Youth Activities Committee

The purpose of the Youth Activities Committee is to foster, supervise, and carry out all state association programs on behalf of the youth of our state recognizing all mediums to promote the welfare physically, mentally, and morally of our youth and to inculcate love and respect for God and country. This committee shall encourage Lodges to sponsor projects such as Little League baseball, youth camps, Boy and Girl Scout troops, Big Brother blubs for underprivileged children, educational programs, support churches in their spiritual aims, and related projects designed for the assistance of the youth of America.

Scouting

In 2000, Elks Lodges in Florida sponsored 44 scouting units with 1,233 youth members and 528 adults.

Basketball League

A note deserves mention here of a very successful Elks basketball league which is sponsored by Palm Coast Elks Lodge 2709. Founded by their Youth Activities Cochairman, Phil DePalma, the idea was for a middle school youth league. When presented before the Lodge the idea was accepted with wide approval. DePalma organized the league of six teams of boys and girls grades six through eight and registered 72 players.

In 1996 the league expanded to twelve teams with over 140 boys and girls registered. All players had to have passing grades to participate.

In 1997, it was necessary to cut the league back to eight teams comprising approximately 100 players because of the lack of facilities and volunteers.

Cochairman of Youth Activities, Bob Burns, was highly instrumental in obtaining top-notch referees. Burns also was instrumental in obtaining an increase in the Elks budget to keep the league running as a top-notch professional organization.

Burns, whose background was as an athletic director, and DePalma were still at the helm in 2001 and attracted much of the community of Palm Coast as well as the entire county. High school coaches were frequently seen in attendance at the games because the league functioned as a breeder for high school basketball.

Each year more and more adults got involved in the league as participants. Member Elks are used as scorekeepers, timers, and coaches. There is a waiting list of area coaches and the bleachers are usually full with fans.

Brooksville Lodge 2582 Turn Around Awards

Brooksville Lodge holds an annual Turn Around Awards dinner for elementary, middle, and high school students. This is a joint effort with Spring Hill Bowling Lanes and the Hernando County Bowling Association. Teachers from every school in the county tell of how these special students have turned their failures in their personal and scholastic studies into success.

(Laws of Order, Section 13.070 and Grand Lodge Youth Activities Committee Program Manual)
(See also Elks National Foundation)

Youth Camp, Florida Elks

The Florida Elks Youth Camp is an accredited camp of the American Camp Association.

At the 78th annual Florida State convention held on May 24, 1984, State Sponsor Bob Grafton addressed the convention. At that time Grafton envisioned a possibility that the Florida Elks Children’s Hospital would become obsolete and that it would be wise to have another project to fall back on. He proposed to the membership that the Florida State Elks Association appoint a committee of seven men to investigate the purchase of a piece of property of approximately 250 acres close to Umatilla at a cost not to exceed one and a half million dollars.

Grafton made a motion, seconded by Past State President George Dominiani, to proceed with the idea.

The committee found 365 acres fronting a lake eight miles from the Florida Elks Children’s Hospital. The following year a land use committee was formed and went about determining the best use of the land. Meanwhile an additional twenty acres was purchased which gave access to County Road 450.

PDD Tom Ryan, Youth Camp Chairman, announced in the summer of 1994 that the building had begun. The Florida State Elks Association had pursued an active program of construction by starting the kitchen building,
the camp director’s house, the pole barn, and the swimming pool. At this time, the Florida Elks and Ladies had contributed money to build residential cabins for the campers.

During the annual state convention in Kissimmee a motion was made and approved to obtain construction bids for the first sixteen cabins to be erected which were to be dedicated to the individual Lodges or districts that had completed their $20,000 donations. An additional five foundations and floor slabs were poured at the same time to allow other districts to continue their fundraising programs. Construction was to begin at the end of the summer and other cabins were added as funds were received.

The second motion approved during the convention provided $150,000 to complete the Florida Elks Youth Camp support and infrastructure facilities. The sewer and water lines for all 21 residential cabins would cost $58,800 including a $22,000 lift station to connect all cabins to the existing Florida State Elks Association waste disposal and water systems. A major project became the HRS-mandated restroom, showers, and storage and pump house facilities at the pool. This project was approved at a cost of $42,500. There was also $4,600 for pathways for wheelchairs between cabins and support facilities. Electric service for all of these facilities cost $6,500. An additional $30,000 was required for six state and county permits, architect fees, and site development costs.

The Florida State Elks Association also approved a $150,000 to complete the Florida Elks Youth Camp support and infrastructure facilities. The sewer and water lines for all 21 residential cabins would cost $58,800 including a $22,000 lift station to connect all cabins to the existing Florida State Elks Association waste disposal and water systems. A major project became the HRS-mandated restroom, showers, and storage and pump house facilities at the pool. This project was approved at a cost of $42,500. There was also $4,600 for pathways for wheelchairs between cabins and support facilities. Electric service for all of these facilities cost $6,500. An additional $30,000 was required for six state and county permits, architect fees, and site development costs.

The Florida State Elks Association also approved a first year operating budget of $114,141 for the youth camp for 1994-1995. This included the salary for Charles Lyle whom the Youth Camp Operating Committee selected from a field of 32 applicants as the camp coordinator. The operational funds included resources for maintenance and custodial expenses for the marketing grant writing and publicity necessary for expansion of this project.

In addition, the state association approved a motion not to renew the grazing contract on the Marion County property when it expired on October 31. The cattle currently pastured there were removed at that time. This would qualify the Florida Elks Youth Camp property for tax-exempt status.

A volunteer group led by PER Larry Shields and PER Randy Himmelhaber of Margate Lodge and Bill Cunningham of Plantation Lodge along with a crew of Broward Community College plumbers and assistants worked on the plumbing for all 21 cabins.

A youth camp wish list was circulated to the various Lodges for major and minor items.

The Florida Elks Youth Camp slogan was “Build it and They Will Come.”

Construction during 1995-1996 consisted of twenty-one cabins funded by various Lodges, districts, and ladies; Florida Ladies of the Elks enclosing the pavilion; completion of the kitchen by four districts, five Lodges, and the Grand Lodge National Foundation; boat house by Arcadia Lodge; aquatic complex, coordinator’s residence, camp office, multipurpose athletic field, and laundry room by the Florida State Elks Association; volleyball courts, project challenge ropes course, golf driving range, archery range, and basketball and tennis courts by the Grand Lodge National Foundation. This put the camp two years and four months ahead of the original projected opening date.

Founders Week was instituted in 1995-1996 which was scheduled one week before the camp opened. Volunteer Elks spent time at the camp cleaning up and preparing for the seasons. It continued each year. There were also work weekends scheduled during each fall, winter, and spring quarter.

At a meeting of the Florida State Elks Association, Inc. Board of Directors on May 24, 1996, Ed DeMask made a motion seconded by Marty Folan to incorporate the youth camp under the name of the Florida Elks Youth Camp, Incorporated. Bob Grafton said that it would be incorporated as a 501 (c) charitable corporation.

In 1999 State Sponsor Bob Grafton and State President Tom Ryan officially dedicated the new Albertus “Boots” and Eleanor Van Duren Educational Complex which was to be used for business conventions and educational seminars as well as a center for academic enrichment, arts and crafts, drama, and various types of cultural development.

Construction started on the gymnasium located on the property in 1999. The gymnasium doubles as a convention center and provides meeting rooms, offices for the Youth Camp, and the home of the Florida State Elks Association. Available in November of 2000, it was dedicated by the Grand Exalted Ruler during his official visit to Florida in February of 2001.

The gymnasium represented phase 10 of what was laid out as an 18-phase development. Previous to this construction had provided the pavilion which serves as the youth camp’s dining hall, game room, TV room, and gift shop; twenty-one Lodges for campers; a building for lodging camp supervisors; craft room; an aquatic complex; two baseball diamonds; volleyball courts; archery range; a driving range; a ropes course; a boat house for canoes and paddle boats; a campfire amphitheater; and primitive camping sites.
Dedication of the Grafton Center

In February of 2000 Grand Exalted Ruler Dwayne Rumney dedicated the four million dollar gymnasium as the Grafton Center.

The gymnasium and its meeting rooms were first used for the third quarterly meeting of the Florida State Elks Association in 2000. It is also used for quarterly meetings and state Hoop Shoot and Soccer Shoot contests.

PGER Robert Grafton had the vision seventeen years ago and through the hard work, time, and talents of hundreds of Florida Elks and ladies, Florida Elks Youth Camp has fulfilled the prediction made by PSP Tom Ryan, “Build it and They Will Come.”

Grafton’s vision of the Elks hospital becoming obsolete eventually did come about, but with his guidance the rehabilitation of crippled and developmentally challenged children continues with the development of the Florida Elks Children’s Therapy Services. This mobile service brings the therapist to the homes of the children requiring such care. This project under the direction of Administrator Ben Brown, PSP, has 21 physical and/or occupational therapists with vans equipped for treatments serving Florida’s children.

In 2001 work started on 21 additional lodges for campers.

The camp is located on 415 acres in one of the most picturesque areas of central Florida in southeastern Marion County. With Ocala National Forest within hiking distance as well as the Orlando major attractions within an hour’s drive, the Florida Elks Youth Camp is the ideal location for organizations to hold events. The youth camp features state of the art facilities and is available year round to such organizations as colleges, schools, churches, Boy and Girl Scout troops, and camps as well as other profit and nonprofit organizations.

Some of the organizations using the camp are the A-Lee Academy (an alternative school for troubled children), American Red Cross (disaster relief training), Florida Department of Children and Family Services, Project Graduation (local high school), Ocala Police Department, Jr. Leadership Camp, and the South Miami High School Band.

2002

The total number of children using the camp in the past year was 16,278.

2003

The total number of children using the camp this past year was 19,976.

Total camper days were 59,366.

Lynn Warburton, Administrator, announced that since the institution of the camp, we had served about 125,297 children.

The camp has housed many groups including scouts, churches, and some of the Elks major events such as the Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot, investment seminars, and quarterly meetings. Warburton said that one of the latest partnerships was with the DEFY, Drug Education for Youth, started by the Department of the Navy with a focus on nine to twelve year old children. It is now administered by the U. S. Attorney’s office.

Some of the activities now being enjoyed are making lanyards. Campers and staff weave as they track from one activity to another. Color pillowcases are also a great hit. They love sand art and building things out of popsicle sticks. By midsummer of this year they had used over 40,000 sticks. Archery and canoeing are a favorite.

2007

The total number of children using the camp this year was 15,954.

Since the camp began they have brought in 196,859 children to the campus.

Donations in support of the camp:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Camperships</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</table>
The Future Development Committee was reappointed. It evaluates the needs of Florida children and being here for them. Success of the camp depends on the ability and flexibility in campus and program development for the next generations.

2008

Operating Budget $2,060,900

In 2000 a Florida Elks Youth Camp pin contest was instituted. The announced winner was Harold Hoke from Lake Placid Lodge 2661.  
(See also Brown, Ben - his report on Youth Camp during his year as State President)

ELKS YOUTH CAMP  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
Bylaws

SECTION I: DUTIES OF FLORIDA ELKS YOUTH CAMP BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A. Florida Elks Youth Camp Board (the Board). Subject to the supervision and control of the Board of Directors of the Florida State Elks Association, Inc. (FSEA). The Board shall meet at the August and February quarterly meeting and the state and midyear convention or as often as necessary to conduct business concerning the operation of the youth camp and advise the Board of Directors of FSEA in the operation of the youth camp and advise the Board of Directors of the FSEA in the operation and maintenance of the Florida Elks Youth Camp and its related programs. It shall in all cases protect the interest of the association in addition to promoting the welfare of the youth camp.

B. The Board by majority vote shall select its own Chairman. The Board shall make recommendations to the President, FSEA, who shall appoint, subject to the consent of the convention, the Board of Directors, which shall consist of one member from each district of the association and three members at large, who shall be Past State Presidents. Terms shall be for two years and only two terms can be served, except an appointment of a member to fill a vacancy who can then be appointed to a full term.

C. The Chairman of the Board shall have full authority to call special meetings as deemed advisable in the best interest of the Florida Elks Youth Camp and FSEA.

D. The Board shall recommend to the State President the suspension of any member of the Board who fails to attend three consecutive meetings without good and sufficient reason. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the other Boards of the FSEA.

E. Funding to operate the Florida Elks Youth Camp will be deposited and distributed through the Florida Elks Charities Inc., with the recommendation of the Youth Camp Board and the approval of the Board of Directors of the FSEA, who shall also approve the operating budget of the Board on an annual basis.

F. The Board shall submit reports of activities and budget financial status at the February and August quarterly meetings, the midyear convention, and a full report at the annual state convention.

G. The Board members shall actively work in the state and their districts to promote the financial status and operations of the youth camp, which includes promotion of groups to participate in the camp itself by using every acceptable means of communications at its disposal, i.e. news media, films, filmstrips, speeches before groups or organizations, and/or personal contact or references.

H. The first year appointments to the Board shall be seven districts for three years and districts for two years. Thereafter all appointments will be for two year terms with a rotation of seven new appointments per year at the conclusion of the two-year terms. Members at large would serve two-year terms.
Counselor in Training Program (CIT)

FLORIDA ELKS YOUTH CAMP TRUST SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM CRITERIA

The CIT program is open to young men and women between the ages of fourteen and seventeen who want to develop and serve the children of Florida at the Florida Elks Youth Camp.

Those individuals sought are ones who exemplify the goals and mission of the Florida State Elks Association and the Florida Elks Youth Camp. Most of all they pledge their allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and profess a faith of God.

The commitment is to serve for three years as a CIT or a cabin counselor. The candidate will have to serve a minimum of four weeks each summer to a maximum of eight weeks at the Florida Elks Youth Camp. During that time they will need to display the proper attitude and conduct towards the campers and staff of the Florida Elks Youth Camp.

The young adults will have to consent to the Florida Elks Youth Camp monitoring their academic progress (including the grade point average) and standardized scores. In addition, the program will examine a candidate’s volunteer service to the community and the leadership qualities that they exhibit. Attendance and disciplinary records will also be reviewed as part of the entire evaluation process. Similarly the candidate must demonstrate a commitment to positive and healthful living. There must be no gang involvement, no illegal substance, and no violations of law.

The candidate must also be accepted by an accredited higher education institution. The school can either be a two- or four-year college and can be either private or public funded. Correspondence schools are accepted.

BENEFITS

CITs who qualify after the first year of service will be invited back. They will be provided with free room, board, and activities during their second year. A CIT invited back for the third year will receive $80 per week along with room, board, and activities.

If a person is invited back for a fourth year and is over eighteen years of age they will be offered the option of becoming a cabin counselor. They will be paid $240 per week plus room, board, and activities. This would then fulfill the purpose of the Counselor in Training program to provide the Florida Elks Youth Camp with its own home counselors.

The scholarship is renewable by continued service at the Florida Elks Youth Camp. The same academic and personal life standards that applied to the CIT candidates would also apply to any cabin counselor seeking a continuing scholarship.

Scholarship money from the Albertus “Boots” and Eleanor Van Duren Scholarship Fund will be deposited with the Bursar’s Office of the college of the recipient’s choice. The money is not to be used for anything other than the scholastic expenses at the college.

EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process begins the minute a CIT steps on to the camp property. The evaluation process continues twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week while the CIT is at camp.

An evaluation will be done on all CITs whether or not they intend to apply to the scholarship program. The Head Counselor and/or the Camp Administrator will be asked to write an in-depth evaluation of each CIT’s performance, attitudes, and whether or not they exemplify the aims and ideas of the Florida Elks Youth Camp and the Florida State Elks Association. The Head Counselor will be expected to make a specific recommendation as to whether or not a CIT should be invited to return next year.

The evaluation will be on how well they perform in the different tasks assigned to them. The CITs will also be graded on the training program curriculum given by the Programs Directors and their assistants.

The CIT will apply for the scholarship by completing and Albertus “Boots” and Eleanor Van Duren Scholarship Foundation application. They will also be asked to sign a release of information. The release of information will give to the Florida Elks Youth Camp access to the youth’s or young adult’s school records. It will also give the camp permission to secure information concerning other items including health records, law enforcement involvement, employment history, and community service efforts.

The CITs will be asked to write an essay expressing their ideas about a topic of concern as determined by the CIT Scholarship Evaluation Committee. The package of information will then be reviewed by a committee.
consisting of three members from the Florida Elks Youth Camp Board of Directors. The committee will then score the applications and determine who will be the six finalists. The six finalists will then have a personal interview by the committee. The three finalists will then be asked to give a presentation to the full Florida Elks Youth Camp Board of Directors. A secret ballot vote will be taken to determine who will be given the scholarship.

CONTINUING SCHOLARSHIPS

Each candidate who applies for a continuation scholarship will have to provide to the committee any background information requested and sign a release of information. In addition, they must receive at the very least a positive evaluation from current work at the Florida Elks Youth Camp. They will be expected to attend any training and receive a satisfactory grade for the training.

The committee will make their recommendation to the full board of directors who will vote by secret ballot on whether or not a continuation scholarship should be awarded to an individual for the following year.

A scholarship recipient who digresses from the aims and ideals of the Florida Elks Youth Camp and the Florida State Elks Association will be required to remit either in full or a prorated amount of the scholarship they have received.

INFORMATION

Information and tours of the facilities can be obtained from the Florida Elks Youth Camp.

While visiting Florida in February of 2000, GER James Varenhorst and his wife, Mary, met with many Florida Elks and learned of the improvements under way at the Florida Elks Youth Camp. During his visit he participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the new $4 million gymnasium which will double as the state association headquarters. Additionally, GER Varenhorst was informed of the camp’s efforts to replace its many pine trees with oak trees which are more resistant to lightning strikes. By February of 2000 more than thirty individual Elks, Lodges, and districts have each contributed $300 toward the project. Pictured here helping GER Varenhorst (second from the right) plant a tree are (from left) PGER C. Valentine Bates; State Sponsor and PGER, Robert Grafton; State President, Thomas Ryan; and State Vice President at Large, R. William Wellbaum, Jr.
Grafton Center Gymnasium at the Florida Elks Youth Camp

Interior of the Grafton Center Gymnasium