31 due to COVID-19. Check out the information and registration form on the state website. Our state convention at the beautiful Rosen Resort and Conference Center is rescheduled for June 18-20. Our national convention is scheduled for July 5-8 in Baltimore, a vibrant city with lots to do. The Florida hotel is on the Inner Harbor with water taxis, shops, restaurants and pubs. Our second annual Unmasking Autism gala is rescheduled for Oct. 17 due to the coronavirus. It is really an elegant and entertaining evening with an incredible purpose.

Speaking of “Loud, Proud and Visible,” thank you, Rachael King, Florida Elks Magazine editor, for making our publication the best in the order.

Bob Grafton and I thank you all for what you do for our order. Please be safe and stay healthy as we navigate through COVID-19.

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Photo credit: Dylan Zayner, sister

+ ALL address changes and cancellations MUST be submitted to the member’s lodge secretary, not the Florida Elks Magazine editor.

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WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

To share lodge news between Florida Elks Magazine issues, please email articles and photos to r.king@floridaelks.org. They will be posted to the Florida Elks News Online section of the state website, floridaelks.org, and the state Facebook page, Facebook.com/floridaelks.
JOYCE AND I HAVE REALLY ENJOYED OUR VISITATIONS TO THE VARIOUS DISTRICTS THIS WINTER. IT HAS BEEN FUN TRAVELING WITH RUDY AND DOLLY MASII AND OUR ENDORSED VPAL, SUZI SIMONELLI, AND HER HUSBAND, JOEY. WE CELEBRATED NEW YEAR'S EVE AT THE FLORIDA ELKS YOUTH CAMP WITH A GREAT GROUP OF ELKS. OUR FIRST VISITATION OF THE NEW YEAR WAS TO THE NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT WHERE WE WERE GREETED BY DISTRICT VICE PRESIDENT, RUSSELL SMITH; HIS WIFE, DENISE; AND A GROUP OF WONDERFUL ELKS. FRIDAY NIGHT WE ENJOYED A GREAT DINNER AT SOUTH LAKE LODGE AND SOME FANCY DANCING. SATURDAY WE VISITED MATTHEW'S HOPE WHERE THEY REHABILITATE PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS BY TRAINING THEM IN NEW SKILLS AND FINDING THEM JOBS. IT WAS AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE TO SEE ALL THE GOOD THEY DO. THAT EVENING WE HAD DINNER AT WINTER GARDEN LODGE WHERE THE AWARD-WINNING MOUNT DORA ROTC CADETS DID AN AMAZING JOB PERFORMING THE POW/MIA TABLE OF HONOR PRESENTATION.

NEXT WE HAD A GREAT TIME ATTENDING THE ALABAMA ELKS ASSOCIATION MIDWINTER MEETING IN PERDIDO BEACH WHERE THEY WELcomed GRAND EXALTED RULER, BOB DUITSMAN, AND FIRST LADY, BETH DUITSMAN. ALABAMA ELKS ARE DEDICATED TO HELPING OTHERS, ESPECIALLY KIDS AND VETERANS, AND ARE FRIENDLY AND TREATED US AS IF WE WERE ONE OF THEM.

AT THE END OF JANUARY, WE VISITED THE NEORDELIA DISTRICT WHERE WE WERE ENTERTAINED BY DISTRICT VICE PRESIDENT, GENE RITENHOUSE, AND HIS WIFE, LINDA. WE HAD DINNER WITH MANY DISTRICT ELKS AT THE HOTEL FRIDAY NIGHT FOLLOWED BY A BUSY SATURDAY. FOLLOWING LUNCH AT THE CADDY SHACK, WE TOURED THE WORLD GOLF HALL OF FAME AND MUSEUM. RUDY AND I TRIED TO MAKE A HOLE IN ONE OVER A 140-YARD LAKE, WHICH WE DID NOT! THAT NIGHT, A 1943 CHEVY POLICE CAR DELIVERED US TO GREEN COVE SPRINGS LODGE WITH THE SIRENS SCREAMING FOR ANOTHER GREAT EVENING OF FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP. AFTER DINNER AND THE MEETING, MAYOR KELLEY PRESENTED ME WITH A CERTIFICATE OF HONOR AND A KEY TO THE CITY.

OUR NEXT VISITATION WAS TO THE NORTH DISTRICT WHERE WE WERE GREETED BY DISTRICT VICE PRESIDENT, CHRIS LYDICK; HIS WIFE, DAWN; AND A LARGE GROUP OF ELKS. FRIDAY EVENING INCLUDED A WONDERFUL HOSPITALITY ROOM ON THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE FAMOUS 118-YEAR-OLD NEWLY-RESTORED HOTEL BLANCHE AND DINNER AT LAKE CITY LODGE. ON SATURDAY MORNING, WE HAD BREAKFAST ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE HOTEL AT HALPATTER BREWING COMPANY. THAT AFTERNOON, CHRIS TOOK US TO THE OLUSTEEL BATTLEFIELD WHERE THEY HAVE A REENACTMENT EVERY YEAR OF A FAMOUS CIVIL WAR BATTLE. WE FIRED 1850 AND 1860 SPRINGFIELD AND ENFIELD BLACK POWDER RIFLES IN A STRAIGHT MILITARY FIRING LINE. DINNER SATURDAY EVENING WAS SERVED IN THE HOTEL BLANCHE. MAYOR STEPHEN WITT PRESENTED ME WITH A KEY TO THE CITY. NEXT ON OUR SCHEDULE, WE GREETED GRAND EXALTED RULER, BOB DUITSMAN, AND FIRST LADY, BETH DUITSMAN, WITH A WELCOMING COMMITTEE AT JACKSONVILLE AIRPORT. WE HAD A NICE LUNCH AND TOURED SOME SHOPS IN ST. AUGUSTINE. LATER WE TOOK OFF FOR THE ELKS QUARTERLY MEETINGS WHERE THE GRAND EXALTED RULER TRAVELING PARTY WAS GREETED AT THE FLORIDA ELKS YOUTH CAMP FRONT GATES BY A VERY LARGE GROUP OF EXCITED ELKS. ON FRIDAY EVENING WE WERE ENTERTAINED WITH A WONDERFUL PATRIOTIC PERFORMANCE BY RE-CREATION. GER DUITSMAN GAVE AN INSPIRING SPEECH TO FINISH THE MEETING SATURDAY.

THE NEXT WEEKEND, JOYCE AND I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF ATTENDING THE STATE HOOP SHOOT AT THE FLORIDA ELKS YOUTH CAMP. WE SAW SOME OUTSTANDING SHOOTING. AFTER LUNCH, OUR STATE HOOP SHOOT CHAIR, ERIC JOHNSON, AND I GAVE OUT RIBBONS AND TROPHIES. THIS WAS A VERY REWARDING EXPERIENCE FOR US.

OUR FINAL VISITATION OF THE YEAR WAS IN ARCADIA FOR OUR HOMECOMING TO THE SOUTHWEST CENTRAL DISTRICT. DISTRICT VICE PRESIDENT, NANCY HIGGINBOTHAM, AND HER HUSBAND, ALFRED, HOSTED A PHENOMENAL WEEKEND FOR US. WE STARTED THE WEEKEND BY CHECKING IN TO THE NEWLY REMODELED OAKPARK INN IN DOWNTOWN ARCADIA; OUR ROOM WAS AWESOME. WE HAD A HUGE BED SHAPED LIKE A BOAT AND A BEAUTIFUL SUITE WITH A BALCONY OVERLOOKING DOWNTOWN. TO WELCOME US BACK TO THE DISTRICT, BRIAN AND MARY KAY BURNS HOSTED A GREAT BARBECUE AND BONFIRE IN THEIR BARN AND BACKYARD. ON SATURDAY MORNING, WE ATE BREAKFAST IN THE GRAND LIVING ROOM OUTSIDE OUR ROOMS. EVERYONE LOVED THE HOTEL AND BEING ABLE TO SIT AND VISIT IN THE EVENING. SATURDAY MORNING WE ATTENDED THE ARCADIA YOUTH RODEO. AFTER A WARM WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OVER THE LOUD SPEAKER, WE WATCHED THE LITTLE KIDS DO SOME MUTTON BUSTING. WE REALLY ENJOYED WATCHING THE YOUNG COWBOYS AND COWGIRLS COMPETE IN THE VARIOUS EVENTS. THE TACO BAR LUNCH AT THE LODGE WAS PERFECT AND ENJOYED BY EVERYONE. AFTER LUNCH, ALFRED TOOK THE GUYS TO THE ARCADIA STOCKYARD. WE LEARNED HOW TO BUY AND SELL COWS AND STEERS; IT WAS A GOOD TIME. MARY KAY TOOK THE LADIES ON A FUN SHOPPING TRIP. SATURDAY EVENING STARTED WITH A WARM WELCOME TO ARCADIA LODGE WITH A BEAUTIFULLY DECORATED DINING ROOM AND INCREDIBLE APPETIZER TABLE. THE EVENING AND THE DINNER WAS UNBELIEVABLE. THANK YOU, SOUTHWEST CENTRAL DISTRICT AND ALL THE ELKS AND GUESTS, FOR BEING THERE FOR US. WE CAN'T THANK THE ARCADIA ELKS ENOUGH FOR ALL THEY DID TO MAKE OUR HOMECOMING SO SPECIAL FOR EVERYONE.

THE NEXT WEEK WE TRAVELED TO VALDOSTA FOR THE GEORGIA ELKS ASSOCIATION SPRING MEETING. FRIDAY WE HAD LUNCH AT THE GEORGIA ELKS SPECIAL PROJECT, ELKS AIDMORE. THEY HELP CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN TIMES OF CRISIS BY PROVIDING THEM WITH RESOURCES TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES. ON SATURDAY, VALDOSTA LODGE HOSTED A DINNER FOR GUESTS AND GER DUITSMAN AND FIRST LADY BETH.

AS OF MARCH 31, OUR PRELIMINARY END-OF-YEAR MEMBERSHIP RESULTS ARE IN. CONGRATULATIONS! WE HAD A GAIN! WE STILL HAVE WORK TO DO. WE HAVE UNTIL THE END OF MAY TO REINSTATE MEMBERS WHO WERE DROPPED IN MARCH.


THANK YOU, ELKS, FOR ALL YOU DO TO MAKE OUR ASSOCIATION SO GREAT. YOU MAKE US “PROUD TO BE AN ELK!”

STAY HEALTHY AND SAFE.

THOMAS R. “TOM” LUDWICK, STATE PRESIDENT
FLORIDA STATE ELKS ASSOCIATION
We Derive Strength from Unprecedented Times

It is April 21 and I must admit that I have never felt as challenged to write my quarterly column as I do this time! I have taken the liberty to be the last column submitted in hopes that we might by now have a little more direction on when our lives can return to some sort of normalcy. The planner in me is completely disrupted by all the uncertainty!

A lot has happened in such a short amount of time. As business owners (yes, our lodges are small businesses), the outlook is challenging since there are no deadlines. How long must we wait? Do we dare gather again soon or are we better off remaining virtually together for the time being?

We have addressed our loneliness by using technology, but oh how we miss not hugging each other!

We have been thrust into the world’s largest virtual social experiment where we had to hold meetings to conduct business online, share our knowledge online and work together online. True, it is an abrupt change for our “business,” but are we embracing it as the opportunity it is; and are we getting creative and seeking out new ways to address member and community needs?

Look how we have come together in just the past few weeks.

- We donated the food in our walk-ins to community food banks, first responders and health care workers.
- We took care of our informed members and others who were forced to become informed.
- We virtually installed our new lodge officers.
- We used technology to hold lodge meetings and board meetings, etc.
- We have sent e-messages to our members to address payment of dues even amidst the crisis.
- We assured our members we will reopen when it is safe.

Because of the more senior age of many of our Florida members, all indications are that it might take months before our members feel it safe to return to a pre-COVID-19 lifestyle. For this reason, we must continue our focus on developing new models for our lodges so we can be ready for what is to come. We must:

- Embrace technology.
- Become more accepting of non-in-person interactions that still help our members feel included and feel involved.
- Permit the paying of dues online as well as making donations, supporting events, and paying for food and drinks – basically, improve our online platforms.

Many of us have been forced into a world where we order takeout and groceries online for either pickup or home delivery. We have “attended” a visit with a doctor via our computers or phones. We have all become more tech savvy and this is a good thing!

Developing an online community for our members has enabled us to become more inclusive of our members, helping them feel more a part of our lodge and our care! We must continue to be there for our members especially when we can’t be with each other physically!

No one can predict today what the world will be like one month from now let alone one year from now. We must adopt a flexible mindset to be prepared to deal with whatever comes our way!

The introduction of the online technology for lodge secretaries, CLMS, took a lot of longtime secretaries out of the game. The Grand Lodge is now introducing the same for lodge treasurers. We cannot allow the challenges of technology to affect us as they have in the past. We must embrace technology, master it and make it a part of our lodges going forward. When we reopen, it cannot be a return to business as normal. This exercise should help us better understand where the gaps and vulnerabilities are in our business. Were we ready for an abrupt business interruption longer than a hurricane? Were our financial reserves enough to weather the “storm”?

How many lodges discovered when they tried to communicate with their entire memberships by email how displeased the email list was? Just last article I proposed a solution to member communications. Perhaps now it will have even more meaning significant enough that I will share it again:

An idea I have often suggested for improving communications with our members is what I call divide and conquer. A lodge of 300 members usually has 30 dedicated members. Take the membership list and draft 30 teams chaired by one of your 30 (10%) devotees. Use the full membership list and rotate the selection of team members among the captains allowing each team captain to select their team. In the end, each of the 30 will have nine members they are tasked with keeping up with. Imagine the camaraderie that will develop as each team captain learns how each of their team members wishes to be communicated with! It is my belief that email, texting and Facebook are not working and are not enough. They are not inclusive of everyone! We can’t expect non-officer members to go to our websites to become self-informed. Phone calls are a thing of the past unless the person being called wants them. We think we are great communicators because of social media and instant messaging but I believe (and I am guilty of it, too) that we are worse communicators now than we have ever been before. Perhaps in 20 years everyone will use modern methods, but today, as we work to retain both our new and longtime members, we must determine how each individual wishes to be communicated with and then communicate with them in that manner! Nine people to keep up with is nothing and what have we got to lose? Poor attendance at meetings and events? Burned out volunteers? Loss of money?

The input of 300 people will always produce more solutions than the input of 30. Once our members feel like they are part of the solutions to challenges, they will no doubt feel more involved and will feel as if their opinions really do matter. We might find a renewed sense of belonging among our members and that can lead to them proposing their friends and families for membership – a win-win for everyone!

The need to communicate is not a one-way street! Every member should contact their lodge to ensure that the lodge has their correct address, phone number and email address. Become a proactive part of your lodge community! Let them know you wish to be a part of this new norm!

Our lives have been threatened and our lifestyles restricted. Our economy has been wrecked and so too have the personal security and income of almost everyone!

Imagine a restaurant that was not at least experimenting with takeout and delivery. It might be hard for them to recover from this. We have already heard of several apparel retailers who are seeking bankruptcy protection and the outlook for many mom and pop businesses is bleak.

We have the time to revisit our operations. We must create plans to put into action as soon as the economy reopens. A welcome-back party is but just one part of a comprehensive reopening strategy! We MUST be a strong community ourselves before we can contribute to the community of others!

Elks are strong, we are resilient, and we are patient!

Learn how to grow and heal together. We will emerge stronger; this I know!

Please visit https://floridaelks.org/carls-corner and join the conversation by logging in and posting your comments.

Carl Seibert, COO/State Secretary
Florida State Elks Association
ADELLA ASHTON, PRESIDENT, FLORIDA LADIES OF ELKS

It’s a great day in Florida and an even greater day to be a Florida Lady of the Elks (FLOE). Time is passing so quickly; we’re getting ready for the state convention June 18-20 at the Rosen Centre in Orlando, Florida.

Our ladies have been busy since the midyear convention. With the help of our delegates and their auxiliaries, we have reached our goal to complete the Florida Elks Youth Camp wish list of 195 board games set by Nick Miller, Camp Director. We’re looking forward to the youth camp having the games in time for camp this summer.

Once again, our ladies have supported FLOE with enthusiasm and dedication in helping us sell our reverse draw tickets for FLOE’S Angel program. Our program was initiated with love and the desire to do something special for a child in Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services. With Colleen Gallant, PDD, Director, a child and their family will be chosen for a long weekend which includes a paid trip to Disney. We started with 300 tickets at $20 each with a main prize of $2,000 and smaller tickets drawn from $50 to $500. Tickets will be drawn at our FLOE conference in September. You don’t have to be present to win. We now have 102 tickets available. If you haven’t purchased a ticket, please see Linda Rittenhouse or one of our delegates to help complete our goal. With your help, we can “Be an Angel in the Life of a Child” and family.

We began our quarterly weekend attending the Ladies meet and greet and luncheon honoring First Lady, Beth Duitsman, wife of Grand Exalted Ruler, Robert L. Duitsman. The meet and greets give us the opportunity to not only meet the Grand Exalted Ruler’s wife but to visit with our Past State Presidents’ wives and our Florida Ladies of Elks. That evening we enjoyed a delicious barbecue dinner in the pavilion and our entertainment was Re-Creation, a wonderful group of young adults who brighten the lives of everyone everywhere they go. You can’t help but feel pride and appreciation for the time and talent they put into making the show memorable.

Saturday morning was our FLOE meeting with 35 in attendance including officers, delegates and guests. State President, Tom Ludwick; VPAL, Rudy Masi; and endorsed VPAL, Suzi Simonelli, shared words of encouragement and appreciation of FLOE.

The FLOE Chinese auction at the state convention will be open Thursday and Friday morning. Winners will be announced after the luncheon Friday. If you’re bringing your donation to the convention, please try to have it to us by Wednesday evening. Visit floridaelks.org for the packet regarding our luncheon reservations, Chinese auction and hospitality hours. If you do not have computer access, please call or email me and I will be happy to mail you a copy. We look forward to making new FLOE memories with you.

The nominating committee chair, PSP Mary McCoy, presented a slate of officers for the upcoming FLOE year. Nominations will be permitted from the floor at the June FLOE meeting.

Vice President, Linda Rittenhouse, presented her choices for the 2021 FLOE conference site. It was voted on and the 2021 FLOE conference will be held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in St. Augustine, Florida, Sept. 24-26.

Following our meeting, we attended the Elks major projects meeting where PSP Felicia Vuletich presented the proceeds from the previous year of $7,000 which was split between Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services and the Florida Elks Youth Camp. Congratulations go to Felicia for a great year! During the meeting, there were many inspirational reports presented which gave us food for thought on the way home.

We’re looking forward to hosting the luncheon at the Elks state convention. I hope you will join us as we will have a delicious menu; a red, white, and blue fashion show by Resort Fashions by Tiffany; and the ever-inspiring Bomber Girls for pictures. It’s our way of honoring veterans and first responders who gave their lives for us. I thank our chairladies for their hard work and dedication to help make our June luncheon an enjoyable event. The preliminary agenda has FLOE’s meeting Saturday at 9 a.m. Please check the final agenda for confirmation. We look forward to seeing you!

While we’ve been working toward the state convention, our FLOE conference has also been a priority to plan. This year’s conference will be held at the Lido Beach Resort in Sarasota, Florida. Aside from the beautiful beach and amenities, there are many places to visit such as the Ringling Museum of Art, aquarium, opera house, Jungle Gardens, Siesta Key Marina, and Marina Jack, and if you like to shop, there are St. Armand’s Circle and University Mall. I’m hoping you will enjoy dinner and our entertainment Friday evening. We have an exciting group to keep you entertained with Motown, soul and disco music by Act 3. The winners of the FLOE Angel reverse draw will also be announced Friday evening. Saturday morning will be our FLOE business meeting followed by a luncheon. We welcome all Elks and guests to our luncheon and afternoon session which will begin with our memorial service followed by annual awards for the 2019-2020 year and the installation of 2020-2021 FLOE officers.

Our conference packet will be handed out at our FLOE meeting in June which will include all events and hotel rates; it will be available soon after on the FSEA website. Also included will be the fundraising shoppe information. If you haven’t before, you may want to consider a table this year. We will be located alongside the hotel restaurant which will make us more visible to the public as well as to FLOE members and guests.

We have the following districts that do not have delegates whether it’s because there is no auxiliary or possibly not enough information about FLOE – Northwest, Central, Southwest and South. There are openings in the North, Northeast, North Central and South Southeast districts. Delegates help us get information to the ladies in your district. If you have an interest, you may contact me or any of our officers.

The past couple months, Richard and I have enjoyed attending the President’s visitations for the North Central, Northeast and North districts. Thank you, all, for your hospitality. Thanks go to President Tom Ludwick and his wife, Joyce, for giving us the opportunity to speak about FLOE. I also visited the Anna Miller Circle ladies of Eustis Lodge #1578. I enjoyed meeting all the ladies and thank Joyce Collier, President, for the invitation and warm welcome!

I thank everyone for their support of FLOE and look forward to working with you in the next few months. Many thanks go to our June chairladies, Barbara Carroll and Diane Sharpe, West Central District; Judy Reyes, Northeast District; Linda Crawford and Oleo Ladies, North Central District; and Connie Kael Poage and Faye Bryant, Southwest Central District.

May God bless FLOE, Elksdom, veterans, the military and first responders!

Adella Ashton, 2019-2020 President
Florida Ladies of Elks
I sincerely hope you are all doing well and staying safe.

My how things can change in a short period of time. Since our last edition of this magazine, we finished our travel with State President, Tom Ludwick; we had a very successful annual meeting with our therapists; and last but not least, we had a very successful officer training.

On March 8, we welcomed 27 of our therapists to the Florida Elks Youth Camp for four days. It started Sunday evening with an incredible barbecue by Past State President Brian Burns and Mary Kay Burns along with Nancy and Alfred Higginbotham from Arcadia Lodge. A very special thank you is given to them from all the therapists for such a great evening. What a great way it was to start our annual meeting.

The next few days were filled with a lot of learning, sharing and fellowship. We topped the week off by saying farewell to Alice Smith, longtime secretary to Ben Brown and Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services (FECTS). Most recently she worked for the Florida State Elks Association. Alice was a very important part of our FECTS team for more than 30 years. She was so devoted to FECTS and trained Deborah Hall so she could carry on and do an amazing job for FECTS.

An important part of our meeting is choosing our new CHAMP of the Year. After quite a bit of discussion, our therapists chose Emily Bulson from Hobe Sound. Emily is 16 years old and lives with her parents, Talitha and Merril, along with an older sister, Alaina, and two younger brothers, Blake and Brett. The following is provided by Tina Morris, RPT.

“Before her diagnosis, Emily was an active teenager, participating in volleyball and yoga. Emily enjoyed going to the beach with her family and friends and attended traditional school. She was a talented vocal performer as well. In 2018, Emily started to have episodes of syncope and she was passing out up to eight times a day. The cardiologist diagnosed her with POTS (Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome), most easily described as when most of the blood stays in the lower part of the body when a person stands up, making the heart beat faster to try to get blood to the brain. The heart rate can go up by 30 beats or more a minute after standing up, thus causing an episode. In addition to POTS, Emily started to present with mysterious symptoms including joint pain and cognitive changes. Through multiple medical consultations, testing and endless appointments, Emily was diagnosed with Tick-Borne Disease, specifically Lyme Disease. Emily continued to have fevers and swelling and was given a course of antibiotics to quell the infection. Unfortunately, she had a severe reaction to the medication and lost the use of her arms and legs. Emily and her family remained hopeful that she would continue to recuperate and improve after she started to have the return of the use of her arms, but it continued to be a slow process. She was unable to access physical therapy services as the medical care became cost prohibitive. Emily’s pediatrician encouraged the family to apply for therapy services through Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services. Emily’s patient advocate through Martin Health System knew about FECTS and gave Emily’s family an application to submit.

“Emily was evaluated for physical therapy services through FECTS in February 2019. She showed deficits in strength and endurance, and she required total assistance for all movements into and out of her wheelchair. She was dependent on her family to assist her in all areas and was now homebound as she could not tolerate sitting up for any length of time. Emily was determined to do as much as she could physically handle. Through physical therapy services and the family support, Emily learned new strategies to increase her independence which in turn improved her emotional health. Emily’s father built parallel bars to be used with the physical therapist and the family to practice standing while attempting to take steps forward to walk. The rehabilitation process is long for Emily's disease. Although walking is her ultimate goal, the physical therapist and the family agreed that a custom power wheelchair would be appropriate to facilitate more independence with Emily’s mobility skills. Emily received her custom power wheelchair Feb. 28, 2020, and is embracing the new wheels.

“Emily has a strong, supportive family and even though she struggles daily, she maintains optimism with a happy disposition. The weekly physical therapy sessions are always productive, even when Emily is having a 'bad day.'”

Emily and her family will be joining us at the state convention.

On March 15, we returned home from a very successful officer training. It was a great weekend. We met many new officers and really enjoyed getting to meet them and discuss all the wonderful things we do as Elks.

The following week, it became necessary for everyone to work from home, and in an effort to continue working with patients while not putting our therapists or their patients who have a compromised immune system at risk, our therapists worked on programs for the children to do while the therapists are unable to go into their homes. By staying in touch with the families and helping them during this time, we are hoping the patients won’t lose much ground. All patients will receive the 26 visits to which they are entitled. Since the therapists are not spending time on the road, they have extra time to take online continuing education classes. We are all working hard to make this very difficult situation work the best way we can.

We will all continue to pray that our country and all that we stand for heals and we can all return to whatever our new normal is. I am keeping you all in my prayers. Stay safe!

Colleen Gallant, Director
Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services
What a difference a few weeks can make. As I look back to the beginning of March – which seems more like several months ago and not just several weeks – we were busy getting campers registered and hiring our last few staff members for summer camp 2020. We had youth groups filling the property, and my biggest worry was whether or not we would get any rain.

Well, we never did get any rain, but even more sad is that the camp is currently closed to all visitors. We have assigned a small group of staff to maintain the facilities and a security detail to monitor the property, but the only kids on property are the baby sandhill cranes.

We've cancelled all youth and Smith Center groups through May 1. We will continue to evaluate the situation week by week and will cancel groups in May as needed at least three weeks in advance, but it's not looking good. The earliest we are scheduling new reservations or tours is Aug. 3.

Summer camp is also up in the air. Right now, we are leaving registration open and are not canceling any sessions. If we need to cancel sessions of camp, we will begin doing so May 1. I won't lie to you; while I remain hopeful for a miracle, it doesn't look like we will be able to have “normal” camp for the first time in 25 years. But if you think that means your youth camp staff is just going to sit back and binge watch our entire collection of Disney movies, you've got another thing coming! Along with our normal preparations for summer camp, we are also developing several new types of camp that would still allow us to provide a camp experience even if we can't have kids on property. I'll list what we've got in mind below, but keep an eye on our website for the posting of any official decisions at floridaelks.org/camp.

Depending on restrictions related to COVID-19, here are several potential versions of summer camp 2020. First, if it's simply a matter of waiting longer, we may just have a shortened season. For instance, we may only run weeks 4-7 in July and skip those in June altogether.

Second, if we can't have kids come to the camp at all but we are allowed to have small groups of people who can travel, we will have a mobile camp plan. Our friends at the Florida Sheriff's Youth Ranches already do this every summer, and we are working with their director to develop our own version. This type of plan would allow us to transport small groups of our staff to various neighborhoods around the state of Florida to provide appropriate day camp sessions for kids right where they live.

Third, if we're unable to have kids come to camp at all and we’re also unable to have even small groups of people gather together away from camp, we are developing a virtual summer camp program. With this plan, our staff and campers would all remain home but still be assigned “cabins” each week. Our administrative staff would then coordinate with our counselors to utilize various social media platforms to interact with their campers each day. We would also be busy creating video here at camp of our normal activities to send out to the kids stuck at home.

Regardless of which plan we utilize this summer, our mission will remain the same – to mold the next generation into adults we would be proud to have as American citizens. As this year will likely be a pivotal moment in their development, it is our responsibility to reach them and help them through it.

With that said, it won't just be your summer camp staff who will impact this generation. This is an unprecedented event in the lives of our youth, and our response to it will make a lasting impression. As Elks, it is crucial that we take this opportunity to impress upon this generation what it truly means to be an American. Yes, we may be a stubborn and opinionated people and we can get ugly with each other when it comes to issues like politics. However, we are also compassionate, brave and resourceful. And as with past tragedies – the World Wars, the Great Depression, 9/11 – when we are put to the test, we will stand united, and we will not give way.

So, let us show these kids what it means to be an American, and let's show America what it means to be Elks.

Be safe and well.

Nick Miller, Director
Florida Elks Youth Camp
First and foremost, I hope this article finds everyone safe and healthy! We have all had our everyday life disrupted in one way or another due to COVID-19 and have found that we are doing what we need to do by helping others to make our way through this crisis. Life will go back to normal hopefully soon and we will have many things to do as if we haven't skipped a beat! Below are a few notes on changes and happenings.

**UNMASKING AUTISM GALA – NEW DATE**

Many of you were planning to attend the Florida Elks Charities Unmasking Autism gala April 18, 2020, which has now been postponed to Oct. 17, 2020. The gala is still being held at the Carillon Hilton in St. Petersburg, Florida, and is definitely an event you do not want to miss! Our major gala and table supporters reassured me that they will be there and are excited that we did not cancel and instead rescheduled. This year’s theme is “Unmasking Autism: An Evening Under the Stars,” presented by Florida Elks Charities and all proceeds will go to Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services to enhance and expand the treatment for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Our therapists have found that 50% of the patients they treat are within the spectrum or have ASD and they have cases from mild to severe. With early intervention being the key for these children while developing, it will help them reach their full potential, whatever that may be for each child. This event is one of our premier fundraisers so please join us for this black-tie event which is a fun, informative event with guest speakers, dinner, dancing, silent auction, live auction, and the opportunity to meet other members and people in our communities supporting this cause! Join us in making a difference in the lives of so many children.

This year we wanted to create a way for all lodges to be able to participate in the statewide gala in some way as we know that sometimes schedules conflict and you cannot attend the gala. The Star Campaign was launched with all lodges receiving 20 stars at the end of January to sell to members for $5 each to honor someone with ASD or just to show their support for ASD. Members could put their name or a name of who they are honoring on the star and lodges have come up with many creative ways to display them. Many lodges have requested more stars and have challenged other lodges to see which lodge will sell more! We know of two districts that have challenged one another with the loser having to give each lodge of the winning district something that is known from their community. Since COVID-19 disrupted our daily lives and schedules, we are pleased to say that this campaign will continue and will give lodges the chance to sell their stars. If you need more stars, contact me at dan@floridaelks.org or 352-805-0823. The deadline of March 27, 2020, has been extended to on or around Sept. 25, 2020, and we will keep you informed as the deadline nears. This has turned into a “Star Wars Campaign,” but in the end it is all for one purpose – the children it will help – and to show your support for one of our major projects, Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services. If you wish to send money already collected, please send to Florida Elks Charities, Attention: Amanda Frosch, P.O. Box 49, Umatilla, FL 32784. Thank you for making a difference!

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**SUSTAINING DONORS**

Congratulations! At the midyear convention, I challenged Florida Elks to surpass California on our number of sustaining donors. At that time, California had 266 and Florida had 183. At the time of this publication, we had 210 sustaining donors, so thank you! The challenge is continuing, so let’s surpass California to become No. 1! If you would like to become a sustaining donor, visit our website and it is very easy to donate.

**WALGREENS**

We are currently working on expanding our partnership with Walgreens. Many of you know that this year we were in 139 Walgreens stores in the tri-county area for our Walgreens-Elks Community Toy Drive to help families in the communities. We are hoping to add more stores this year in the Southwest District. Walgreens is very excited with this partnership and wants it to continue!

There are many other exciting developments going on so stay tuned to new and exciting things that will be happening in the future. Through all of this, the Florida Elks will continue to do great work and help our communities. We are Florida Elks and we are loud, proud and visible. We will help our communities and businesses rebound. As my grandmother used to say, “sii forte e gentile:” be strong and gentle.

Dan Masi, Development Director
Florida State Elks Association
This list reflects monthly sustaining donors as of March 31, 2020, of the Florida Elks major projects: Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services and the Florida Elks Youth Camp. With donors’ ongoing support, these projects can continue their missions of changing the lives of Florida's children. Won’t you please join them? Visit floridaelks.org to become a supporter. To our donors, we sincerely thank you!
Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services physical therapist Yvette Lambert addresses the audience Feb. 8 at the major projects meeting. Her presentation focused on the importance of therapists making treatment plans for their patients in order to reach goals.

Vincent Como, PSP, Chairman of the C. Valentine Bates Memorial HOPE Scholarship, and Vic McCellan, PSP, Florida Elks Charities Board of Directors President and Recreation USA Florida Liaison, present Jonathan Gagnon a $7,500 scholarship Feb. 7. He is from Milton, Pennsylvania, and plans to pursue a degree in anthropology or archaeology after his year with Re-Creation. “Re-Creation has taught me to appreciate the world around me and what’s going on across our nation and I would love to see that on a more broad sense whether more nationally or internationally.”

Walgreens store managers receive plaques Feb. 8 for collecting the most gifts during the 2019 Walgreens-Florida Elks Community Care Gift Drive. In the front row are store manager John Lyons, second place; store manager Jess Overbeck, first place; and store manager Megan Verette, third place. In the back row are Robert L. Duitsman, Grand Exalted Ruler; Wes Shaw, store manager and Walgreens liaison; Mark Mason, district manager; Tom Ludwick, State President; and Dan Masi, Development Director. As an update to the Winter 2020 cover story about the toy drive, the total amount of gifts collected has increased from 7,715 to 8,409.

Elliott Gilbert, program director at the Florida Elks Youth Camp, speaks Feb. 8 about the camp’s mission and motto and how they are put into action at camp. He explains how camp “is more than just a place for fun but also the place where campers can truly develop who they are and impact their communities when they leave. It’s our duty as Elks to actively find campers to send to camp. It’s an honor to be an Elk and the work we do with the campers is what it’s all about. We must be worthy of that honor and have the desire to send kids and staff alike to FEYC because those who come don’t just have their lives changed but the lives of everyone else they meet.” He also thanked the Elks National Foundation for covering the cost of 600 campers every year.

Displayed Feb. 8 is the banner given to Florida Elks by France and the City of St. Mere Eglise. The banner was used to announce Florida Elks in the 75th anniversary of D-Day commemoration parade held in St. Mere Eglise, France. The town has a population of 2,800 and was filled with 130,000 people from around the world for the parade and festivities. Fifty-six Elks including five World War II veterans participated in the event. The veterans were on various stages during the week at ceremonies and spoke at the events. The banner will hang in the Grafton Center at the Florida Elks Youth Camp. Pictured are Bob Gorby, PER; Nancy Gorby; Andy Long, PER, endorsed North Central District VP; Lucelly Miller; Marlene Evans, PLP; Mary Lou Scribner, PER (mostly hidden); Becky Long, PSP-FLOE; Joanne Matos, PER, endorsed West Central District VP; Mark Singer; Toni Goodrich, PDD; Renee Singer; Alfred Higginbotham; George Scribner, Southwest Central District Deputy; Bob Matos; and Nancy Higginbotham, Southwest Central District VP.

Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services Therapist Explains Treatment Plans

Walgreens Award Presentations

Florida Elks Children’s HOPE Scholarship Recipient

Banner Presented to Florida Elks from France Commemorating D-Day 75th Anniversary to Hang in Grafton Center

Grand Exalted Ruler Addresses Florida Elks

Grant Exalted Ruler Robert L. Duitsman introduces himself to Florida Elks Feb. 8 at the Florida Elks Youth Camp.
Rudolph “Rudy” Masi Sr. was born in Pittsburgh in 1952 and moved with his family to St. Petersburg, Florida, in 1954 where he grew up and still resides. He graduated from Dixie Hollins High School in 1970. He attended St. Petersburg Junior College and graduated with honors in 1974 from National Louis University with a degree in applied behavioral sciences and was graduation class speaker. He also received certifications from the University of North Carolina’s Kenan-Flagler Business School for Leaders. Masi and his wife, Dolly, have been married 30 years. They have two sons, Rey III and Rudy Jr. (deceased); a grandson, Rey IV; and a granddaughter, Aurelia. Rey III became an Elk in January. Rudy and Dolly raised their grandson who was the youngest member to join St. Petersburg Elks Lodge upon turning 21. Rey IV graduated cum laude last year with a fine arts degree in musical theatre from the University of West Florida and is part of the cast of Re-Creation 45.

Other Elk family members include his brothers, Rick, Steve, and Danny; his sister, Patty; his cousins, Carol, Nancy, Lou, and Mike; his nephew, Michael; his niece, Sondra; and his uncles, Lou and George, PER. His mother, Isabel (deceased), was an active Elk, earning Citizen of the Year in 2010. Dolly Masi has been an Exalted Ruler, President of the St. Petersburg #1224 Ladies of Elks Association, Vice Chair and/or Chair of West Central District committees, and Vice Chair and State Chair of Government Relations.

In 1973, Masi began a 39-year career with Florida Power Corp. (Duke Energy), retiring Aug. 31, 2012. He helped establish and manage Progress Energy’s residential and small commercial non-regulated businesses and channels in North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida. He went to work for Convergent USA the week he retired from Duke Energy as Vice President of Product Development and Channel Management. He was promoted to Vice President of Operations, responsible for consulting with utilities nationwide setting up and managing businesses. He received the 2009 and 2011 EMAC’s Best Practices Award for Marketing and Program Management among all utilities in the nation, AllConnect’s Ambassador Award, Florida Progress Chairmen’s Award, and the Edison Electric Institute Award Winner for Creative Design. He earned a lifetime achievement award from the Corporation for National & Community Service and the Office of the President of the United States in 2017.

Masi is certified and licensed as a Level 3 thermographer, power quality consultant, residential building contractor and commercial/industrial energy auditor. His affiliations included the Association of Energy Engineers, National Association of Electrical Inspectors, Chartwell Inc., National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council Affordable Housing Board of Directors, and Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board of Directors.

Masi joined St. Petersburg Lodge #1224 in 2004. He served as Chair of Harry-Anna Trust Fund, Elks National Foundation Fundraising; Youth Activities, Investigations, Membership and Indoctrination, Government Relations, Law and Order Night, Building Fund and Fundraising, Bylaws, All-American Lodge, and Kitchen. He served as Lecturing and Leading Knight and was a two-time House Chair, two-time Entertainment Chair, two-time Lodge Past Exalted Rulers Association President, and two-time Exalted Ruler. He served the West Central District as a two-time Chair of Drug Awareness as well as Chair of Government Relations, Publicity and Public Relations, and Orientation. He was Leadership Advisor for Lodge Activities and Interlodge Visitation and Leadership Advisor for Lapsation and Membership. He served as District Esquire, District Vice President and District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler. He belonged to the District Past Exalted Rulers Association and the District PDDGER Advisory Council, serving as Chair for 2018-2019. He is currently Holiday Isles #1912 Lodge Advisor.

Within the Florida State Elks Association, Masi has served as Vice Chair and State Chair of New Lodges. He was on the hospitality team for State President Carl Ledig and his wife, Dolly. He served on the Florida Elks Youth Camp Board of Directors and on the Florida State Elks Association Board of Directors and Executive Committee for 2018-2020. In November 2018, he was endorsed as State Vice President at Large for 2019-2020. He serves as the Florida State Elks Association Historical Commemorative Programs Liaison.

His Elk awards include Elk of the Year, 2006-2007; Grand Lodge membership award, 2008; GER membership award, 2009 and 2016-2017; GER Outstanding Service Award, 2009-2010 and 2012-2013; GER Commendation for Excellence, 2014-2015; and GER Outstanding Service Commendation, 2016-2017. He also led St. Petersburg Lodge to earn the coveted All-American Lodge award, earning second in the nation in Division 5 for 2015-2016. Masi serves on the lodge's All-American Lodge team that won No. 1 in the nation in Division 5 for 2018-2019.

Susan “Suzi” Simonelli was born in

Endorsed State President

RUDOLPH “RUDY” MASi SR.  Endorsed Vice President at Large

SUSAN “SUZI” SIMONELLI
Waterville, Maine, Sept. 23, 1966. She was educated in Maine schools, graduating from Thomas College with a degree in retail management in 1986. She held management positions with Kmart, CVS Pharmacy and All East Enterprises before moving to Florida in 1993. She dedicated the next 12 years to raising her son, Tony. She was PTA president, receiving the Martin County Volunteer of the Year award for her work with the public school system.

Simonelli comes from an Elk family. Her mother, Betty Tewksbury, PDD, has been an Elk for 22 years and sponsored her. Simonelli was initiated in 2002 into Stuart-Jensen Elks Lodge #1870. Her stepfather, Harold Tewksbury, PER, was the charter Exalted Ruler from Skowhegan/Madison Elks Lodge #2531 in Maine and was an Elk for 45 years until he passed in January 2016.

She served as Lodge Secretary, Leading Knight, Exalter Ruler (three terms) and lodge trustee. She was named Citizen of the Year for 2004-2005, Officer of the Year for 2007-2008 and Elk of the Year for 2012-2013. Her lodge gave her honorary life membership in January 2012. She has served on numerous committees including the House Committee as chair. In 2012, she was presented the President's Call to Service Award signed by the President of the United States.

On the district and state level, Simonelli served as state Drug Awareness trailer manager and District Chair of Drug Awareness for five years. She served as Officer Attendance Vice Chair for 2011-2012. She was Southeast Central District Vice President for 2012-2013 and District Deputy for 2013-2014. She also chaired and coordinated two presidential demonstrations and served on the hospitality team for State President John Harris. She was State Chair of the Harry-Anna Trust Fund for 2014-2015 and surpassed the goal, raising $777,495.31. At the 2015 state convention in Orlando, Florida, she was named Elk of the Year. She served as State Membership Chair for three years and served on the 2016 and 2017 state training staff speaking on membership. She served a six-year term on the Florida Elks Youth Camp Board of Directors and completed two terms as President. She was State Chaplain for 2016-2017.

In addition to the Elks, Simonelli has participated in all phases of the Boy Scouts of America for the past 25 years including den mother, assistant scoutmaster and chartered organizational representative. She earned many top scouting awards including the Sailfish District Award of Merit and the Council Silver Beaver Award in 2005. In July 2005 at the Elks national convention in Reno, Nevada, she was awarded the Marvin M. Lewis Award for her dedication to the Boy Scouts of America and the order of Elks.

She and Joey have been married 11 years. He has been an Elk for 24 years and served two terms as Exalted Ruler for Stuart-Jensen Lodge. They belong to the Stuart Congregational Church and enjoy cruising, golf, bowling and camping in their RV. She has one son, Tony Gordon, who graduated from the University of South Florida with two degrees in criminology and marketing. He is an Eagle Scout and has been an Elk for five years.

Georgiana “Jan” Thorburn was born and raised in El Paso, Texas, in 1952. She moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, in 1973. She attended Florida Atlantic University where she studied land use and surveying. She became a tabletop survey drafting technician in 1978. In 1980 she met Robert while working together on a development project in Coconut Creek, Florida; they married the following year and moved to Cocoa, Florida, where they worked for one of the largest engineering firms in the United States. Around 1990, drafting moved from the drafting board to the computer and she did not care to move with it so she entered the paralegal program at Brevard Community College in 1991 and worked as a paralegal until she retired in 2010.

She and Bob relocated to Tallahassee, Florida, in 1992. She worked with two attorneys who were members of Tallahassee Elks Lodge #937. She was invited to join the lodge and was initiated in 2000. She went through all the chairs including two terms as Esquire and two terms as Leading Knight. During her first term as Leading Knight, she was named Officer of the Year. She has been the Lodge Elks National Foundation Scholarship Chair since 2013 and has served as District Orientation Chair. Over the years, she has served as Lecturing Knight, Leading Knight, Exalted Ruler and chair of the board.

He and Barbara have been married 33 years. He has a stepdaughter, Kelly, and she has a daughter, Kaci. His stepson, Mike, is married to Farrah and they have a son, Jake.

Richard J. “Rick” Woelfl was born Sept. 22, 1946, in Milwaukee. He moved to Florida in January 1984. He served in the Air Force for 22 years as an aircraft avionics technician and retired in June 1988. He spent six years as a senior member of the technical staff at Computer Sciences Corporation. He was then self-employed until 2019 with a home-repair business.

Woelfl joined Twin Cities Elks Lodge #2747 in 2010 and has served as Lecturing Knight, Leading Knight, Exalted Ruler and chair of the board.

Richard J. “Rick” Woelfl
Endorsed NW District Vice President
years, she has been All-State Inner Guard, All-State Leading Knight and All-State Coach for the state ritual competition. She served as Vice Chair and State Chair of Ritual from 2015-2017. She was the recipient of the John D. Franks Award at the 2017 national convention in Reno, Nevada, as coach of the winning team in the national ritual contest and was invited to judge the national contest in San Antonio the following year.

She and Bob have been married 39 years and have five children between them and two grandchildren. They love fly-fishing and boating on the Homosassa River. She loves to cook and bake cookies and dabbles in making moonshine on the side.

**ELIZABETH L. WEST**
Endorsed NE District Vice President

Elizabeth L. West was born in San Jose, California, and grew up in Mountain View, California. She graduated from Mountain View High School and completed two years at Foothill Junior College. She moved to Florida in 1969.

She is retired from both AT&T (one of several Bell System companies with which she was employed) and a travel agency as an owner/consultant.

West joined St. Augustine Elks Lodge #829 in 2008. Two weeks after she was initiated, she became Chaplain. She has served as Lecturing Knight, Loyal Knight, Leading Knight and Exalted Ruler. She also served a three-year appointment on the board of trustees. She was District Chair of Americanism and Government Relations. She has served as Vice Chair and State Chair for Government Relations.

In addition to her Elks membership, this is her third year serving as a committee member for the annual Miracle on the Bayfront gala in St. Augustine, Florida, an annual fundraiser for St. Jude. She is also a 30-year member of the Order of the Eastern Star and is a member of Trinity Episcopal Parish where she is a member of the Daughters of the King ladies ministry.

West's husband, Donald, passed away in 2015; they were married 50 years. He was a 100% disabled veteran having been exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam. He served in the Korean War as well. She has a son, Jeffrey; a daughter, Dianne; and son-in-law, Frank Cernese. Her grandchildren are Kellyann, Jeffrey and Kimberly. Jeffrey and Kimberly are twins. Her son and son-in-law are members of St. Augustine Lodge. Her son served in both Iraq wars; both he and his father retired from the U.S. Navy.

**JOHN A. “ANDY” LONG**
Endorsed NC District Vice President

John A. “Andy” Long was born in Milan, Tennessee, in 1954 and grew up there. He moved to Florida in 1998. He graduated from Milan High School in 1972 and earned a Bachelor of Science in 1975 from the University of Tennessee.

From 1976-1977, he worked for Farrell Calhoun Paint Co. as a chemist and for Methodist Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, as a patient transport. In 1977 he worked as a research assistant for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis. He then worked for Mosley and Mosley Construction in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, from 1977-1978 as a builder and then for Long Construction Co. in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, from 1978-1980 as a builder. From 1980-1998, he was a senior chemist and supplier quality manager for Martin Marietta Ordnance in Milan, Tennessee. He was a quality manager for Martin Electronics in Perry, Florida, from 1998-2000. From 2001-2009, he was a quality manager for Class 1 in Ocala, Florida; Avasar in Perry, Florida; and Closetmaid in Ocala, Florida. He was an operations manager for Simar in Ocala, Florida, from 2010-2011. From 2011-2019, he worked for Pyrotechnic Specialties in Byron, Georgia, as a technical director but he came home on weekends. His wife, Becky, was active in the Florida Ladies of Elks, and Elks activities were something they could do together.

Long became an Elk in 2002 after he was sponsored by Past State President Winston Needham. Needham and his wife, Karen, were family friends of Becky’s family and encouraged him to join. He served as Chaplain, Esquire (two terms), Loyal Knight, Leading Knight and Exalted Ruler. He has been District Chair of Ladies Organizations and North Regional Chair of Soccer Shoot. He has also placed in three state ritual competitions in the categories of Chaplain, Esquire, Leading Knight and eleven o’clock toast.

He is a member of the First United Methodist Church of Ocala Praise Band.

Andy and Becky have been married 20 years. She is a Past State President of the Florida Ladies of Elks, serving for 2015-2016. They have a blended family with two children each – Matthew Cretul, Russ Long, Jonathan Cretul, and Aubrey Oxley – and eight grandchildren – Autumn Long, Jacob Brinton, Hudson Brinton, Nathaniel Cretul, Russell Long Jr., Noa Long, Matthew Cretul, and Kailee Oxley.

**ERIKA J. BARGER**
Endorsed EC District Vice President

Erika J. Barger was born in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1987 and grew up in Ormond Beach, Florida. She graduated from Seabreeze High School in Daytona Beach, Florida, as valedictorian in 2006. In 2005 she
graduated with high honors from Daytona State College in Daytona Beach, Florida, with an Associate of Arts degree earned prior to graduating from high school through a dual enrollment program. She graduated cum laude from Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., in 2010 with a Bachelor of Arts in government and a minor in history. In 2013 she graduated magna cum laude from Florida State University College of Law in Tallahassee with a Juris Doctor.

During law school, Barger completed internships with the Office of the Public Defender, Seventh Judicial Circuit in Flagler County, Florida; U.S. Air Force Judge Advocate General’s Corps at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state; and the Supreme Court of Florida in Tallahassee.

She began her career as a law clerk at the Fifth District Court of Appeal in Daytona Beach, Florida. She was a compliance director and is now general counsel, chief compliance officer, and corporate secretary for Holland Financial Inc. in Ormond Beach, Florida. She was admitted to the Florida Bar in 2016 and the U.S. Supreme Court Bar in 2017.

Barger became a fourth generation Elk at Ormond Beach Elks Lodge #2193 in 2008. Her family's service in Elksdom began in 1918 in Pennsylvania with her great-grandfather followed by her grandfather and father who is a Past Exalted Ruler and honorary life member of Ormond Beach Lodge. In 2006, she was awarded a scholarship from Ormond Beach Lodge and a Legacy Scholarship from the Elks National Foundation. Prior, she had been a volunteer for projects including Drug Awareness, Americanism and children's Christmas parties.

She has served her lodge as Esteemed Loyal Knight, Esteemed Leading Knight, Exalted Ruler, Presiding Justice and Secretary of the House Committee. She has also been the Chair of Government Relations, Lodge Scholarships and Orientation. She was twice named Lodge Elk of the Month. She also volunteered with the Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot and dictionary project along with serving lunch to participants of the MS Walk in Ormond Beach.

On the district and state level, Barger has been District, Vice and State Chair of Elks National Foundation Fundraising. She is a member of the East Central District Past Exalted Rulers Association. At the state convention in Orlando, Florida, in May 2019, Barger was named Elk of the Year.

Barger has been particularly active in the Elks scholars community. From 2008-2012, she was one of eight inaugural members nationwide on the Elks National Foundation Scholar Advisory Board and served as Vice President for 2009-2010. This board served to increase scholarship recipient participation in the Elks organization and its charitable programs and among scholars on college campuses. She participated in meetings at national conventions and in Chicago and volunteered at the Elks national Hoop Shoot finals in Springfield, Massachusetts. They also filmed several short videos which appear on YouTube, Facebook and elks.org. From 2009-2013 she was also a campus leader for Elks scholar service projects for Florida State University (litter cleanup event), Stetson University College of Law/ St. Petersburg, Florida, and Gulfport, Florida (beach cleanup on Shell Key Preserve in St. Petersburg), and Georgetown University (washed, cleaned, scrubbed and scoured the Korean War Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.). In 2018 she was one of 150 Elks scholar participants for two major service projects in San Antonio during the Elks national convention. They volunteered at a homeless shelter and packed 5,000 hygiene kits for veterans in need.

Along with her Elks membership, Barger is a member of the Volusia County Bar Association and the Jane Sheldon Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. She is a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary, Daytona Beach, Florida, Post No. 1590. She is a Kentucky Colonel of the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels, the highest title of honor bestowed by the Kentucky governor to recognize an individual's noteworthy accomplishments and service to the community, state, and nation. Since 2017, she has been the scholarship coordinator for B&G Refrigeration in Jacksonville, Florida.

Barger is the daughter of Jack Barger, PER and the late Rita Barger. She has three siblings – a sister, Audra Moore, of the Tampa Bay, Florida, area, and two brothers, R. Brett Barger, MD of Gainesville, Georgia, and P. Todd Barger of Jacksonville, Florida, both of whom are more than 25-year members of Ormond Beach Elks Lodge. When not practicing law or volunteering, she enjoys traveling (she has visited all 50 states) and spending time with her Wheaten Scottish Terrier, Reggie.

Mary J. Crosier was born in Cortland, New York, in 1942 and grew up in central New York. After spending 12 winters in Florida, she permanently moved to Florida in 2010. She graduated from Cincinnatus High School in 1960 and from Albany Medical Center School of Registered Nursing in 1963. She earned a Bachelor of Science in health care administration from Empire State College in 1968 and graduated from Ithaca College the same year from their nursing home administration program.

Crosier worked in the geriatrics field as a registered nurse for the NYS Department of Health. She then worked as the assistant administrator and was later promoted to administrator at a 242-bed nursing home. She worked at NYS Veterans’ Nursing Home in these capacities for 28 years. She was then selected to move to a new 126-bed veterans’ nursing home in western New York to assist in the design, program development, construction and operation of this new facility. She worked there for five years and retired in 1997. All this employment was for the NYS Department of Health. She was also a consultant for the Health Department in the development of three veterans’ nursing homes.
In 2004, Crosier joined Zephyrhills Elks Lodge #2731. She was doing volunteer work at the lodge and wanted to become more regularly involved. She has worked in the kitchen and was a server, cook, kitchen purchaser, and kitchen manager. She is certified as a food service manager and sees that the lodge always passes its Health Department inspections with an A. She also assisted with the lodge bulletin. She has served on the House Committee and was chair for two years and was also a member of the Audit Committee. She has served as Lecturing Knight, Leading Knight (twice), Exalted Ruler and Treasurer. She has served as a trustee, on the board of directors and as secretary of the PER Association. She has chaired lodge committees for Government Relations, Harry-Anna Trust Fund, Lodge Activities, Orientation and Army of Hope. She has written several grants to obtain the Elks National Foundation Gratitude, Beacon, and Freedom grants and wrote the Impact Grant which gave the lodge $7,500 to initiate the Feed the Kids program. Crosier is a three-time Elk of the Month and was named Elk of the Year and Officer of the Year. She also received the Outstanding Service Commendation award.

On the district level, Crosier served as the Central District Chair of Americanism, Harry-Anna Trust Fund and Orientation. On the state level, she was the State Vice Chair of Ladies Organizations. In 2015-2016 she served as District Vice President but developed cancer in late 2015 and was unable to continue to the District Deputy position the following year.

In addition to her work with the Elks, Crosier belongs to the Retired Public Employees Association of New York State, the Nursing Association, the American Legion Auxiliary and the Methodist Church of Zephyrhills. She also enjoys traveling, camping and spending time with family.

Crosier has one daughter, one son and nine grandchildren who live in New York. She was married to Leroy for 27 years who passed away in 2015.

**Thomas Carns** was born Aug. 20, 1967, in Clearfield, Pennsylvania, and attended Clearfield High School where he graduated with honors. He has a master’s degree in project management from Embry Riddle Aeronautical University.

He enlisted in the military in 1985 and was placed on active duty in 1986. He was stationed at Lackland AFB in Texas for basic training and then elected to go to the electrical missile maintenance career field. He transitioned to Chanute AFB for technical training in the missile maintenance apprentice course. After this training, he was stationed at F.E. Warren AFB in Cheyenne, Wyoming, where he worked on the nation’s intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) for nine years. He then transferred to Vandenberg AFB in California where he worked with space launch systems to put multibillion-dollar one-of-a-kind satellites in orbit. Four years later he transitioned to Schriever AFB in Colorado where he began his career in test and evaluation. He performed evaluations for the Air Force around the world for the next four years. In 2004 he transitioned to Patrick AFB in Florida where he continued to test Air Force range assets for the next eight years. He retired in 2012 from the Air Force after 26 years. He currently works for the Northrop Grumman Corporation as a staff test engineer.

Carns joined Merritt Island Elks Lodge #2650 in 2011 and was a trustee for four years before becoming Exalted Ruler. He was also District Esquire and State Chair of Ladies Organizations.

Tom and his wife, Wendy, have three children – Stephanie, Alec, and Haley – and a granddaughter, Natalie.

**Joanne Matos** was born and raised in Newark, New Jersey, and graduated from Mount Saint Dominic Academy followed by employment in the mortgage accounting field.

In 1990, she received a real estate license and was employed by Gallery of Homes Shore Connection in Brick, New Jersey. In 1992, her family relocated to Gulfport, Florida, where she attained a Florida real estate license and was employed by Vigilant Real Estate and later by Coldwell Banker.

Her husband, Bob, joined St. Petersburg Elks Lodge #1224 in 1994. Although she was not an Elk, she volunteered with and chaired many events including the lodge and district hospitality rooms at state conventions for 21 years. In this capacity, she made friends with many Elks across the state. She joined the St. Petersburg Ladies of Elks Auxiliary in 1998. In 2011, Matos became a member of St. Petersburg Lodge along with her son, Eric. She has served on the House Committee since 2013 and has served as its secretary in 2013, 2014, and 2017 to the present. In 2015 she served as the board of directors secretary. Since 2017 she has been a trustee. She has served as Lecturing Knight, Loyal Knight, and Leading Knight and was Exalted Ruler for 2016-2017 when she led the lodge to All-American Lodge status. She was named the lodge’s Elk of the Year for 2013-2014 and Officer of the Year for 2015-2016. She has been District Chair of the Harry-Anna Trust Fund and serves as the West Central District Esquire. She was Vice Chair and State Chair of Orientation.

Matos is also a member of the American Legion Auxiliary. As a 35-year survivor, she is a...
supporter of the Susan G. Komen 3-Day, a three-day 60-mile walk for a breast cancer cure. She formed a team with Elks who fundraised and did the walk from 2006 until the last scheduled walk in the Tampa Bay area in 2013.

Joanne and Bob have been married 39 years and have one son, Eric Matos.

Sharon L. Hammersla was born in Baden, Maryland; grew up in southern Maryland; and graduated from La Reine Catholic High School in Suitland, Maryland, in 1967. In 1983 she earned a technical school certification in information systems administration. She moved to Florida in 2002.

After 34 years of federal civilian service as an information resource manager for the U.S. House of Representatives, Hammersla retired in 2002. She later worked close to home as an accounts payable clerk for Willet Construction Company in White Plains, Maryland. In 2003 and 2004 she worked for the Hillsborough Board of Education to administer tests to students.

Hammersla had been volunteering at Jackson Elementary School, serving as volunteer coordinator for United Food Bank, helping a local pub provide Christmas gift-giving opportunities for the community, and coordinating Easter basket donations for children at Everyday Blessings. Her sponsor, an acquaintance from a local Irish grill, asked her if she was interested in becoming an Elk to channel her volunteering through one organization. After learning how Elks support veterans, students, the community and those in need, she joined Plant City Elks Lodge #1727 in 2008 and transferred to Brandon Elks Lodge #2383 in 2017. After serving in the chairs, she was Exalted Ruler for 2012-2013. She has served as Lodge Chair of Americanism, Drug Awareness Education, Scholarships and Veterans Services. She has also been chaplain and grants coordinator for her lodge. She has served as District Chair of Americanism, Drug Awareness Education and Youth Activities. For the state, she has been Vice Chair and Chair of Americanism, Elks National Foundation Fundraising, and Youth Activities.

Hammersla continues to volunteer for a local elementary school. She and her Elks friends travel together and visit Elks lodges during their trips.

She and Donald have been married 33 years. She has two daughters – Karen Mitchell, married to Tim, and Jennifer Blakley, married to Rick. She also has four grandchildren – Tom, Amanda, Emma and Zach.

Judy Nuetzel was born in Washington, Indiana, in 1953. In 1993 she earned a degree in dental hygiene from the Indiana University School of Dentistry.

She was a dental hygienist at Rockville Dental Clinic until her husband, Fred, sold his practice and retired in 2012. This is when they moved to Florida.

In 2014, Nuetzel joined Punta Gorda Elks Lodge #2606 and served as Exalted Ruler, trustee, PER Association president, and Lodge Chair of the Harry-Anna Trust Fund. She was District Chair of Interlodge Visitation and Sports and served as president of the South Southwest District PER Association. She was also Vice Chair and State Chair of Veterans Services.

Additionally, she volunteers for Punta Gorda Bayfront Hospital. She was the county chair for the American Cancer Society’s Relay for Life in Indiana.

She has been married 35 years and has four children and two grandchildren.
Luis B. Oms Sr. was born in New York City Oct. 1, 1957, and grew up in Brooklyn, New York, with his grandmother until he was 12 years old when he was sent to live with his father in Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico. Here he graduated from Luis Munoz Rivera High School in 1976. He also attended Interamerican University of San German, Puerto Rico, and studied a premedical program, earning a bachelor's degree in chemistry with a minor in biology in 1979.

In 1974 when he was 17 years old, he joined the Army/National Guard. The next year he transferred to the Army National Guard in Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico, until his honorable discharge in 1981. He joined the Puerto Rico Police Department and graduated from the academy in 1976. He worked with the police until 1981.

Oms moved to south Florida in 1982 and worked with a security firm and the government. In 1984 he returned to Puerto Rico to study at the School of Ophthalmology at the Interamerican University but due to economic hardship went back to south Florida where he joined The Breakers Palm Beach, a hotel. He is currently the security/transportation manager.

In 2013 he joined West Palm Beach Elks Lodge #1352 after several lodge visits at Jerry Devine's invitation. He has been Lecturing Knight, Leading Knight, Exalted Ruler, trustee and board of directors chair. He has served as Lodge Chair of Government Relations, Hoop Shoot, Lodge Activities and Public Relations. He has been District Chair of Hoop Shoot and Lodge Activities, and he has been State Vice Chair and State Chair of Interlodge Visitation.

Other memberships include the Exchange Club, Lions Club and Masons.

He met Aminta in Brooklyn, New York. They fell in love and married four days later, July 6, 1995. He has three sons, four daughters and six grandchildren.

Jim Blanchard was born in Spartanburg, South Carolina, in 1950. He grew up in Greenville, South Carolina, and moved to Hollywood, Florida, in 1962. In 1974 after he was married, he moved to Davie, Florida. He attended Chaminade Catholic High School and received an associate degree from Miami Dade College.

Blanchard worked for Publix Super Markets for 46 years working as a bagger to a store manager. He also worked in the office as a retail computer systems specialist.

In 2003, he joined Hollywood West Elks Lodge #2365 after being encouraged by his cousin, Bill Benton, PER, from Charleston, South Carolina, Lodge. Benton also traveled to his initiation. Blanchard’s first lodge position was trustee in 2008. He has also served on the House Committee and as board of directors chair. He served as Leading Knight and twice as Exalted Ruler. Additionally, he chaired lodge committees for Elks National Foundation Scholarships, Harry-Anna Trust Fund, Youth Activities, Bulletin, Bylaws, Flag Day and Scouting. His lodge named him Elk of the Year and Officer of the Year. On the district level, he has been a Drug Awareness Education trainer manager, was named District Elk of the Year for 2017-2018 and served two years as District PER Association Vice President. He has been a delegate at most state conventions since 2005.

Along with his Elks membership, Blanchard is a member of the Loyal Order of Moose and St. David Catholic Church in Davie, Florida. He is a past vice president of the Men’s Club. He is an executive board member of the South Florida Council for the Boy Scouts of America. In scouting, he has received the Silver Beaver Award, the James E. West Fellow Award and Vigil Honor in the Order of the Arrow.

He has been married to Barbara 45 years and has two children, Tammy-Sue and Tony, and five grandchildren. His brother, Larry, is a PGA professional golfer.


From 1989-1993 he served in the U.S. Air Force with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron. He is now the owner and operator of Action Maintenance and Overseas Plumbing. He is a master plumbing contractor.

Veltri joined Florida Keys Elks Lodge #1872 in 2002 after he was asked by a Past Exalted Ruler. He has served as Tiler, Loyal Knight, Inner Guard and Exalted Ruler. He has also served on the House Committee. He has been a member of the board of directors and served part of that time as chair. He has been District Chair of Elks Training and State Chair of Orientation.

Veltri is also a member of the American Legion, Moose and VFW. He enjoys fishing and is a history buff.

His son, Jason Hostetler, attends Florida Gulf Coast University. Veltri’s partner, Brenda Cockrell, has been a lodge member since 2007.
2019-2020 STATE HOOP SHOOT WINNERS

**GIRLS 8-9:** Mirari Erickson, Deep Creek #2763, third place; Kasidee Florio, Inverness #2522, first place; and Keeley Wilson, Venice-Nokomis #1854, second place

**BOYS 8-9:** Rocco Randall, Zephyrhills #2731, third place; Judson Phillips, Lake Okeechobee #2871, first place; and Braydon Jeter, Fort Walton #1795, second place

**GIRLS 10-11:** Ya'Zuri Hollie, Lake City #893, third place; Yinuo Wang, Boca Raton #2166, first place; and Samiyah Singleton, South Hillsborough #2672, second place

**BOYS 10-11:** Carson "Max" Howard, Holley-Navarre #2787, third place; Joe Huang, Naples #2010, first place; and Louisen Desinor, Bradenton #1511, second place

**GIRLS 12-13:** Genesis Acosta Santos, Jacksonville #221, third place; Antanesha Singleton, South Hillsborough #2672, first place; and Melody Charlton, Naples #2010, second place

**BOYS 12-13:** Logan Barbieri, Inverness #2522, third place; Andrew Johnson, St. Petersburg #1224, first place; and Lazaro Rodriguez-Lopez, Fort Myers #1288, second place

Left: Pictured with the state Hoop Shoot winners are Eric Johnson, State Chair; Tom Ludwick, State President; Lester Collins, Southeast Regional Hoop Shoot Director; and Danny Tabor, PSP, Hoop Shoot Past State President Advisor.

Right: Champion of Champions Yinuo Wang and Andrew Johnson
KAYLEE ZAYNER: HOW THE HOPE SCHOLARSHIP IMPACTED ONE STUDENT’S LIFE

By Rachael King

The Florida State Elks Association oversees many charitable endeavors that make positive impacts on people’s lives, but perhaps what it does best is provide hope to populations who really need it, whether for a struggling family in the community, a veteran, or a student wondering how they will find enough funding to attend college. Aptly named, the Florida Elks’ HOPE Scholarship is a one-time scholarship for graduating seniors that gives special consideration to students who have shoulderered extra responsibility such as working throughout their high school career to help provide support for siblings or family.

In 2019, the scholarship was renamed the C. Valentine Bates Memorial HOPE Scholarship in memory of C. Valentine “Val” Bates, Elks Past Grand Exalted Ruler (national president). Bates was particularly instrumental in implementing the HOPE Scholarship. The scholarship was founded for students not in the top 10% of their graduating class but who have a grade point average between 2.3 and 3.3 on a 4.0 scale. The students still demonstrate leadership, community service and citizenship. It is available for students who are residents of Florida who plan to attend an accredited American college; university; community college; vocational/technical training program; or law enforcement, fire, or correctional academy. Since 2011, approximately $775,000 has been awarded to nearly 200 students. Awards range from $3,000 to $10,000.

One of the top two scholarship recipients in 2019 was Kaylee Zayner, and she fit the targeted demographic completely. “Once I read what the Elks HOPE Scholarship entailed, I swear it was made for me. It stood out amongst the other scholarships,” she remembers. Thanks in part to the Florida Elks’ funding of $10,000, she is now at the end of her first year in college. What follows illustrates why this extraordinary young woman was so deserving of her scholarship, what her college journey has been like so far and what her future holds.

Kaylee Zayner began her time at Venice High School as a typical teen might, nervous about a new and unfamiliar situation. To get ahead, she took higher-level courses which often left her the only freshman in her classes, enough to unnerve any young student. She quickly adjusted and finished her year with honors. Throughout high school, she continued to take on a strenuous course load, but with hard work, she was able to enter the dual enrollment program during her senior year which allowed her to earn college credits during high school and graduate in three years instead of four.

Despite her heavy course load, Kaylee had to find time to work as a hostess and waitress. She also participated in extracurricular activities including a breast cancer awareness club, a political party club, a church youth group, and the Key Club (a service club) as well as three sports – swimming, cross country, and weightlifting. She even made time for community service. She served as a youth counselor at a children’s center where she taught Bible study and helped the children with crafts and putting on holiday plays. “I cherished my time there and miss the kids I taught dearly,” she says.

As if this nonstop schedule wasn’t enough of a hardship during high school, Kaylee was also facing difficulties in her family life and was later declared an unaccompanied homeless youth. She moved out of her family home during her senior year and rented a room from a coworker for $200 a month. As she writes in her scholarship application essay, “At the beginning of this year I moved out of my parents’ house in hopes of overcoming and separating myself from my family’s turmoil. Although I love and will always be there for my family, I decided to make a decision to better myself and help me achieve my future goals. Both my mother and brother struggle with addiction. My house at times has felt like a warzone with the continuous fighting and chaos. Making this decision was not easy. I had to work more hours in order to support myself, and I got a second job to be able to support myself. On average I work 40 hours a week in addition to my school, college courses and extracurriculars. During my swim season in the fall, I would wake up at four in the morning to go to swim practice and then to school. After high...
school I would either go to my first job of the day or one of my college classes. In the late afternoon I would go to my second job and get off around ten at night. I would go home, study, do homework, go to sleep, and start the whole routine over again.”

Maintaining this schedule would take a toll on anyone, let alone a high school student. When asked what it was like dealing with these obstacles, she recalls, “My senior year was a minefield constantly trying to get through it. At times I didn’t know if I was going to be able to graduate. It felt like I was drowning under the pressure. With the help of my school and my social worker, I was able to get the support I desperately needed. I graduated with honors taking dual enrollment classes, but I wouldn’t have been able to without that support.”

The senior year of high school can be an immensely stressful and confusing time, and Kaylee had to navigate it without the luxury of living at home with the guidance of a parent to help with the challenges of college and scholarship applications, difficult course work, and life in general. “Living with my parents was hard, to say the least,” she explains. “Even after moving out I still helped my family financially when I was able to. Many of my friends weren’t able to understand what I was going through. Their parents had bought them cars, were paying for their college and came to support them at sporting events. My parents did what they could but were never fully able to help me financially or emotionally. This left me feeling distraught.”

But Kaylee persevered as she always does. Today she is completing her first year of college at State College of Florida. Her original plan was to earn her associate degree from a community college and then transfer to a university for her junior year. However, even with the funding she’d received, she was still going to be unable to afford the University of South Florida (USF), so she instead has enlisted in the U.S. Air Force and will begin her service in July. She plans to complete her college degree if she gets accepted into the Air Force’s S.O.A.R. program which would allow her to finish her degree at any college that offers Air Force ROTC. USF is one of these schools.

Kaylee finds her freshman year of college vastly different from her high school experience. She was used to a more relaxed high school setting and soon found college to be a “make or break” atmosphere. She studies constantly. “Dealing with the combination of school and work is stressful. I just take every day as it comes and try my best to wade through the waters. If I put the time and effort in now, in the long run, it will pay off,” she observes.

In addition to her prerequisite classes for math, English and science, she has taken basic level criminal justice classes and a few psychology and sociology courses. Her major is criminology and her minor is women’s studies. With her degree, she plans to work for a special investigations unit working with human trafficking.

Kaylee illustrates what a usual day in college is like for her. “A typical day is getting up around 7 a.m., going for a run and following it up with my PT training for the Air Force. After that is coffee which is quintessential for functioning throughout the day. I’ll follow that up with a class or a few assignments. After that I like to read a nonfiction book in the morning. Late afternoon I’ll go into work or another class, depending on the day. If I get home early enough I’ll try to get a chapter in whatever fiction book I am reading at the moment. Reading is a way that I release tension from the day; it’s a great escape from reality.”

Kaylee’s favorite experience of college has been learning about interesting topics such as theories and studies in the psychology field and about world religions. She added that “learning about different cultures has been an eye-opener.” Not surprisingly, her least favorite aspect has been the lack of sleep she gets because “there is not enough time in the day to get everything done. Sometimes this means sacrificing a few hours of the night to get through assignments.” She looks forward to earning her diploma and becoming an officer in the Air Force.

While in college, Kaylee works 25-30 hours a week waiting at the bar and grill, sometimes working as late as 1 a.m. Currently taking six classes, “balancing the two gets a bit hectic from time to time,” as she mildly puts it. In her rare spare time, she enjoys drawing and reading. To clear her head, she goes for a run.
She continues to live at the same residence where she has lived since the beginning of her senior year of high school with two coworkers. She will be sad to leave in July for the Air Force because “none of us have come from a good home and we bonded a lot over the last two years.”

Kaylee found out about the HOPE Scholarship through her college resource center at school. She says her advisor “was a huge help in my senior year with S.A.T. and all kinds of various senior obligations. I was eternally thankful for the opportunities this scholarship has allowed me to achieve. During my senior year of high school, I was often hard-pressed with the choice of food or gas, if I had enough to pay all my bills on time, and other difficult choices. This scholarship has allowed me to put school first and work second which was a luxury I wasn’t able to have in the last few years.”

When asked what the scholarship means to her, she declares, “Everything. My family is not one of high merit. I was the only one out of my siblings to fully complete high school. All of us had to grow up too fast. In turn, we made sacrifices in order to survive. Education has always been my way out; I learned this at a young age. I had to start working at 14 to help out but that never deterred me from my goal.” Kaylee’s message to the Florida Elks is one of complete gratitude for the opportunity the scholarship provided. “I am still astonished that I was chosen to receive this award. Thank you for giving me the chance to go to college.”

In recognition of her award, Kaylee was invited to attend the 2019 Florida State Elks Association state convention at the Orlando World Center Marriott and speak during the awards celebration luncheon. Despite being shy and nervous to address the crowd, she was honored to attend and hopes the audience enjoyed listening to her remarks.

What lies ahead for Kaylee is sure to hold more challenges, but she has proven time and again that she stands ready to face them and surpass them. She is also sure to have countless successes because of her persistence, an unbreakable work ethic and boundless passion. There is no doubt that Kaylee Zayner will do remarkable things in her life, and the Florida Elks can be proud to have played a role in her success.
Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, this Elks History column highlights examples of Elks throughout the order’s history rallying for relief efforts in times of great peril. As always, this history is available at Floridaelks.org in “The Encyclopedia of Florida Elksdom,” compiled by Lowell Tyler, Historian Emeritus.

In 1917 during World War I, the Grand Lodge created the War Relief Commission and endowed it with $2,000,000 to finance activities. The commission organized and equipped the first two field hospitals in France – Unit 41 staffed by faculty and alumni from the University of Virginia and Unit 46 with the same group from the University of Oregon.

To accommodate the maimed and wounded, the Elks built a 700-bed rehabilitation hospital near Boston and gave it to the federal government in 1918. That same year, the order built a 72-room community house to take care of the families visiting the 40,000 soldiers stationed at Camp Sherman, Ohio. They also volunteered to build another hospital in New Orleans but the government declined the offer saying that it wasn’t needed at the time.

During the war, the Salvation Army was severely handicapped in their great work for the servicemen by lack of funds. To make sure this work continued, the Elks War Relief Commission and the lodges of the order undertook campaigns to raise funds for the Salvation Army and on many occasions assumed the entire cost of these undertakings. In addition, the commission gave the Army $60,000 to continue its work at Christmastime in 1918.

The Elks War Relief Commission established a revolving loan fund and granted 40,000 loans to facilitate rehabilitation as well as vocational and educational training for returning veterans who were ineligible for government help or awaiting approval of their applications. So effective was the Elks program that the government followed the fraternity’s lead and established its own as a precursor of the GI Bill.

More than 70,000 Elks served in the armed forces during World War I; more than 1,000 died.

During World War II, the remitting of dues for members in the armed forces was a voluntary action taken by most of the subordinate lodges. A duration sticker was designed and furnished by the Elks War Commission so all cards would be uniform. When the serviceman was discharged and once again became a citizen, he was required to start paying his dues at the next dues-paying period, either April 1 or Oct. 1.

Lodges aided in the recruitment of flying cadets at the request of the secretaries of the Army and Navy. More than 400 lodges conducted refresher courses that qualified thousands of young men for training.

In 1942 the Adjutant General asked for help in recruiting 45,000 men for Air Corps ground crews. Again, the lodges responded and set up a program that recruited 97,000 men. Because of their previous record, the Secretary of the Navy asked for help in recruiting for the Naval Air Corps, and once again, the Elks delivered.

In 1943 there was a critical shortage of construction specialists in the armed services. Because of their record, the Elks were asked to help recruit construction personnel and were the only organization to participate in this program. The required numbers of Army Engineers and Navy Seabees were obtained three months ahead of schedule.

The Merchant Marines notified the Elks War Commission of a shortage of reading material on board ships, and the Elks responded by collecting and donating 500,000 books.

The organization established 155 Elks fraternal hospitality centers around the country. More than one million GIs were guests at the New York center alone.

During World War II, Elks members generously and willingly gave up many personal privileges of their clubs in order to make room for servicemen holding courtesy cards. The servicemen were stationed great distances from home and many lodges converted portions of their lodges to servicemen’s clubs to hold dances, parties, etc.

Thousands of gift boxes containing smoker’s supplies, candy, and personal hygiene items were sent to the fighting men, while thousands of slippers were distributed to hospitalized servicemen. With the end of World War II, many wounded servicemen were returned to the United States where they became patients in hospitals closer to home to continue treatment and care. This created the demand for slippers. The Elks War Commission located in Columbus, Ohio, commenced a program for supplying this need. They were assisted in this endeavor through the assistance of the state Elks associations in Massachusetts, New York, Oregon and Washington. Through these efforts, several hundred thousand slippers were furnished to the hospitalized veterans.

By the end of World War II, the Grand Lodge had spent more than $1,500,000, while the lodges spent hundreds of thousands of dollars more.

In 1946, the Elks War Commission became the Elks National Veterans Service Commission. The name was again changed in 1949 to the Elks National Service Commission. It was changed back to Elks National Veterans Service Commission in 1995.

Providing gift boxes to overseas personnel was a major activity for the Elks in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

In 1951-1952, the Secretary of Defense appealed to the Elks for blood donations. The average need of the armed forces was 300,000 pints of blood per month. The Red Cross was capable of taking approximately 350,000 pints per month. Working through the American Red Cross, they hoped to meet 1,000,000 pints.
Keeping up with the Elks National Foundation

This year has flown by; it's hard to believe we are coming into a new Elk year. It seems like just last week my first article about the Elks National Foundation (ENF) was published. My goal for the year was to increase your knowledge about ENF and the benefits the lodges and communities received from your donations.

The summer 2019 article focused on what the Elks National Foundation is and what it has meant to our communities. Programs like Drug Awareness, Hoop Shoot and help for veterans were outlined. For each dollar donated in the 2018-2019 year, Florida received $2.287 to support those programs.

The fall 2019 article outlined why ENF is important and why we should donate – to help build stronger communities; to provide the leaders of tomorrow with lifelong skills through the scholarship programs and the Drug Awareness and sports programs like Hoop Shoot; to help fill the needs of veterans with grants and the Army of Hope; and to help the Florida State Elks Association accomplish some of their charitable objectives and goals with the Community Investment Programs (CIP).

The winter 2020 article talked about the ways you can donate to ENF and why it's so important to become a member of the program. The ENF Fidelity program was explained. It also relayed the benefits you as a member would receive and what it would mean to your lodge and your community.

Being my last article as your State Chair for the Elks National Foundation, I thought I could share how you can keep up to date with what ENF is doing. There is always enf.org for valuable information on the programs. Just go to the ENF home page for access to Facebook to keep up with the ENF; YouTube to view ENF videos; Instagram to see Elks in action; Twitter for live updates during events; Flickr to view ENF event photos; and ENF podcasts, ENF blogs, and ENF films.

These are all great ways of keeping up with the Elks National Foundation. One of the best ways is to become involved in your lodge and the various programs. I don't know of any lodge that isn't looking for help with the Drug Awareness, Hoop Shoot and veterans programs. Become involved with your lodge's scholarship programs and in your lodge's CIP program. Volunteers are always needed and it benefits everyone.

I hope with all the information I have shared, you have learned a little bit more about the Elks National Foundation and all the good it does. The monies you donate will always go to good use. The ENF Board of Trustees has approved a $39.1 million budget for 2021. Can you just imagine all the help we can give to our Florida communities with some of that money? If you can't donate money, donate your time; every little bit helps with the Elks National Foundation.

Thank you for a great year. I was honored to be the 2019-2020 State Chair.

Rose Wujcik, PER, State Chairman
ENF Fundraising Committee
Florida State Elks Association

Update from the Elks National Foundation on Community Investments Program Grants

The COVID-19 pandemic has shifted our Community Investments Program grant project timeline and how we're encouraging lodges to use specific grants. Right now, the CIP grant year will likely start June 1 for all grants except the Gratitude Grant. Gratitude Grants are the only grant that can be used for a donation to another organization. Normally, we encourage lodges to use their Gratitude Grants to plan an active project. Instead, given current restrictions on public gatherings and events, consider using the Gratitude Grant to support a food pantry, homeless shelter or other organizations in your community that are better equipped to directly serve the people who need help most as we work our way through this pandemic.
Jacksonville Elks Lodge #221 hosted a community baby shower for military mothers Feb. 15 using funds from the Elks National Foundation Spotlight Grant and member donations from the lodge's diaper drive. Ten mothers were in attendance with their husbands or friends and their children. “Events like these are so special for our military families that don't have any family in the area. Because of this we asked each mom to send us their wish list of items that they would like to receive at the baby shower,” says Deborah McCabe Reedy, PER, a member of Saratoga-Wilton, New York, Lodge #161 who volunteers with Jacksonville Lodge. Gifts included a stroller/car seat set, highchair, baby swings, travel playpen, bathtubs, hygiene products, baby clothes, pacifiers, toys, bottles, bath towels and wash cloths, diapers, and wipes. The mothers also got to choose a handmade baby blanket crocheted by McCabe Reedy. Lunch, homemade cookies and treats were provided as well and were handled by member Sarah Schlesinger. Guests played games with the winners receiving gift bags donated by member Susan Kelly as well as an “Advance My Baby” book from the Florida State Elks Association. Kelly also hosted baby trivia. A raffle drawing earned two attendees a diaper cake made by member Robin Pipkins. Carmel Reed oversaw the children’s reading room. Brent Reedy, also a member of Saratoga-Wilton Lodge, helped shop for and transport the larger items with McCabe Reedy and donated the collection box for the diaper drive and pizza for the shower. Jacksonville Lodge Exalted Ruler, Bill Watson, offered his and the lodge's assistance if the guests were ever in need of help with anything.

Kelly Stull from Blue Star Families of Jacksonville, Florida, was in attendance as well, and each family received a generous amount of books and the kids received T-shirts. Wendy Weir-Layton of Blue Star Families helped by finding the families to invite. The guests appreciated how welcome they were made to feel by the members. The lodge hopes to continue this event as an ongoing project in their military community with more Elks National Foundation grants.

For more information including guidelines, restrictions, applications and report forms, visit elks.org/cip/.

IN EACH ISSUE OF THE FLORIDA ELKS MAGAZINE, A LODGE WILL BE HIGHLIGHTED USING ONE OF THEIR ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION GRANTS.

To be considered, please submit a description of the project and several pictures of the grant being put into action to Rachael King, editor, at r.king@floridaelks.org.

While gifting grants to other organizations and causes is allowed for several grants, ENF urges lodges to use the grants for Elk-involved functions so they can be seen in the community and garner new members, so lodges that gift their grants will not be showcased in this feature.

Send in your submission so the state can see the fantastic impact your lodge is making in your community!

* Submission by Deborah McCabe Reedy, PER, a member of Saratoga-Wilton, New York Lodge #161
* Photos by Bill Watson, Jacksonville Lodge Exalted Ruler

* Submission by Deborah McCabe Reedy, PER, a member of Saratoga-Wilton, New York Lodge #161
* Photos by Bill Watson, Jacksonville Lodge Exalted Ruler

Gifts are displayed for military mothers attending Jacksonville Lodge’s baby shower.
Florida Food Code: An Introduction

There seems to be some confusion regarding the difference between a food handler and a food manager in Florida. Some are under the impression that if they have a food handler certification card, that is the same as the food manager certification. The ServSafe Health Handler and the ServSafe Food Protection Manager are two different programs. The food handler course is designed for food preparers, food servers and other frontline staff. The food manager certification is held by a person or persons who have sufficient food safety knowledge to protect the public from foodborne illnesses. Florida requires the food protection manager while the food handler is considered optional training for staff members. The food manager certification is valid for five years and the food handler card is valid for three years.

According to premierfoodsafety.com, a Florida food handler is "any person responsible for the storage, preparation, display or serving of foods to the public in establishments regulated by the Department of Professional Responsibility," and according to bls.gov, a food manager "is responsible for the daily operation of restaurants or other food establishments that prepare and serve food and beverages." If you are a food handler in Florida, you are required to complete a food safety course that is approved for use in Florida.

On Sept. 26, 2018, changes were made to Code 64E-11 of the Florida Administrative Code regarding the necessity of a certified food manager and include but are not limited to the following:

- A certified food manager is one who has passed a written certification test which has been approved by the Florida Department of Health which demonstrates a basic knowledge of food protection practices.

- All establishments shall designate in writing the certified food manager(s) for each location.

- Certification is to be completed by March 31, 2019.

Code 64E-11.012 also states that “it is the responsibility of the certified manager or person in charge to train or ensure the training of all employees under their supervision. The trainings must be annual and provided to employees by March 31 of each year. Employees hired after the annual training has been provided for that calendar year must receive training within 30 days of being hired.”

Food service establishments such as fraternal organizations, as defined in Section 381.0072 of the Florida Statutes, are not exempt from the manager certification requirements. All establishments required to have a certified food manager shall designate, in writing, the food service manager or managers for each location.

A person can become a certified food manager by successfully passing a certification examination and obtaining a certificate of successful participation which is valid for five years from the date of issue. Recertification through testing is required after a five-year period.

Code 64E-11 of the Florida Administrative Code and Section 381.0072 of the Florida Statutes should be reviewed for further information including the information for organizations that can administer the test.

Sonja S. Lopez, PER, Member
FSEA Business Practices Committee

Disclaimer: The Business Practices Committee of the Florida State Elks Association (FSEA) has prepared this information to assist the lodges of this fraternal order. The FSEA Business Practices Committee is neither responsible nor empowered to be responsible for the establishment of such procedures. The Business Practices Committee acts as a resource to assist lodges. You should always consult your lodge's tax and legal advisors before engaging in any endeavors or transactions to ensure compliance with federal, state and local laws.
What I get for my Dues

I get the opportunity:

• To belong to the finest fraternal order in the world.

• To be associated with fine American men and women.

• To enjoy the comforts of my lodge both socially and fraternally.
  
  • To take part in all the charitable work my lodge performs.

• To proudly support veterans who served our country.
  
  • To participate actively in all the programs sponsored by my lodge.

• To support our state’s major projects – Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services and the Florida Elks Youth Camp.

• To visit other Elks lodges and enjoy their hospitality.

• To wear my Elks insignia and show everyone that

  I am Loud, Proud and Visible!
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An Evening Under the Stars

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2020
6-11 p.m.

CARILLON HILTON . 950 LAKE CARILLON DRIVE . ST. PETERSBURG, FL 33716

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Perry Elks Lodge’s state Soccer Shoot winner in the under-16 category, Dominick Curfman, advanced to the southeastern state competition and won against the competitor from South Carolina. The lodge held a recognition dinner for him and his family Feb. 13.

Tallahassee #937

On the first weekend in March, Tallahassee Elks Lodge #937 once again was the food provider for a Civil War battle reenactment ceremony at Natural Bridge Battlefield Historical State Park. The menu included burgers, hot dogs, bratwurst and pulled pork sandwiches. This event provides community visibility for the lodge, and 25% of the proceeds from this fundraiser is shared with the Natural Bridge Historical Society (NBHS). NBHS is a nonprofit Citizen Support Organization established under the laws of Florida to preserve and promote the historical, cultural and recreational value of the Natural Bridge Battlefield Historic State Park in cooperation with the Florida Park Service.

Gainesville #990

On March 3, Gainesville Elks Lodge #990, through partnership with the University of Florida’s Healthy Families Organization (HFO) and the Alachua County Library District and with the assistance of an Elks National Foundation Spotlight Grant, held a community baby shower. Young first-time parents and expectant mothers were invited to the event and were informed of a vast amount of programs and services that the Elks, HFO and the Library District offer. A literary program was conducted by HFO with attention drawn to the learning capabilities of unborn children and the importance of reading to children even before their birth was discussed. Elks members distributed over 350 board books to the over 25 families in attendance and held a raffle for a large quantity of baby items ranging from diapers to play yards and highchairs. The Elks distributed information on Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services and Drug Awareness and assisted the library staff in providing library cards to the families. The families left with a copious amount of information to assist them in raising healthy children and promoting their children’s literacy skills and development. Pictured are members Maryann Davis, Linda Califf, and Lisa Cruz and helper Veronica Cruz.

Green Cove Springs #1892

On Jan. 25, Green Cove Springs Elks Lodge #1892 brought Storm Troopers and the Florida State Elks Association (FSEA) State President, Tom Ludwick, to Green Cove Springs Library for a “Star Wars”-themed Elks library day. The event was attended by 270 children and adults, many of whom were in costumes. The event included a full-sized R2D2 robot, crafts, games, ice cream, face painting and an age-specific book giveaway. Each child received two new books to take home. Jennifer Parker, Green Cove
On Feb. 17, the Eustis Elks Lodge's Americanism Committee recognized the Officers of the Year from police and fire departments of Mount Dora, Eustis, Tavares, Leesburg, Umatilla and Howey-in-the-Hills. Officers were also recognized from the Lake County Sheriff’s Office, Lake County Fire Department and the Florida Highway Patrol. Also honored were the K-9 officers and their K-9s from Eustis, Leesburg and the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

Dinner was served to all officers, spouses and the chief of each department. Each department was given a plaque to be placed at their departments and each officer received a framed certificate of achievement from the lodge. Each chief explained why their officers were chosen for their recognition by their peers. The keynote speaker for this annual event was Michael J. Saxe, retired detective from New York City and a 9/11 first responder. He is also a member of Ocala Elks Lodge. The Table of Honor was performed by the Mount Dora High School Jr. Air Force ROTC. Lodge member Lt. Chad Williamson of the Eustis Fire Department was chosen as that department's Officer of the Year.

During the month of February, Green Cove Springs Lodge held their annual Comfort Campaign in support of the local law enforcement. Thanks to generous members and guests, the lodge donated 140 stuffed animals to the Green Cove Springs Police and Clay County Sheriff’s departments. These stuffed toys will be distributed by law enforcement to provide comfort to the children they encounter on their calls. Members of both agencies were guests for breakfast at the lodge Feb. 29. Pictured preparing the donations are Kathy Hughson, spouse; Ed Weston, Exalted Ruler; Emily Hughson, volunteer; Greg Hughson, PDD; Diane Watson, Secretary; Patsy Weston, entertainment committee member; and Tracy Carroll, PER. Pictured at the breakfast are Ed Weston, Exalted Ruler; Deputy Matthews; Deputy Freshour; Itzy Hughson and Emily Hughson, volunteers; Sergeant Daniels; Tracy Carroll, PER; Officer Babcock; Sergeant Hess; and Officer Camp.

On Feb. 22, Green Cove Springs Lodge hosted a community baby shower funded through the Elks National Foundation Spotlight Grant. The lodge partnered with the community including schools and health clinics to reach out to new mothers. Nineteen volunteers helped guests feel welcome, and each new mom received gifts including a diaper bag, diapers, toys, bibs, bottles and a variety of door prizes. Lunch was provided and there were games as well. Each mom also received a home library of eight books to support their child's early literacy learning. Therapists Rae Montgomery and Melanie Sarris from Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services, Sergeant Kim Miller from Green Cove Springs Police Department, and Jennifer Parker, Green Cove Springs Library branch manager, were on hand to provide informational resources to the families. Left: New moms are pictured having lunch with Jennifer Parker, Rae Montgomery and Melanie Sarris; volunteers and door prize table are pictured; and sets of books for home libraries are given away.

Jacksonville #221 held a community shredding event March 7 to help feed those in need. This was the third of three events of this kind held at the lodge and they were open to the public. Lodge and community members were invited to bring their confidential paper documents to be shredded in return for making a food donation for the Jacksonville Central Food Pantry. At each event, the amount of food donations increased, this time filling a pickup truck full of donations. There were over 8,000 pounds of paper shredded at this event and one of the visitors donated $200 for the food pantry. These events were made possible with the Elks National Foundation Gratitude Grant and organized by member Marlene Beckman-Hayes. Left below: Don Rowand and Deborah McCabe Reedy, PER, a member of Saratoga-Wilton, New York, Lodge #161 who volunteers with Jacksonville Lodge, empty boxes into bins for shredding. Above: Members Sarah Schlesinger, Don Rowand and Marlene Beckman-Hayes are pictured with some of the food collected.

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Eustis Elks Lodge #1578

On Feb. 17, the Eustis Elks Lodge’s Americanism Committee recognized the Officers of the Year from police and fire departments of Mount Dora, Eustis, Tavares, Leesburg, Umatilla and Howey-in-the-Hills. Officers were also recognized from the Lake County Sheriff’s Office, Lake County Fire Department and the Florida Highway Patrol. Also honored were the K-9 officers and their K-9s from Eustis, Leesburg and the Lake County Sheriff’s Office. Dinner was served to all officers, spouses and the chief of each department. Each department was given a plaque to be placed at their departments and each officer received a framed certificate of achievement from the lodge. Each chief explained why their officers were chosen for their recognition by their peers. The keynote speaker for this annual event was Michael J. Saxe, retired detective from New York City and a 9/11 first responder. He is also a member of Ocala Elks Lodge. The Table of Honor was performed by the Mount Dora High School Jr. Air Force ROTC. Lodge member Lt. Chad Williamson of the Eustis Fire Department was chosen as that department’s Officer of the Year.

NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

Eustis #1578

On Feb. 17, the Eustis Elks Lodge’s Americanism Committee recognized the Officers of the Year from police and fire departments of Mount Dora, Eustis, Tavares, Leesburg, Umatilla and Howey-in-the-Hills. Officers were also recognized from the Lake County Sheriff’s Office, Lake County Fire Department and the Florida Highway Patrol. Also honored were the K-9 officers and their K-9s from Eustis, Leesburg and the Lake County Sheriff’s Office. Dinner was served to all officers, spouses and the chief of each department. Each department was given a plaque to be placed at their departments and each officer received a framed certificate of achievement from the lodge. Each chief explained why their officers were chosen for their recognition by their peers. The keynote speaker for this annual event was Michael J. Saxe, retired detective from New York City and a 9/11 first responder. He is also a member of Ocala Elks Lodge. The Table of Honor was performed by the Mount Dora High School Jr. Air Force ROTC. Lodge member Lt. Chad Williamson of the Eustis Fire Department was chosen as that department’s Officer of the Year.
Kissimmee #1873

On Feb. 7, Aripeka Elks Lodge #2520 donated suitcases and backpacks to Guardian Ad Litem for children in the foster care program after they learned that many children arrive at a new foster home with their belongings in a trash bag. The lodge will continue this program as long as there is a need.

Aripeka #2520

On Feb. 14, Port Orange Elks Lodge #2723 teamed with the Vagovic & Abend Law Firm from Daytona Beach, Florida, and Advanced Air to donate school supplies to Horizon Elementary School in Port Orange, Florida. They know that schools are always in need of items and many times they are purchased by teachers for the children or they just go without. The lodge donated $425 and the other sponsors donated a total of $500. Pictured are Gary Harms, principal; Art Rauch, lodge member; Chelsea Abend and Amanda Goodwin of Vagovic & Abend Law Firm; Richard Violette and Larry Lewis, PER, lodge members; and Doug Miller, guidance counselor.

Port Orange #2723

Whenever a month has five Fridays, the Past Exalted Rulers of Merritt Island Elks Lodge #2650 put on a dinner. In May 2019, they invited the first responders of the Merritt Island area to join them for a spaghetti dinner. The attendance was pretty good for a first-time event. On Jan. 31, the lodge invited them again, but this year it was turned into a competition between the firefighters and deputy sheriffs for best turnout. Last year the deputies won. This year, 19 firefighters and 14 deputies attended, and the parking lot was filled with police cars, ambulances and fire trucks.

Merritt Island #2650

On March 13 at a private club in Williston, Florida, Ocala Elks Lodge #286 presented the Elks medal to two first responders – Firefighter R. Grajek of the Williston Fire Department and Police Officer C. Rosa of the Williston Police Department – for their dedication to the community and for going above and beyond the call of duty. Exalted Ruler-elect, Mike Rolls, presents the awards to Firefighter Grajek (top) and Officer Rosa (bottom).

Ocala #286

On March 16 to pack welcome kits for The Haven of Lake and Sumter Counties. The donation included 340 adult welcome kits (travel-size soap, shampoo, conditioner, moisturizer, toothbrush, toothpaste, mouthwash and deodorant) and 100 children’s welcome kits (soap, toothbrush, toothpaste, hand sanitizer, lip balm, shampoo, a small toy and other items). Also included were 11 birthday kits (cake mix, frosting and candles) for children who celebrate their birthday at the shelter. Other items included food, children’s clothes and toys. The total contribution was valued at $4,545.50. The Haven of Lake and Sumter Counties is a shelter for women, teens and children who have been abused and who find themselves with no place to go during a difficult time. The Haven offers many services to help women and their children on the road to a safer and healthier life and the Eustis Elks and Anna Miller Circle are proud to be in the fight with them. Pictured packing kits are Stanley Piskadlo; Sherry Piskadlo, Anna Miller Circle co-chair of the lodge’s Haven project; Joyce Collier, president of the Anna Miller Circle; Bonnie Smith; Judith Polson; Mary Ann Cerney; and Anna Mitchell. Suzanne Cunningham, Anna Miller Circle co-chair of the lodge’s Haven project, takes the picture.

Winter Garden #2165

Winter Garden Elks members partnered with Maxey Elementary School Jan. 10 for a fundraiser for fifth graders to visit Tallahassee, Florida, to see the university and the Capitol. More than $1,300 was raised from the Friday Night Lights fundraiser where the lodge provided, cooked, and sold barbecue pork, hot dogs, chips, buns, and cookies. They also provided baked goods for the raffle. Pictured are Frances Heckman, Elks spouse; Cheri Doyno, Elks spouse; Leslie Yant, Elks daughter; John Biasi, Elks; Gloria Wallick, Elks spouse; Ed Colon, Elks; and Pam DePriest, Elks.

Winter Garden #2165

The Ocoee Police Department recognized Winter Garden Lodge Jan. 31 for their outstanding contributions as a community partner including hosting a baby shower and several fundraisers. The shower was held for 25 mothers with low incomes and provided them with diapers, wipes and other baby necessities. The lodge also held a fundraiser and raised $10,000 for a young man battling cancer. Another of their fundraisers raised $10,000 for an Ocoee man’s medical bills after a hunting accident. Both fundraisers were held at the lodge and included food, a cornhole tournament and silent auctions. Receiving the award are Wally Hatch; Joe Snyder; Bob Warren, PBD; Frank Severance, PER; Cheri Doyno; and Pam DePriest along with Chief of Police, Charles Brown.

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On Feb 8, Kissimmee Elks Lodge #1873 in partnership with the First United Methodist Church of Kissimmee held a winter gala charity event for both organizations. The church’s portion went to their mission team that travels around the world helping those in need. The lodge will use its proceeds for the Elks National Foundation and the state Harry-Anna Trust Fund. Pictured are Terry Hebior, Exalted Ruler, and Jose Nieves, senior pastor.

**WEST CENTRAL DISTRICT**

**New Port Richey #2284**

On Jan. 30, Largo Elks Lodge members shopped for nonperishable food items to be delivered to Pinellas Safe Harbor, a homeless shelter in Largo run by the Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office. Using the Elks National Foundation Spotlight Grant, they used $1,000 to purchase food at Sam’s Club. The lodge also holds clothing drives and couples the clothing donations with clothing purchased with the remaining $1,000 from the grant. The facility has at least 425 people, primarily men, pass through their doors every day. Members Jeanne Reinhart, PDD; Alice Wallace and Barbara Hennessey are pictured after purchasing the food. Pictured at the delivery are members Ed Cabana and Alice Wallace; Sergeant Debra Knighton; Jeanne Reinhart, PDD; and Criminal Justice Specialist Nunez.

**Largo #2159**

At the request of Wheelchairs 4 Kids, the lodges of the West Central District donated $2,200 to purchase an adaptive tricycle for 5-year-old Marli who has cerebral palsy. Wheelchairs 4 Kids is a nonprofit organization that assists children with physical disabilities by supplying wheelchairs, modifying vehicles, and providing other assistive and therapeutic devices. Erin Wilson, Programs Coordinator for Wheelchairs 4 Kids, describes Marli. She “endures numerous obstacles as a result of the illness. She is nonverbal. Marli uses a G-tube for nourishment. She also cannot walk. The little girl, however, is happy despite her limitations. Many things make Marli smile. Every day she learns something new by watching ‘Sesame Street.’ Her favorite movies include ‘Aladdin’ and ‘Wildcrats.’ Marli also listens to children’s music, but her favorite artist is the reggae superstar Bob Marley. On special occasions, she and her family visit Disney’s Magic Kingdom. Her must-go-on ride is the Carousel of Progress. Most of all, Marli loves playing with her brother. They can be silly and goofy, and at day’s end, a bit of silliness is Marli’s best medicine.” Pictured are Chris Miles, Tampa Lodge Exalted Ruler; Toni Goodrich, PDD of St. Petersburg Lodge; Bonnie McManus and Rhonda Smith from Holiday Isles Lodge; Dave Marcinkowski from New Port Richey Lodge; physical therapist Nick Hamilton from Charlie’s Champs (the other partner in the purchase); Erin Wilson from Wheelchairs 4 Kids; Raquel Scott, Marli’s mother, holding Marli; Mozes Scott, Marli’s brother, sitting on the tricycle; and Garrett Scott, Marli’s father.

**SOUTHEAST CENTRAL DISTRICT**

**Vero Beach #1774**

On Jan. 28, Vero Beach Elks Lodge #1774 presented 29 stop-the-bleed kits, one for each area school, to the Indian River County School Board’s new superintendent, Dr. David Moore. The $2,247 used for this project came from the kids’ charities account. Shown are Richard Campbell, Esteemed Loyal Knight; Paul Diaz, Exalted Ruler; Dr. Moore; and Richard Miller, Esteemed Leading Knight and Community Activities Chair.

On Jan. 28, Vero Beach Lodge gave $6,200 from the kids’ charities account to the Cal Ripken League for a new T-ball field in Vero Beach, Florida, which will be used to instruct 6-8-year-olds how to play baseball and to teach sportsmanship. Vero Beach Lodge held their annual Valentine’s Ball Feb. 8 and raised $1,564 to support Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services and the Florida Elks Youth Camp. On March 6, a Neil Diamond tribute concert raised $3,000 for the Past Exalted Rulers scholarship program.

Using $1,000 raised at the annual Super Bowl Party Feb. 2 along with items donated by members, Vero Beach Lodge packed welcome boxes for The Hope for Families Center and The Samaritan Center of Vero Beach, Florida. The Hope for Families Center uses education, rules, training and requirements to build the foundation for long-term independence to teach families that are homeless the habits and routines necessary to sustain themselves. The center provides housing as well as a structured program that teaches families how to set expectations. The Samaritan Center provides affordable, supportive, transitional housing and support services to those who are homeless or who are close to homelessness.

**New Port Richey #2284**


**St. Petersburg #1224**

Largo #2159

On Feb 8, Kissimmee Elks Lodge #1873 in partnership with the First United Methodist Church of Kissimmee held a winter gala charity event for both organizations. The church’s portion went to their mission team that travels around the world helping those in need. The lodge will use its proceeds for the Elks National Foundation and the state Harry-Anna Trust Fund. Pictured are Terry Hebior, Exalted Ruler, and Jose Nieves, senior pastor.
On Feb. 1, St. Petersburg Elks Lodge #1224 recognized 14 first responders at their annual law and order awards event. (Three additional responders who could not be present were recognized Feb. 29.) In attendance were 151 officers with their families and 71 Elks and guests. The lodge provided dinner. The awards recognize the outstanding contributions of top law enforcement, firefighting, and emergency medical personnel. Honorees are nominated by their peers and represent departments throughout Pinellas County. “We remain indebted to the men and women first responders who work every day to keep the people of our community safe,” stated Toni Goodrich, PDD, Lodge Secretary. After the ceremony, the lodge presented Pinellas Park High School JROTC $1,000 in support of the school’s four-year high school magnet program with emphasis on law education to Cassandra C. Bogatz, program director for the Criminal Justice Academy. The JROTC served dinner to all 222 in attendance. Afterward, the St. Petersburg Police K-9 unit gave a demonstration by Officer Dixon and Officer Herring with K-9s Johnny and Blaze. Officers selected to become K-9 handlers must complete a 16-week school with their K-9 partners. K-9 activities include building, article and tracking searches. Demonstrations included obedience exercises, mock drug searches, simulated apprehension and an agility test. Pictured are Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office Deputy Sgt. Rich Trump who presented awards to Deputy Bryan Beeler, Deputy Colin Roper, Deputy Jayson Young and Deputy Rita Bison (not pictured).

Leahlman Fire Control District – Paramedic of the Year presented to Paramedic Allen Smay by Fire Division Chief Jim Millican

Pinellas County Sheriff Office – Four top honors presented to Deputy Bryan Beeler, Deputy Rita Bison, Deputy Colin Roper and Deputy Jayson Young by Pinellas County Deputy Sgt. Rich Trump

Pinellas Park Police Department – Officer of the Year presented to Detective Bridget Hurt by Pinellas Park Police Chief Michael Haworth

Pinellas/Pasco County State Attorney’s Office – Three top honors awarded to the Consumer Fraud Division to Assistant State Attorney Elizabeth Jac, Assistant State Attorney Catherine Wachter and Assistant State Attorney Julia Rice by Division Director Jim Hellickson

St. Petersburg Beach Fire Rescue – Firefighter of the Year presented by Chief Jim Kilpatrick to Firefighter Derek Herman

St. Petersburg Police Department – Unit of the Year presented to the Police Anti-Crime Team (names withheld due to nature of their work) by St. Petersburg Police Assistant Chief Mike Kovacsev

Gulfport Police Department – Officer of the Year presented to Officer Eric Clague by Gulfport Police Chief Robert Vincent

Kenneth City Police Department – Officer of the Year presented to Sgt. Jamison Raley by Chief Kevin Riley

Leahlman Fire Control District – Firefighter of the Year presented to Firefighter Jordan McCullum by Fire Division Chief Jim Millican

On March 7-8, St. Petersburg Lodge sponsored member Chris Boland in Bike MS: The Citrus Tour 2020 with a donation of $1,000. Bike MS is the fundraising cycling series of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and raises more money than any other cycling event for any other cause. Their mission is to end MS. Routes included 23, 50, 75 and 100 miles.

On March 11, the St. Petersburg Ladies of Elks Auxiliary made a $1,000 donation to the Southeastern Guide Dogs walkathon and the lodge added an additional $250. The walkathon is the organization’s largest fundraiser of the year and is relied upon to bring in more than $1 million annually to fund their mission. The organization does not accept government funding and depends on private donations and grants to provide its life-changing guide and service dogs to the people who need them at no charge. Pictured are Jan Giallourakis, St. Petersburg Ladies of Elks Auxiliary Vice President, and Tracy Horrell, PER, a member of Tampa Elks Lodge who is representing Southeastern Guide Dogs. She raises puppies and Sandy, pictured with Horrell, is under her charge right now being trained. She teaches puppies the basics including house manners and basic obedience, and they then go on for further training.
On March 18, Tampa Lodge had a Suds and Stories event planned in partnership with a local laundromat to provide a free laundry day for families with small children. A pizza shop in the same strip mall was going to provide a discount on a family meal for all attendees. Two local low-income elementary schools partnered by sending home flyers. Families that were helped by the lodge in the past were also invited. They also planned to have Laundry 101, storytelling, crafts and a book distribution during the two separate sessions of free laundry. Then, two days before the event, all large events had to be cancelled due to COVID-19. Since it was such short notice, lodge members contacted the families that had RSVPed and offered to let them come do their laundry at an appointed time, assuring them there would be no crowd, and they could still have pizza and books. Three families made appointments, but one family called out due to illness and one large family didn’t show up. The Lopez-Reyes family attended with four large bags full of laundry. They were very grateful for the free laundry (worth $37), the children’s books and the free lunch. Pictured are Lolo Lopez, mother, and children – 4-year-old Miguel Reyes Jr. and 18-month-old Joel Reyes. The event was postponed and will be rescheduled as soon as it is safe.

**SOUTHWEST CENTRAL DISTRICT**

**Plant City #1727**

On Jan. 25, Plant City Elks Lodge volunteers partnered with The Wooden Spoon, Universal Tire and Auto Repair, the Plant City Police Department, and the community for a barbecue lunch to raise funds for the Plant City Police Department to participate in the Police Unity Tour. The Police Unity Tour is a yearly event that starts 250 miles outside Washington, D.C., in Virginia and ends at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. There is a fee to ride in this tour. The primary purpose of the tour is to raise awareness of law enforcement officers who have died in the line of duty; the secondary purpose is to raise funds for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. The event raised over $5,000 which will be used to cover the $2,000 entry fee for each of the two Plant City officers riding, and $1,000 will be donated to maintain and enlarge the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. Two of the four barbecue organizers were lodge members George Domedian and Judy Wise, and 15 lodge volunteers participated. With the help of off-duty officers, the “drive-through” pickup of a barbecue lunch at The Wooden Spoon restaurant went smoothly. The giant law enforcement flag was displayed by Brewington Towing.

**SOUTHWEST DISTRICT**

**Sarasota South #2495**

Sarasota South Elks Lodge #2495 treated the volunteers of the Toys for Tots program to a dinner at the lodge Jan. 22. There were volunteers from the lodge as well as from Venice-Nokomis Elks Lodge #1854, VFW Post 3233, and the volunteers from Charlotte County. Jim Lamb, PDD from Sarasota South Lodge has been the coordinator for the Marine Corp Toys for Tots for Sarasota County since 2009. This year he was also responsible for Charlotte County. A total of 153,031 toys, 5,016 books and 8,755 Christmas stocking stuffers were passed out to families from the two counties totaling $2,937,258.86. During the campaign there were 68 Elks and 39 non-Elks who worked on the project for a total of $431,678.65 in-kind dollars that were given back to the community. Pictured are Jim Lamb, PDD; Ruth Rankin, Leading Knight and volunteer in charge of the Toys for Tots warehouse; and Liz Watson, lodge treasurer and volunteer with toy distribution.

**Deep Creek #2763**

On March 3, the Charlotte County Commissioners proclaimed March as Officer Lou Henyecz Month. Deputy First Class Lou Henyecz of the Charlotte County Sheriff’s Office is a member of Deep Creek Elks Lodge #2763 and assists in coordinating the lodge’s annual shopping trip to Walmart with the children from Genesis House Homeless Shelter. The lodge uses its Elks National Foundation Gratitude Grant to provide clothing, shoes, school supplies and backpacks. Officer Lou always enjoys interacting with the children. He works in community policing and serves on the board of The Homeless Coalition.

**Punta Gorda #2606**

On Jan. 22, Punta Gorda Elks Lodge #2606 held a first responders award banquet for the Punta Gorda Police and Fire departments. Lt. Alex Davenport of the fire department was awarded Firefighter of the Year and Officer Jesse Richards of the police department was awarded Officer of the Year. The lodge was later informed that Officer Richards had been awarded the Enrique Camarena Award by the Florida State Elks Association.

On Feb. 11, the Punta Gorda PER Association held a spaghetti dinner and raised $2,735 through ticket sales for the Harry-Anna Trust Fund which benefits Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services and the Florida Elks Youth Camp. On Feb. 18, Punta Gorda Lodge held the 13th annual bocce tournament and raised $885 for Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services through ticket sales. The annual lobsterfest was held Feb. 19 which raised $7,833 also through ticket sales which will be used for local charities and scholarships. For these events, 50/50 raffles were also held along with lottery boards to raise funds.

**Rotonda #2710**

On March 2, Rotonda Elks Lodge #2710 donated $1,000 to support Project Phoenix in its continuing endeavors to help those in need. Since 2012, Bobbi Sue Burton, founder, and her team of volunteers have provided numerous families with assistance that would not have otherwise been available. Run strictly by volunteers, the project in Englewood, Florida, provides many services to the community, but the main objective is to collect and distribute new and gently used household items to assist families and individuals in need for a variety of reasons and to help them make a fresh start and allow them to rebuild their households. If Project Phoenix collects items that cannot be used to assist an individual or family in need, they may put the item for sale in their resale shop and use the proceeds for operating expenses or to purchase items that clients need which are not in stock. Pictured is Jean Humphreys, Exalted Ruler, presenting the check to Bill Werner, Exalted Ruler, Project Phoenix volunteer.

**Clewiston #1853**

Clewiston Elks Lodge #1853 sponsored a booth at this year’s Hendry County Fair Feb. 11-16, providing flyers and handouts to highlight the many activities and charitable causes supported by the Elks each year. Elroy was popular among the kids and young adults and many stopped to say hello. Membership applications were given to those who expressed a desire to become involved and six new Elks were initiated Feb. 26.
**West Palm Beach #1352**

West Palm Beach Elks Lodge #1352 used its Presidents Grant to help Conner Pulver (center) compete in the Palm Beach County, Florida, summer 2020 Special Olympics March 7. He is the son of member Jonathan Pulver and grandson of member George Zocchi, PER.

**Jupiter #2469**

Jupiter Elks Lodge #2469 charters Pack 157 and hosted their Pinewood Derby the first weekend in March; the winners advanced to the district race.

**Lake Okeechobee #2871**

Lake Okeechobee Elks Lodge #2871 hosted a fun day at the Agri-civic Center Feb. 29. The event was called Cops and Bobbers and was all about safety, learning and fun. Local off-duty law enforcement from Fish and Wildlife Conservation (FWC), Okeechobee Sheriff’s Office and Okeechobee City Police Department joined the kids for some fun and learning. FWC instructed the kids how to properly wear the life preservers they were given and discussed when they should be wearing the preserver. Then each child was gifted a rod and reel, small tackle box, and the basic tackle with which to fish. The officers each took three to four kids and showed them how to tie the hook, place the sinker and attach the bobber. There were prizes for the biggest fish, smallest fish and most fish caught. After the catch and release, the officers, kids, some of the parents, and Elks volunteers enjoyed some conversation and dined on hamburgers, hot dogs, and sides provided by the Elks and prepared by David Drawdy.

**Pompano Beach #1898**

Pompano Beach Elks Lodge #1898 participated in the ninth annual Unity in the Community event Jan. 25. It is a day for family fun promoted and coordinated by the City of Pompano Beach. The lodge sponsored a booth and passed out information about the Elks drug awareness program, Elks scholarships and Elks membership. Coincidently, a performing clown at the event noticed the Elks booth and told them that her daughter had been treated at the Florida Elks’ Lower East Coast Clinic approximately 20 years ago and she let them know how much she appreciated what the Elks had done for her family. Pictured are Robin Haywood, Exalted Ruler, and Frank Sellers Jr., District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler.

With an Elks National Foundation Beacon Grant, Pompano Beach Lodge’s Exalted Ruler-elect, Bud Legere, and his wife, Sandy, work with the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Catholic Church in Pompano Beach, Florida. Donations from the Elks stock the cupboards with nonperishable foods for the community.

**Delray Beach #1770**

Delray Beach Elks Lodge #1770 held their 13th annual chili cook-off Jan. 18 and raised $1,000 for the Harry-Anna Trust Fund. Pictured are the winning members: Lynn Lavenco, second place; Joe and Lisa Danciu, first place; Frank Barbieri accepting third place prize for Mike Cruz; and Mitch Katz, emcee.

Delray Beach Lodge also held their 59th annual country-western dinner dance Feb. 22. They hosted 250 people who raised $17,000 for Sunny Shores Sea Camp, a respite in Florida for children with cystic fibrosis and their families. On March 7, the lodge held their annual awards night where they honored the city’s finest police officer, firefighter and ocean rescuer.

**Oakland Park #2407**

On Jan. 16, Oakland Park Elks Lodge #2407 held their first of what is hoped to be an annual fundraising event for Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services (FECTS) – Drag it Out. Local drag queens from Lips Restaurant in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, donated their time and tips for this benefit. Occupational therapist Lynanne Koenig and her husband were invited to represent FECTS. She spoke about how valuable donations are to the services provided to the children and their families. Five dollars from each ticket sold went to FECTS. From the tips and tickets, $650 was raised at this event. Pictured are members Barry Draeling and Regina Roskowski.

On Feb. 29, Key West Elks Lodge #551 brought residents of the Key West Convalescent Center together for music, food and beverages to celebrate Leap Year. Lodge Esquire, Fredy Varela, prepared the Cuban mixed sandwiches. They and the staff had a great time. The residents enjoyed the familiar sounds of music from the 1950s and 1960s. The lodge also provided a teddy bear to each of the 75 attendees. Pictured are Natalie Castaldo, Lodge Secretary; Burnette Hardin, volunteer; Elizabeth Igoffo, Inner Guard; Mary Wheeler, Exalted Ruler; Bob Reber, volunteer; and Helen Garcia, South District Deputy.
EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT

Palm Coast #2709

Palm Coast Elks Lodge #2709 held a karaoke night at the lodge Jan. 26 and raised more than $1,200 for the Army of Hope through ticket sales. The event was open to Elks and their guests.

CENTRAL DISTRICT

Aripeka #2520

Aripeka Elks Lodge #2520 continues to support the local veterans’ Steps to Recovery program. On Jan. 6, the lodge delivered a truckload of clothing and hygiene items. Pictured are member Lucille Joy and Ken Clark of Steps to Recovery with one month’s donations.

SOUTHEAST CENTRAL DISTRICT

Vero Beach #1774

An Elks National Foundation Freedom Grant of $2,180 was used Feb. 8 to supply services to 18 veterans who are homeless in Indian River County, Florida. Vero Beach Elks Lodge #1774 and the Vietnam Veterans of Indian River County hosted a Stand Down to aid veterans who are homeless and in need. The lodge donated tents, bedding, underwear, socks, clothing and personal hygiene products. More than 10 members helped with the distribution.

Also in February, Vero Beach Lodge donated $2,000 to American Gold Star Mothers Inc. and $1,000 to the Army of Hope.
February was National Hospitalized Veterans Month and to show their love and gratitude to them, Plant City Lodge members brought more than 300 valentines to the lodge for everyone to sign and add messages of thanks for the hospitalized veterans at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa, Florida. Judy Wise, Veterans Chair, and her husband, Ed, Americanism Chairman, delivered the valentines. Students from Advantage Academy in Plant City, Florida, also made 240 cards after Wise informed a teacher there about celebrating hospitalized veterans in February. The program was used in art, English and history classes as a teaching moment for the students about veterans and their sacrifices. The teachers donated the art materials.

On Jan. 8, Plant City Elks Lodge #1727 presented Adam Marasco a check for $1,500 through the Army of Hope. This will help him attend a summer program that will prepare him for a career in medicine. He is the son of first Sgt. Patrick Marasco and his wife, Deann. Marasco served three tours in the Middle East while serving in the military for 23 years. Adam’s mother was a family readiness coordinator for 15 years. Pictured are Judy Wise, District Veterans Services Chair, and Adam Marasco.

On Feb. 28, Tampa Elks Lodge #708 hosted 25 veterans from James A. Haley VA Hospital and the VA domiciliary for dinner and dessert. To their surprise, one of their lodge members was on the bus from the VAMC. Pictured are veteran Carl Camon, Tampa Lodge volunteer Carolyn Miller, and Tampa Elk and veteran Walter Steward.

Tampa #708

On Jan. 3, a group of Brandon Elks, Past Exalted Rulers, Ladies of Elks and visiting Elks spent the morning with veterans of the spinal cord unit of the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital. The visit showed them that they are never forgotten. Bags of gifts were given to each veteran, and cookies and treats were left at each nurse’s station to let them know how much their service to the veterans is appreciated. Top picture: The event was planned by Lodge Veterans Chair, Robin Rutzke, right, who is retired from the Air Force, and Vice President of the Brandon Ladies of Elks, Millie Marrero, left. With them is Orion N. Geib, spinal cord injury unit administrator. Bottom picture: Tammy Riley, member; Sharon Hammersla, PER; Robin Rutzke, Veterans chair; Millie Marrero, Ladies Vice President; Charlene Hart, Ladies member; Grace Weigand, Ladies member; Julie Ebert, Ladies member; Mary Lou Scribner, PER; and Richard Clark, Seattle Lodge #92 Brandon #2383

On Feb. 14, Vero Beach Lodge hosted the Have a Heart for Veterans second annual charity Mah Jongg game and raised $4,500. The event was open to the public and there were 90 players who each paid $50 to participate. The event had several corporate sponsors and individual donors as well. The check was presented Feb. 22 to members of the Vietnam Veterans of Indian River County. The funds will be used to help furnish new homes for veterans who were homeless. Pictured are Victor Diaz and Tim Nightingale from the veterans organization; Paul Diaz, PER, Exalted Ruler; and Karen Guidry, co-chair.

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Alice Wallace, project coordinator for Largo Elks Lodge’s Operation Little Big Feet, and Edye Day, Lodge Treasurer, prepare boxes of handmade newborn sweaters, hats, blankets, and baby toys to be sent to the Naval base pediatric department in Jacksonville, Florida. This shipment went out Feb. 20. The lodge has been sending items here for almost two years. Donations over this time period are valued at over $4,000. The base hospital has approximately 3,000 births per year.

Largo #2159

On Feb. 28, Tampa Elks Lodge #708 hosted 25 veterans from James A. Haley VA Hospital and the VA domiciliary for dinner and dessert. To their surprise, one of their lodge members was on the bus from the VAMC. Pictured are veteran Carl Camon, Tampa Lodge volunteer Carolyn Miller, and Tampa Elk and veteran Walter Steward.

Florida State Elks Association
Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota #2855

Due to the cancellation of baseball’s spring training, the Lakewood Ranch-Sarasota Lodge’s Veterans Committee was unable to take 32 veterans to a game March 22. The committee was going to use the Elks National Foundation Freedom Grant for this activity. The Elks National Foundation gave them an extension of one month but also encouraged them to make a donation to a worthy veterans’ cause. Upon getting the grant money back, they made a $2,000 donation to Southeastern Guide Dogs.

Manasota #2734

On March 5, Manasota Elks Lodge #2734 presented to Vets 2 Success founder, Bryan Jacobs, five Mercer Culinary Millennia eight-piece knife roll sets and five Mercer Culinary rules purchased with the Elks National Foundation Beacon Grant. These culinary products are for the next Vets 2 Success veteran culinary training. Vets 2 Success offers a solution for returning veterans to learn a new skill that will give them purpose in their lives and the ability to support themselves and their families. Manasota Lodge has been supporting Vets 2 Success for three years with the Elks National Foundation Community Investments Program. Pictured are Ken Davis; Diane Davis; Jan “Spike” Klocke; Jim Klocke, Manasota Veterans Chair; Bryan Jacobs, Vets 2 Success founder; Ginny Kollath and Jim Kollath.

Punta Gorda #2606

The South Southwest District Army of Hope fundraiser was held at Punta Gorda Lodge Feb. 23 and raised more than $17,200 for the families of deployed military members and disabled veterans. Funds were raised in several ways. Food and beverages that were donated were sold to attendees (Ron Steelman, Patrick McCarthy and Rick Markely of Deep Creek Elks Lodge #2763 prepared and sold 130 Philly cheesesteaks at $5 each). There was also a Chinese auction, 50/50 and lottery boards. Donations were received as well. There were approximately 1,500 members and guests as this was open to the public. The local American Legion and JROTC were in attendance to present the colors. Six bands donated their time to play throughout the day.

Jupiter #2469

On Feb. 22, Jupiter Elks Lodge #2469 hosted the Southeast District annual Army of Hope picnic where the district comes together and raises funds for active duty military personnel and their families. This year’s event surpassed its fundraising goals.

West Palm Beach #1352

West Palm Beach Lodge members Tim Hadsell and John Castro survey the newly remodeled Veterans Clothing Distribution Center at the VA hospital in West Palm Beach, Florida. With Hadsell and Castro are Mary Phillips, head of volunteer services and assistant. This was made possible by the Elks National Foundation Focus Grant for veterans of $10,000.

Manasota Lodge #2734

On March 7, Jupiter Lodge members Susan Aubrey and Alma Foreman deliver a care package to a veteran in need. The package was made possible through the Elks National Foundation Spotlight Grant.

Boca Raton #2166

The Veterans Committee of Boca Raton Elks Lodge #2166 continues its monthly trips to Island Dolphin Care in Key Largo, Florida, with veterans. These visits offer dolphin therapy to veterans suffering from various afflictions, including PTSD. The visits are funded by the Elks National Foundation Beacon and Freedom grants and the Harry-Anna Trust Fund matching Beacon Grant. Pictured is a young Florida Atlantic University/Palm Beach State College veteran interacting with a dolphin.

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Hollywood West #2365

On Jan. 18, at the Southeast District VP/DDGER dinner at Jupiter Elks Lodge, veteran Bob Clark was honored for his military service at the Battle of the Bulge 75 years ago. Clark is a member of West Palm Beach Elks Lodge #1352. Pictured are David Monsour, DDGER; Clark and Ed Morey Jr., West Palm Beach Lodge Exalted Ruler.

On Jan. 23, Hollywood West Elks Lodge #2365 hosted Re-Creation as the dinner entertainment at the lodge. The event raised $1,000 for the Army of Hope, a Florida Elks program designed to support military families. In addition, a basket raffle brought in $1,000 for the Elks National Foundation which was presented to Grand Exalted Ruler, Robert Duitsman, by Jim Blanchard, Exalted Ruler, Feb. 6 at the Florida Elks quarterly meeting at the Florida Elks Youth Camp in Umatilla, Florida.
LODGE PLANNING CALENDAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May 2020</th>
<th>June 2020</th>
<th>July 2020</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY:</td>
<td>FY:</td>
<td>FY:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/31</td>
<td>6/4-6</td>
<td>7/5-8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donation period opens for Alex's Lemonade Stand - run by State Drug Awareness Chair</td>
<td>Alabama state convention – Birmingham, Alabama</td>
<td>Grand Lodge Convention in Baltimore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deadlines:</td>
<td>6/14-20</td>
<td>7/1-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1 • ENF Emergency Education Grant applications available at GL website</td>
<td>Summer Camp staff training</td>
<td>• Summer Camp Week 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lodges to submit annual Membership &amp; Charity Report with dues payment to Grand Secretary</td>
<td>6/18-20</td>
<td>7/12-18</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/15 • DDGERs to submit checklist to Grand Secretary for GER’s Certificate of Appreciation for DDGER</td>
<td>State Convention – Rosen Centre – Orlando, Florida</td>
<td>• Summer Camp Week 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Due Dates for Non-Grand Lodge Reports &amp; Taxes:</td>
<td>6/21-27</td>
<td>7/19-25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/1 • Annual report listing officers to Florida Secretary of State</td>
<td>Summer Camp Week 2</td>
<td>• Summer Camp Week 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/15 • Deposit payroll taxes for prior month to U.S.</td>
<td>6/28-7/4</td>
<td>7/26-8/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasury (Lodges may be eligible to pay quarterly if certain conditions are met.)</td>
<td>Summer Camp Week 3</td>
<td>(Dependents of Military/Army of Hope Week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deposit withholding to U.S. Treasury from gambling winnings if more than $2,500 cumulative for the year</td>
<td>Deadlines:</td>
<td>Deadlines:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/19 • Sales tax for prior month to Florida Department of Revenue (electronic payment and filing no later than 5 p.m.)</td>
<td>6/14/</td>
<td>7/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutes:</td>
<td>• Flag Day (Mandatory Service – Sec. 2.030)</td>
<td>Lodges to complete FSEA online committee reporting for the quarter ending 6/30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• May – Lodge Annual Membership &amp; Charity Report due with dues payment to GL May 1 ($16.010 – Subject to $100 Fine)</td>
<td>6/15/</td>
<td>7/31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notes for Due Dates for Non-Grand Lodge Reports &amp; Taxes:</td>
<td>• Deadline for lodges to submit request form for GL GER Award Pins – three new or reinstated members – to Grand Secretary (7/1/19 to 6/15/20)</td>
<td>ENF Impact Grant intent to apply closes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida sales taxes, if filed and paid by paper, are due the 20th day of each month. Many, if not all, lodges are required to pay and file electronically. Due dates for electronic payments are moved back to ensure that funds are received by the state on the tax due date. See each month’s due date reflected.</td>
<td>• Deadline for lodges to submit request form for GL Recruiter’s Watch – 11 new or reinstated members – to GL Membership Member (7/1/19 to 6/15/20) – Limit two watches</td>
<td>Due Dates for Non-Grand Lodge Reports &amp; Taxes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quarterly reemployment tax returns (Form RT-6), if filed on paper, are due the last day of April, July, October and January. If electronic filing is required, the due dates are reflected.</td>
<td>• Lodges to submit list of recruits for GL Recruiter’s Clock – 33 new or reinstated members – to GL Membership Member (7/1/19 to 6/15/20) – Limit one clock</td>
<td>7/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depository dates of taxes to the U.S. Treasury are noted. An earlier date may apply depending upon whether your payment is directly deposited through your bank or through a bank utilized by the payroll program of your lodge’s choice. PLEASE DETERMINE FROM YOUR BANK OR YOUR PAYROLL PROGRAM HOW SOON BEFORE THE DUE DATE YOU NEED TO AUTHORIZE PAYMENT.</td>
<td>6/25</td>
<td>• Deposit payroll taxes for prior month to U.S. Treasury (Lodges may be eligible to pay quarterly if certain conditions are met.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State President’s Visits:</td>
<td></td>
<td>7/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/26-27 • South District – Florida Keys #1872</td>
<td>• Sales tax for prior month to Florida Department of Revenue (electronic payment and filing no later than 5 p.m.)</td>
<td>• Deposit withholding to U.S. Treasury from gambling winnings if more than $2,500 cumulative for the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/26-27 • South District – Florida Keys #1872</td>
<td>7/30</td>
<td>7/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Online</td>
<td>7/3/31-8/1</td>
<td>7/30-8/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 23, 2020</td>
<td>7/31</td>
<td>7/31-8/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floridaelks.org</td>
<td></td>
<td>7/31-8/1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike our print edition, this online version is updated throughout the year as information changes. Simply log in at floridaelks.org, click Member Resources, and select Officers & Committee Lists. This page will provide the link to the online roster.

Current Information is always at your fingertips!
2020 Florida Elks State Convention

June 18-20 – ROSEN CENTRE HOTEL, ORLANDO, FLORIDA