

# The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks



The Elks Veterans Memorial Building, the centerpiece of the Chicago, Illinois, campus of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, now has landmark status. Dedicated in 1926, the rotunda's magnificent murals and statues honor veterans of all wars and showcase the value of peace. Adjoining the memorial building are BPO Elks administrative offices, including the Elks National Veterans Service Department, and the Elks National Foundation. Adjacent is The Elks Magazine Building.

Under the spreading antlers of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks are almost 800,000 members who form a quiet network of people doing good deeds. Elks pour hundreds of millions of dollars into helping youngsters, college-bound students, old or handicapped people, veterans, active-duty armed forces—anyone who needs assistance. And they do it every year! In 2014 alone, \$330,502,671 was contributed in cash, goods, transportation, and volunteer work within communities across the nation.



Originators of the BPO Elks-1868

This quiet network of good deeds has profoundly changed millions of lives for the better, yet there is little public awareness of the impact of the BPO Elks' vital work. Why is this so? Quite simply, the Elks have rarely sought recognition, nor have they gone to the general public with fund-raising efforts or received money from any level of government. Indeed, the flow of cash and goods moves in the opposite direction. For example, the Elks contribute regularly to schools and police and fire departments and assist the young and the needy throughout this great nation.



"Eyes on the Sky: America Enters the Airmail Age" (PDF)

From its inception in 1868 by fifteen New York City entertainers, through its growth to almost 800,000 members in the United States, effective communication has been essential. The official publication of the BPO Elks is *The Elks Magazine*, which focuses on the programs of the Order and the charitable activities of the lodges, but also contains feature articles of general interest and columns on finance and health.



1922 issue of *The Elks Magazine*

## For the Young



Elks help youth develop and learn.

Wherever you live in the United States, you probably have an Elks lodge not far from you. If you have a child in elementary school, you may know that the Elks give dictionaries and textbooks to the schools. If you have a child in high school, you may be aware that the Elks are one of the largest private providers of college scholarships.



Elks National Hoop Shoot finalists

Other programs provided by the Elks for the benefit of children—and with no cost to the parents—include athletic contests such as the Soccer Shoot and the Hoop Shoot, a national drug-awareness and prevention program, and a scholarship program for college-bound high school students—the Most Valuable Student scholarship.



Elks say no to drugs.

From sponsorships of youth fairs, career nights, student government days, athletic and educational programs, clubs, scouting troops, and much more, the Elks truly are making a difference in the lives of so many young people. It's this caring commitment that makes the BPOE the fraternal organization most actively engaged in promoting strong and healthy futures for young people.

## For Veterans

Since 1917, the BPOE has demonstrated its compassion for the veterans of our armed forces. Indeed, the Order's pledge that "So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them" is faithfully observed by the Elks National Service Commission and members of Elks lodges throughout the country.





Activities for Veterans

During World War I, the Grand Lodge allocated \$2 million to finance efforts to assist US soldiers. The Order organized and equipped the first two base hospitals in France, and to accommodate the wounded, the Elks built a 700-bed reconstruction hospital and gave it to the War Department in 1918. This was the first of what was to become the VA medical centers. That same year, the Order built a 72-room Community House to take care of the families visiting the 400,000 soldiers stationed at Camp Sherman, Ohio.



Activities for Veterans

Following the war's end, the Elks made 40,000 rehabilitation, vocational, and educational loans to disabled veterans. This service was so effective that the government followed the Order's example and established a revolving fund that was the precursor to the GI Bill.

Today, the BPOE continues its ongoing service to our nation's veterans and has an initiative to end veterans' homelessness and unemployment. Regular stand downs are held, where veterans can receive needed goods, medical and dental care, clothing and food, and opportunities to interview for work.

And the regular visits that Elks make to veterans in nursing homes and hospitals are now part of the fabric of the lodges' activities, bringing food, fun, and attention to these treasured members of our society, the ones who offered their lives to preserve our freedoms.

## For Active-Duty Armed Forces Personnel



Dinner for Navy officers

Lodges throughout the nation often send packages to troops serving overseas, give them dinner parties when they deploy and when they come home, and help support the USO with supplies and volunteer assistance.

And for the families of active-duty armed forces personnel, Elks have the Army of Hope, which assists families in their daily lives. The help may be in the form of food or goods, purchasing or fixing appliances, or the skilled services of plumbers, carpenters, electricians—and even a hand from accountants and lawyers in dealing with paperwork.

## For Communities



Support Our Youth stamp, Elks, 1968

Each lodge raises money and looks within its own community to see how best to serve the local needs. Whether it is the school system, which could use new dictionaries or books for the library; the police department, which could use trained dogs; the fire department, which could use new equipment; or the handicapped resident, who needs a ramp built to their house to make it wheelchair accessible, the Elks will step in to assist.

Grants from the Elks National Foundation add substantial monies to fund worthwhile charitable activities, such as food pantries, outreach to nursing homes and veterans hospitals, and developing programs for schools.

## For Help in Troubled Times



July-August 2016 cover of *The Elks Magazine*

Through the years, the Elks have been responsible for aiding the men, women, and children whose lives have been affected by extraordinary circumstances. No matter the cause of the disaster—earthquakes, fires, tornadoes, hurricanes, epidemics, and tidal waves—the Elks have been among the first organizations to lend a helping hand in troubled times.

In 1871, three years after the founding of the BPOE, the Order sprang into action to provide assistance to residents affected by the great fire in Chicago. Elks also helped families that suffered in the devastating Johnstown, Pennsylvania, flood of 1889.

Following the 1906 earthquake in San Francisco, the Order was the first organization to respond, and within twelve hours, the Elks' relief efforts were in full swing. In Oakland, California, the Elks equipped hospitals, established temporary shelters for nearly 2,000 displaced people, and provided food and financial support.

Today, the BPOE continues its commitment to participate in disaster relief. Of course, the Elks were there for 9/11, with money and goods; Katrina, too, elicited immediate and ongoing help from the Order.

## How Can the Elks Do All This?

The answer is simpler than you might think. While substantial monies are solicited from members via fund-raising letters, Elks also raise money by directly asking members for it, by having fun, and by holding profit-making activities, like raffles, dinner-dances, golf outings, motorcycle rallies, and parties. All of these can provide a positive cash flow, and members do not hesitate to reach into their own pockets to contribute to whatever project is at hand. Additionally, early on in the organization, at all levels—from lodge to state to national—the importance of accruing assets by investing wisely has meant that income from these assets can also be used to add to the funding of the many activities of the Order.

Another part of the answer of how the Elks can so effectively be charitable is that the elected leaders of the BPOE—from the lodge level to the national president—serve without salaries. Only at the Chicago headquarters campus of the organization is there a small cadre of employees to serve the objectives of the tremendous group of volunteers who make up the BPOE. Located at the Chicago campus are the Elks National Headquarters, the Elks Veterans Memorial Building, the Elks National Foundation, the Elks National Veterans Service Department, and the editorial and circulation departments of *The Elks Magazine*.

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Today, the BPO Elks members continue their mission to extend charity, promote patriotism, and serve their communities.

**Elks Care—Elks Share**