

# Arizona Elks News

The Arizona Elks News is an official publication of the Arizona Elks Association

December 2021



## *“Be Proud of Elkdom”*

Members All,

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday, and I hope you got to share the day with friends and family. Now we have Christmas and New Years to look forward to, so please celebrate safely.



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As of this writing Tim and I have visited 41 of our 43 Arizona lodges and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members that we met and who welcomed us with open arms. These visits have all been wonderful, both the official and unofficial ones. All of our member lodges are doing well and participating in most if not all of the Grand Lodge and State programs. I want to say how proud I am to be an Arizona Elk!!

Of membership, as of November 27<sup>th</sup>, we have gained 2790 members and lost 885 for an overall gain of 1905, and that's an outstanding accomplishment. However, we still show 1945 delinquents, giving us a net loss to date of only 40 members. We also have 464 candidates awaiting initiation – so please, please, let's get those candidates in and bring our numbers way, way up. Keep up the good work! **These numbers are again significantly up from last month.** If we can get all the candidates (464) initiated, **we will have a current gain of 424!!!!** We can have a gain Arizona!!!! Just keep bringing in those new members, keep initiating and keep working on the delinquents.

Any lodge that wishes to can participate in this year's Ritual Contest or a Past or current Exalted Ruler may participate in the new Eleven O'clock Toast contest. Please contact your District Ritual Chairman if you wish to participate. Remember – Ritual can be fun, and it promotes camaraderie among your officers, and also helps to maintain officer progression.

You are likely reading this article in our great AEA Newsletter, and our editor is Shawnee Carlile from Sierra Vista #2065. This newsletter has been sent to each Lodge Secretary and I have requested that it be emailed to all members in our Directory and that each Lodge Secretary email it to all their members. If you are not receiving it and wish to do so, please contact Shawnee and she will email it to you.

**AEA Newsletter**  
**Submission deadline:**  
**26 December 2021**

[aeaneewsletter@arizonaelks.org](mailto:aeaneewsletter@arizonaelks.org)



Continued on page 2.

**ARIZONA ELKS  
ASSOCIATION  
2021-2022  
STATE OFFICERS**

**PRESIDENT:**

Charyll McKean

**FIRST VICE PRESIDENT:**

East: Mike Weishan

**VICE PRESIDENTS**

South: Sue Krausman

West: Stephen H. Whitney

North: Roy Haddick

**SECRETARY:**

Peter K. Gillespie, PSP

**TREASURER:**

Alane Asp

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES:**

South-1 Year:

Alfred R. Skorupski, PSP

East- 2 Year:

John F. James, PSP

North- 3 Year:

Edward Leuer, PSP

West- 4 Year:

Vacant

South-1 Year:

Richard "Rich" Botkin

**SERGEANT AT ARMS:**

Bruce C. Van Den Eng

**CHAPLAIN:**

Marsha Haddick

**TILER:**

Jo Ellen "Jody" Knapp

**INNER GUARD:**

Hank Thonnard

**ASST. SEC / TREASURER:**

Sara McQuality

**PHOTOGRAPHER:**

Jan Casacchia

**ORGANIST:**

Hugh Dixon

## "Be Proud of Elkdom"

Continued from page 1.

Remember – photos from all of our events are available to all Elk Members by logging on to the Arizona Elks website and clicking on "Members Documents & Manuals" and then "AEA Photographs 2021-2022". This link is also at the very bottom of the "Committees" page as well.

I hope all of you stay safe, both health wise and in your travels.

From Tim and I, have a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year!!!!

Remember -- Be Proud of Elkdom

God bless everyone – until next month - - - -

**"BE PROUD OF ELKDOM"**

Regards



Charyll McKean

AEA President



**AEA Annual Convention 11-14 May 2022 in Tempe, AZ**

**\*\*\*Please submit articles to: [aeaneewsletter@arizonaelks.org](mailto:aeaneewsletter@arizonaelks.org)**

## ***“Sierra Vista Elks #2065 Elroy the Elk Supports Red Ribbon Week”***

On 26 October 2021, the Sierra Vista Elks Lodge #2065 participated at the Red Ribbon Week Event in Tombstone. Elroy T. Elk had a great time entertaining and educating the students at the Walter J. Meyer, where over 200 coloring books, bookmarks, and literature packets were handed out. Students were also treated to live canine demonstrations by DEA agents.

**Submitted by;** PER Barry W. Carlile Jr., Drug Awareness Chairman



## ***“Casa Grande Valley Elks #1957 Haunted House / Harvest Event”***

Casa Grande Valley Elks opened their doors to assist the Casa Grande Fire Department and provided their ramada for a haunted house to be enjoyed by the children of Casa Grande. Elks distributed backpacks which contained Elks Drug Awareness information and school supplies. On 29 October, our Lodge also handed out backpacks with Elroy the Elk at the Halloween Harvest Festival.

**Submitted by:** Debra Johnson, Lodge Secretary

Pictured L-R: Deborah Ramsey, Diane Rebel Repass, ER Chris Repass, Elroy the Elk, Cathy Ziemba, Pamela Adams, and Tim Doherty.



Pictured is Calvin Fong, Trustee and Ryan



## ***“Scottsdale Elks #2148 Hosts Multiple October Events”***

Scottsdale Elks Lodge 2148 hosted Brownie troop 6505 as they learned etiquette with Miss Manners, SueAnn Brown on October 20th. The troop and their leaders set tables, proper use of silverware. Attached photo shows the girls and their leaders of troop 6505

October 9th, 2021 Scottsdale Elks Lodge 2148 hosted Oktoberfest. We had brats and pretzels. Hosted a stein holding contest and raised over \$400.00 for the 100 club in support of local law enforcement families.

**Submitted by;** Debra Clark, Lodge Secretary

Pictured: girl scouts and their leaders of troop 6505



## ***“Mesa Buckhorn Elks #2656 Annual First Responder’s Dinner”***



In August we had our Annual First Responder’s Dinner with South District VP Sue Krausman, PDDGER and her husband, PDDGER Jimm Krausman. We had the distinguished honor of recognizing a total of five First Responder’s (one was from last year). Along with the award, our Lodge made a \$500 dollar donation to a charity of each of First Responder’s choice, for a total of \$2,500.

**Submitted by:** Tarrance Marrill

## ***“Tucson Elks #385” Donates in Support of Special Olympics”***

The Special Olympics 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Breakfast with Champions was held at the Tucson Convention Center on October 27<sup>th</sup>. Our Lodge donated \$500 in support of Special Olympics in Southern AZ, along with generous personal donations from our attending members and guest.

**Submitted by:** John Aceves, PR Chairman

Pictured L-R: Joe Riley, Diane Winters, Curt Winters, Joe Jablonski, Susan Trecartin, Bob Holyoak, Lois Wilford, Photographer – Wayne Burns



## ***“Mesa Buckhorn Elks #2656 Donates to Jefferson Elementary”***

Our Lodge donated \$2,500 (from a grant) to the Family Support Specialist of Jefferson Elementary, Edna Corona, for the JAG Boutique. The JAG Boutique is set up for students in need of clothing and shoes that the families may not be able to afford, the charity was also featured in on FOX 10 news.

*Submitted by;* Submitted by: Tarrance Marrill



## ***“Sierra Vista Elks #2065 Hosts Haunted House for Charity”***

Screams, howls, and lurking monsters disturbed the cool nights of October 2021, as our Elks Lodge Ramada was transformed into a House of Horrors. Children clung to their parents, as they dodged clowns, goblins, zombies, and even a mad scientist, while winding through the incredible Haunted House. Each year, our Lodge Secretary Barry “Bear” Carlile Jr., PER, and Co-Chair of the Haunted House, works with his gang of ghouls to create a fully enclosed creepy cottage. This year was no exception, and we had a large turnout of volunteers that helped build, decorate, and work the den of deviance. Volunteers showed up in force to man the ticket booth, donate candy, sort food and help keep the crowds under control. All of this was for an amazing cause, as 100% of the proceeds go to the Peach’s Pantry food bank, which feeds children and their families on the School lunch program over the weekends. Over 200 Drug Awareness Swag Bags (candy, toy, and DA brochures) were handed out each weekend.

This year our Team Haunted House broke records. We raised \$2500 in cash, and \$2200 in food, for a total of \$4700 for Peach’s Pantry.

*Submitted by:* Shawnee Carlile, Leading Knight / Haunted House Co-Chair





## ***“Catalina Mountain Elks #2815 Participates in Mud Run for Charity”***

On 30 October 2021, several members of the Catalina Mountain Elks Lodge participated in a Mud Run to raise funds for Charity. Their efforts raised \$6200 for the Veterans Fund. They ran through 3 miles of obstacles and mud during the event.

**Submitted by;** Jim Beregi

Pictured: Marie Starjnski, Vicky Harpold, Mandy Wittenborn, Cheley, Krivanek, Tracey Vanoni, Gloria Cisneros, and Becca Rossi



## ***“Yuma Elks #476 Hosts Students of the Month Event”***



Yuma Elks Lodge 476 participated in the Yuma Police Departments (YPD) annual Scary & Safe Trick or Treat at the Yuma County Fairgrounds on October 31st. All proceeds went to the Special Olympics of Yuma and the Arizona Law Enforcement Torch Run. Elroy the Elk was present to assist in handing out candy as well as 1500 Drug Awareness Coloring Books.

**Submitted by:** Jim Thompson, PR Chairman

## ***“Casa Grande Valley Elks #1957 Hosts Students of the Month Event”***

Casa Grande Valley Elks #1957 has selected Alyiah Quezada and Rosendo Rodriguez as the Students of the Month for October.

Alyiah is characterized by her teachers as respectful and hardworking. She is a fifth-grade scholar at Mary C. O'Brien Elementary School and an independent worker who aims to not only complete assignments but excel in her studies. She is an Honor Roll Scholar and a Student Council Representative.

Rosendo Rodriguez is an eighth grader at St. Andrews of Padua Catholic School “Soaring Eagles” in Casa Grande. Rosendo enjoys soccer, basketball, and video games in his spare time. He aspires to be a professional basketball player after college.

**Submitted by:** Debra Johnson, Lodge Secretary



## ***“Raceway Elks #2852 Hosts Flag Raising Ceremony”***

Raceway Elks lodge #2852 held its annual Flag Raising over the Lodge. Our event is hosted each year on the first Saturday in November. The ceremony celebrates Americanism and honors our country's Flag by raising a new Flag over the Lodge. This year we had 33 in attendance including 10 non-Elks, and two visiting Elks from California. The Guest speakers gave the History of the flag and the reading of this Ragged old Flag by Johnny Cash. All present gathered outside and saluted our Flag as the Girl scout color guard Raised the Flag to the Star Spangle Banner, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. This year's Americanism award was presented to Mary Snyder for her display of Americanism to the community and the Lodge. We rounded out the evening with a Tri-Tip dinner with all the trimmings.

**Submitted by:** PDDGER Willie Buttrum, Lodge PR Chairman

## ***“Tempe Elks #2251 Supports Wood Elementary School with Grant”***

Tempe Elks Lodge #2251 is using their 2021/2022 ENF Beacon Grant to assist Wood Elementary School with some of their everyday needs. This trip we had soccer balls, yoga mats, supplies for the Counselor's room, some fun supplies for the PAC store as well as some school snacks. We enjoy working with Wood School and hope to continue for many more years. Our lodge has provided week-end food bags for the last 6 years using the ENF Grants, held Soccer and Hoop Shoots, Essay contests, had peanut butter and jelly drive and taken the kids for the Children's Christmas Shopping Spree.

**Submitted by:** PER Larry Pratt Jr., ENF Chair



Pictured: Larry Pratt Jr. PER, ENF chair, and grants committee member along with Jennifer Collier School Counselor, and Kylee Schneckloth Wood School Principal.

## ***“Casa Grande Valley Elks #1957 Donates to Stand Down Event”***



Casa Grande Elks donated bedrolls for veterans to be distributed at the Stand Down being held on Saturday, November 13, 2021.

**Submitted by:** Donna Johnson, Lodge Secretary

Pictured L-R Veterans Committee co-chairs, Sheree Svoboda and Kate Schmidbauer.



## ***“Jerome Elks #1361 Hosts Clothe a Veteran Event”***

On November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the Jerome Elks Lodge took 15 local Vets shopping at Wal-Mart to purchase clothing and other items of which they were in need. Each Vet was accompanied by an Elk member or spouse or Elk widow and there were a total of 22 volunteers at the event. A total of \$2300 was spent on these 15 Vets, which was part of a \$3500 Beacon Grant received by the Lodge for benefit of our community. The balance, \$1200, of the \$3500 Grant was spent on clothing for the 93 Vets currently inpatients at the Prescott VA Hospital.

**Submitted by:** AEA President Charyll McKean, Public Relations Chair



Pictured Left: Six Elks and spouses who are shopping for clothing for the Vets at Prescott VA Hospital. From left to right, Bill Carr, Rosemary Carr, John Stomas, Sarah Kahn, Joe Barney and Larry Kahn.

Pictured Right: Vet James Warwick accompanied by Elk widow Nancy Brushingham on the right rear.

## ***“Sierra Vista Elks #2065 Hosts Annual Charity Ball with AEA President”***

On Saturday, 13 November 2021, the Halls of High Olympus was shaking with the arrival of all the gods, and thither each did bear the member of their highest choice, as we celebrated our Annual Lodge Charity Ball. MC Jimm Krausman, PDDGER was on the mic, as we welcomed our AEA State President Charyll McKean and First Gentleman Timothy McKean, PER to a feast like no other. Our menu featured homemade hummus, olive tapenade, Mediterranean chicken and featured specially designed cakes. We raised \$1145.00 for our Charitable account to help organizations such as the Salvation Army, Shop with a Cop, and St. Vincent de Paul.

Our PERs put on an amazing skit, which included our AEA President Charyll McKean, and First Gentelman, Tim McKean, PER.



**Submitted by:** Shawnee Carlile, Charity Ball Chair



## ***“Sun City Elks #2559 Restarts Donation Program”***

In October John Hjerpe, new Sun City Elks Member, with the assistance of Mary Ann Michaels, and on behalf of the Sun City Elks, donated about \$350 to the St. Vincent De Paul Charitable Organization.

John and Mary Ann recently learned of the Community Bridges Inc., a charitable facility located at 707 Joan's Ave., Phoenix, Arizona, which had just completed construction of a 600-unit facility at that address and needed help outfitting the rooms for habitation.

John and Mary donated over \$5,200 in bedding, sheets, blankets, towels, and washcloths, enough to stock at least 40 rooms in the new facility.

**Submitted by:** Val Bianchini, Veterans PR Chairman



Left Picture: John (left) and Mary Ann in front of truck with items. Right Picture: Elks Shed with many donated items

## ***“Casas Adobes Elks #2663 Hosts Annual Charity Luau”***

Casas Adobes 2663 members came together for a fun Hawaiian Luau Charity evening. Many friendships were renewed, and new ones formed. We danced the night away to our favorite band “Blackjack “. Our volunteers did a tremendous job decorating, cooking, serving, cleaning up and generally helping wherever needed. Many of our guests went home with a new cherished item. We netted over \$1,000 and expect that number to rise once final accounting is done.

**Submitted by:** PER Mary Shaffer, Public Relations Chair



## ***“Casas Adobes Elks #2663 Hoop Shoot Contest”***

Casas Adobes 2663 held a Hoop Shoot contest November 19<sup>th</sup> at Carden of Tucson Charter School. Even though Carden is a small school we had 32 children participate. The Shoot was coordinated by Nick Barnes our Hoop Shoot Chairperson. He was aided by 7 Elks and his son Cooper. Since 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students are in the same class an adjustable basketball hoop was brought down allowing them to participate. Everyone from the children to the adults had a great time. While talking to the principal Nick discovered that the school was considering purchasing an adjustable basketball hoop for P.E. classes, hopefully for the next school year. Upon hearing this Nick and his son donated the hoop on the spot much to the surprise of the Principal and Coach who thanked them profusely.

Nick and his volunteers took the opportunity to hand out medals to the students who had previously participated in our Soccer Shoot. The top score winner received a soccer ball in addition to a medal.

Nick plans a return to Carden in December and will present medals to winners along with a basketball to the child with the highest score during their Christmas assembly.

**Submitted by:** PER Mary Shaffer, Public Relations Chair

## ***“Casas Adobes Elks #2663 Performs Veterans Day Ceremony”***

Casas Adobes 2663 Lodge Officers performed the Elk Veterans Day ceremony at the Lodge on Veterans Day to a full house. We also performed a flag retirement ceremony and retired 40 American flags immediately afterwards. Afterwards we enjoyed dinner. All veterans ate free as is our custom.

**Submitted by:** PER Mary Shaffer, Public Relations Chair



Lodge members listen intently as the Ken Short, Lodge Esquire prepares to receive a flag ready to be retired.



Veterans in attendance gather before the altar to be recognized

## ***“Lake Havasu Elks #2399 Distribute Essential Items at Stand Down”***

The Lodge distributed backpacks filled with essential items to homeless and nearly homeless Veterans at the Stand Down. We also provided free coffee, donuts, pizza and water to all attendees.

**Submitted by:** Eva Fox, Lodge News Team

Pictured L: Debbie Herd, Arizona Senator Sonny Borrelli and Elks Member Elizabeth Ledingham

Pictured R: PER Debbie Herd with a Veteran





## ***“Casa Grande Elks #1957 Student of the Month Awards”***



Shyenne Lopez, of Casa Grande and is in the eighth grade at The Grande Innovation Academy. She has been a student at GIA for most of her education. Shyenne has been noticed by her teachers for outstanding character, dedication, and her diligence, exemplified by her ideals and values of a GIA scholar.



Ruben Limon, 11, is the son of Martha Meraz and Ruben Limon of Casa Grande. Ruben is a sixth grader at St Anthony of Padua Catholic School and has volunteered as an alter server, lector at

Mass. According to Rev. Lustan, Ruben is “a young person endowed with gifts of faith, talents and leadership skills.” He excels academically and as a member of the Student Council he has become even more responsible and trustworthy.

*Submitted by:* Donna Johnson, Lodge Secretary

## ***“Casa Grande #1957 Host Hoop Shoot Contest”***

Five Casa Grande area boys & girls won their age groups in the Casa Grande Valley Elks Hoop Shoot on Saturday. Four girls and ten boys competed in the Elks annual Hoop Shoot in three age group divisions 8-9, 10-11 and 12-13.

The local winner in the girl’s 8-9 division is Gianna Mejia and the girl’s 12-13 division is Angelique Martinez. The winners in the boy’s divisions are, Adrian Garcia 8-9; Aaron Cano 10-11 and Ruben Gonzales 12-13.

*Submitted by:* Donna Johnson, Lodge Secretary



Elks Hoop Shoot (L-R) C. Singleton, Casa Grande Valley Elks volunteer; winners Aaron Cano, Gianna Mejia, Adrian Garcia, Ruben Gonzales, Angelique Martinez and Elks Exalted Ruler Chris Repass.

## ***“Jerome Elks #1361 Presents Student of the Month Awards”***

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2021 the Jerome Elks Lodge #1361 presented Student of the Month Awards to two seventh grade students from Clarkdale-Jerome School. These students were chosen by the teachers of the school to be the November recipients of these awards. Each student was provided a free dinner at the lodge for themselves and their families, as well as a \$10.00 Wal-Mart Gift Card. Immediately following dinner, the students were honored with their awards.

**Submitted by:** AEA President Charyll McKean, Public Relations Chair

Photo of the two 7<sup>th</sup> grade winners and Elks Exalted Ruler. Pictured from left to right are 7<sup>th</sup> grade boy from Clarkdale-Jerome School Jayden Rhoda, Jim Plas, Exalted Ruler of Jerome Elks Lodge and 7<sup>th</sup> grade girl from Clarkdale-Jerome School J Peyton Valles.



## ***“Sierra Vista Elks #2065 Hosts Annual Feast in a Bag for Charity”***

On Saturday, 20 November 2021 several of our Lodge volunteers caravanned to our local grocery store to pick up \$3500 from our Beacon Grant, in food items to create 180 Thanksgiving Feast in a Bags. Our Lodge partners with Peach's Pantry, a local food pantry that provides weekend meals to children and their families on the school lunch program. These bags will be paired with turkeys donated by our community organizations and then distributed across Cochise County.

Every bag includes all the side items that go with a Thanksgiving feast, small bag of candy, pumpkin pie and a Happy Thanksgiving card from our Lodge to our local families.

**Submitted by:** Shawnee Carlile, Feast in a Bag Chair



## ***“Phoenix Elks #335 Hosts Multiple Charitable Events”***

On November 19<sup>th</sup>, Phoenix Lodge 335 had a tremendous turnout of volunteers to pack Thanksgiving boxes with staples to feed families in need in our community. We had great success, giving out all of the 250 boxes the following day. Thanks to all our fundraising and volunteer hours, so many families will have a more joyful holiday season.

Thanks to all of our volunteers and donors, the Phoenix Lodge Children's Christmas Shopping Spree program had another successful year. We were able to make Christmas merrier with clothing and gifts for 105 local kids. The children included 40 veterans' kids as well as 25 kids referred to us by Elks members. Thanks again for your continued benevolence and willingness to help out our charities!

**Submitted by:** Linda Thompson



***“2022-2023 Grand Lodge Convention Intend to Attend”***

**Intent to Attend  
Atlanta Georgia Grand Lodge Convention  
Georgia “On Our Minds”  
July 3 – July 6, 2022**

*Please Type or Print Legibly*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Spouse / Significant Other Name \_\_\_\_\_

Lodge Name \_\_\_\_\_ Lodge # \_\_\_\_\_

2021 – 2022 Year Position \_\_\_\_\_

~~~~~  
Rooms are limited. Reservations will be on a first-come basis.

**Please return no later than January 1, 2022**

Jerry Grimes  
3397 Monte Moro Street  
Kingman AZ 86401

Work: 928-753-5925

Cell: 928-727-5925

Home: 928-692-5633

nukid@npgcable.com

~~~~~  
Comments/Questions/Concerns: \_\_\_\_\_

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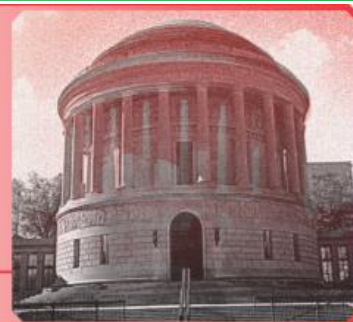
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## “Grand Lodge News”



# Grand Lodge NEWSLETTER

*Elks Care — Elks Share*



## A few creative ways Lodges can spread holiday cheer

The holiday season is in mid-swing. Right out of the gate is our annual Memorial Service. Although this is a somber and humble event, it is one I never miss. Some Lodges invite families of our departed Members to the service and offer lunch or snacks afterward. I try to meet with every family member to share memories and express what their loved one meant to me, the Lodge, and the Order. I always thank them for sharing their loved one with us through their journey of Elkdom, and talk about how the departed Member was always committed to the Elks.

If your Lodge has a Christmas basket program, fantastic. If not, consider starting one this year. One of my first



### Message from the Grand Exalted Ruler

**T. KEITH  
MILLS**

Elks memories was riding with my father and delivering Christmas baskets from the Lodge. Just seeing the help and kindness given to families that need a little extra assistance to make their holiday more joyful is something I will always cherish. If you are starting this activity, just choose a handful of families that you can help.

Another event could be Shop with an Elk. Gather up some kids and spend the day shopping with them and purchase some gifts that they need or want to give to others. I have also participated in this event as well—the great times I experienced with those children is another memory I will never forget.

Contact your local veterans facilities. They always have a list of items that the patients or residents need. My Lodge takes the requested list and puts them in an envelope on a Christmas tree in our Lodge. Then Members can take the envelopes, purchase the item and return it to the Lodge for distribution to the facility. If we do not have time

Please see GER, Page 2

## ENVSC combats veteran homelessness

By **CATHLEEN DRAPER**  
ENF Communications Coordinator

Many veterans face challenges after returning from service, and the Elks step up year-round to meet their needs.

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 37,252 veterans experienced homelessness on a single night in January 2020. The Elks National Veterans Service Commission is dedicated to alleviating veterans' homelessness.

Through August 3 this fiscal year, the ENVSC's Emergency Assistance Fund helped 151 veterans exit or avoid homelessness, awarding \$262,931 in vital, timely aid. Of that total, 35 percent has gone toward paying rent, 31 percent to utilities, and 15 percent to other housing-related expenses.

However, getting veterans housing does not make the house a home, so the ENVSC's work is far from done. Welcome Home Kits provide veterans with small furniture, kitchenware, and cleaning supplies. This year alone, more than 70 Elks Lodges in 30 states have used \$170,185 to provide 623 kits to veterans.

Another way the ENVSC seeks to end veterans' homelessness is through Freedom Grants, which are competitive

grants awarded to Lodges to help Elks serve veterans and active-duty military members in their community.

Naval (Port Angeles), WA Lodge No. 353 is located on the Olympic Peninsula, which, according to the Veterans Administration, is home to 15,000 veterans—the highest per-capita percentage of veterans in the country.

"It is impossible to know for sure how many of those veterans are facing homelessness, but we know they are in our community," says Paul Collins, the Naval (Port Angeles) Lodge Grants Coordinator. "We want to be a central place that can be counted on year-round to provide necessary items to veterans."

To build this haven of resources, the Naval (Port Angeles) Lodge used a Freedom Grant to create a Veteran's Basic Needs Closet. The dedicated space at the Lodge stocks necessities like coats, gloves, hats, sleeping bags, backpacks, sleeping mats, hygiene items, and snacks for veterans in need.

Head over to the ENVSC's website to see everything they have planned this month and throughout the year.

To learn more about the Elks National Veterans Service Commission and see how they are celebrating veterans this month, visit [elks.org/vets/about.cfm](https://elks.org/vets/about.cfm).

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to shop, we can donate money to the tree project and have other Members that do the shopping for us. Finally, we set a date to gather together and caravan to the veterans facility. One Member dresses up as "Old St. Nick" and we then distribute the items to the veterans. What an experience.

The State Bulletin Contest deadline is coming up mid-January. Take some time to investigate this contest in the Grand Lodge Activities Manual and submit the forms to get your state bulletin recognized.

December is not only a busy month for Elkdom, but our personal life as well. Christmas is a time for family. We all get caught up in our Elks duties, but do not forget to take some family time and enjoy everyone in your life. When I was younger, I never thought Christmas could get any better. But, as life moved forward and my children came along, the joy just kept increasing. Now that Amy and I have been blessed with grandchildren, I find myself even more overjoyed watching their faces light up, and them thinking this is the best experience they have had.

So, from my entire family, we would like to wish you all the most blessed holiday season and a happy "and healthy" new year.