



Charity begins at home.

For the 6 & 7-year olds in Mrs. Tomko's classroom ... it begins *there*.

As Wilkins Elks 577 begins its 2014/2015 year, Cardinal Virtues are the focus among Members ... and the community at large.

Peg Fitchwell-Hill Wilkins Elks 577 Lodge

The Wilkins Elks 577 Lodge began its new year April 1, 2014 with a declaration ... that members renew their commitment to live by the Elks core virtues.

The 577's new Exalted Ruler, John Weber declared at his installation, "My primary focus is to continually remind our Members, and make the community at large more aware of our Order's cardinal virtues - Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love, and Fidelity."

Reportedly, fraternal organization membership has been on a decline over the past several decades. But for the Wilkins Elks, membership has enjoyed a steady increase (+37%) over the past two years attributing its growth to member ambassadorship, email marketing and social media outreach and events positively impacting not only its members and constituents, but its partnering municipalities, human services agencies, church congregations, and yes ... its school districts.

Kelly Tomko teaches second grade at Shaffer Elementary School in Pittsburgh's Woodland Hills School District. She's been teaching for 17 years. "I loved my second grade and fifth grade teachers," says Ms. Tomko. "I've always wanted to be a teacher and by junior high, I knew I was going to become one."

So what brought the Food Pantry to Ms. Tomko's classroom? One of those cardinal virtues.

Last fall, the Wilkins Elks sponsored, through an Elks National Foundation Grant a child safety program, which was presented at Shaffer Elementary and Wilkins Elementary Schools. **Westinghouse Valley Food Pantry (WVFP)** Coordinator, Rose Smeltzer Coincidentally has a grandchild attending Shaffer School.

Rose mentioned the Wilkins Elks "Fill the Shelves Campaign" to Ms. Tomko and how the campaign has impacted its monthly distributions over the past year providing non-perishable items to individuals and families who would normally go without.

"... a large number of these children, their families are struggling as well, so the food drive becomes more of an act of sharing – not just giving.

Kelly Tomko, Teacher, Shaffer School

Says Rose of the increasing numbers arriving each month for food distribution and emergency food, "Three food pantries have closed over the past few months. Two in Braddock and one in East Pittsburgh. The numbers are up already from last year and its only springtime. You can only imagine what will happen as the year goes on. We have already made

50 emergency food orders for the month of March — the most ever made in one month. I feel it's because of the food stamp cuts, low wages and lack of jobs. Our food bank families are hurting and it's not right to be hungry ... not in America!"

**Giving becomes Sharing ...
HERE**

Ms. Tomko, who's on school principal, Dr. Deborah M. Vereen's



Shaffer Elementary School teacher Kelly Tomko meets with the Wilkins Elks 577 Lodge to talk about the importance of instilling the virtue of Charity in school-aged children.

- Continued

Community Service Committee, then suggested a student-driven canned goods competition across the classrooms benefiting the Food Pantry.

“My children, in all their innocence, have hearts of gold. For them, it is not only the virtue of giving, but sharing,” she says, tears welling up.

“For a large number of these children, their families are struggling as well, so the food drive becomes more of an act of sharing – not just giving. Every last cent their parents bring home goes to the children for food on their own tables. Despite this disparaging fact, these families donated.”

In fact, the children brought in so many canned food donations, that practically every square inch of space in that classroom was covered in cans.

“We may have been tripping over those cans, but I did not want to store them away each day. The children needed to see all that they were doing – they were filling the room with their care and hope for others,” says Ms. Tomko.



Rose Smeltzer, Coordinator, Westinghouse Valley Food Pantry (Center) with (LtoR) 577 Lodge Member and WVFP Volunteer Gary Hill and his son Jimmy, 577 Lodge P.E.R. Craig Stevens.

“And when Rose pulled up in the van from the Pantry, the children all helped fill it up. They were so excited and so very proud of all they accomplished in the name of charity ... in the name of sharing.”

“So, school’s not just ‘reading, writing and arithmetic,’” says Ms. Tomko with a huge smile. “It’s building self esteem and instilling good virtues.” This is the level, this is the age that you need to instill goodness.”

“Every little bit counts – no matter how big, no matter how small.”

When we asked what message she would like to leave with our members, families and friends, Ms. Tomko said, “Every little bit counts – no matter how big, no matter how small.”



Shaffer Elementary School Principal, Dr. Deborah M. Vereen (R of Elroy the Elk) accepts Wilkins Elks 577 Lodge donation of \$2,000 ENF Grant funding the Child Safety program that reached across two elementary schools student populations, Churchill Borough and Wilkins Township Police Departments. From left to right, Churchill Police Officer Stephen Shaulis, 577 Lodge Loyal Knight, Carol Steele, Elroy Jim Anweiler. Fore-ground (L to R) VP Woodland Hills School Board Barry Driscoll, Secretary 577 Lodge Roni-Sue Stevens, Past Woodland Hills School Board President, Marilyn Messina and 577 Lodge P.E.R. Craig Stevens.



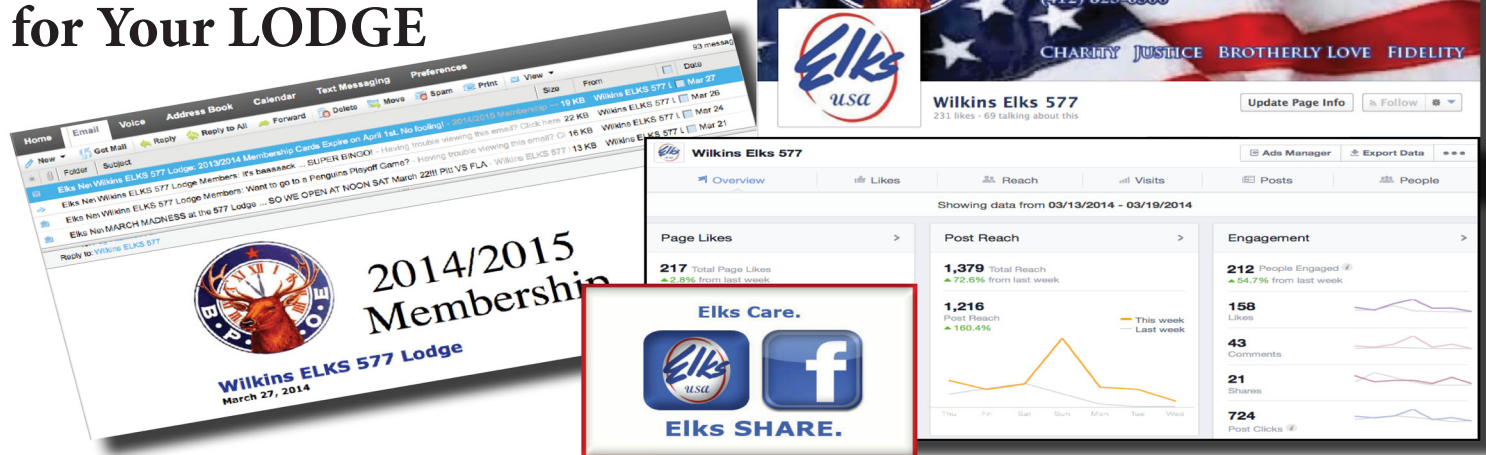
Westinghouse Valley Food Bank now serves on average, **171 families/397 individuals a month** - that is expected to increase dramatically with food stamps budget cuts and as unemployment benefits cease. *Figures do not include Emergency Food Distributions which have also risen dramatically with 50 delivered in March 2014.*

AGE/Status	#Mo/Avg Served*	vs 2013
0-17 Yrs	61	- 30%
18-59 Yrs	132	+60%
60+ Yrs	100	+35%
Disabled	77	+18%
US Veterans	27	+58%

* Figures do not include Emergency food distributions.

Please consider a “Fill the Shelves!” item donation. To make a monetary donation, issue your tax-deductible check to the Westinghouse Valley Food Pantry and mail to: WVFP 519 Penn Avenue, Turtle Creek, PA 15145.

Email and Social Media Make it “WORK HARDER” for Your LODGE



Nothing is more important than keeping your Members informed of your Lodge News, Lodge and Community Partner Happenings and Emergency Postings. In fact, our daily digital and mobile communications and weekly E-News Updates help members “Share” all of our news items, serve as important reminders and more often than not, increases our ability to reach out and ‘grab’ new members!

EMAIL CAMPAIGNING AND MEMBER REMINDERS - Small Investment = BIG Returns!

- Choose a secure online email and marketing program. The 577 Lodge utilizes **ConstantContact.com**. It is one of the most secure and affordable programs with multiple offerings to help inform Members grow your membership!
- Build your Member email list! Create a poster and, or send a postcard to Members who have not provided you with their email address asking them to email your administrator with their *home* email address. Oftentimes, employer email addresses block outside emails.
- Once you have established a list, export it as an Excel or CV file then import it into your online email marketing program.
- Appoint an Administrator to learn the program along with an officer or trustee. Be sure to read over an “Email Best Practices” Policy (found in your online email marketing program services) and, of course following respectfully the B.P.O.E. communications policies and guidelines.
- Your online program has several e-News, evites, media relations and even survey capabilities featuring easy-to-use templates. It also tracks your membership data and generates automatic database reporting. Once you create your templates, they can be copied/revised/reused and even resent. We regularly feature a “Please Forward” alert and ask Members to contact fellow members with no access to email. The 577 Lodge uses their programming for the following reasons:
 - Weekly News/Event Updates and Promotions
 - Last minute Lodge events
 - Reminders such as Daylight Savings Time/ Weekly Bar Bingo/Lodge Dinners/Monthly Meetings/Membership Renewals/Member Obits and Memorial Services (to name a few)
 - Delivers digital version of Bi-Annual Newsletter
 - Offers Community Partners a way to share their news with the 577 Lodge Membership
 - ENF News

FACEBOOK - OVER 1.3 BILLION STRONG - AND IT’S FREE!

Truly one of the best front-running 21+ age group social media platforms. Of those, nearly 50% use it every day! And of those, over 50% view their Facebook updates on their phones! Before you begin to use Facebook, be sure to read “Best Practices for Social Media” - this should be available with your email marketing program.

- Go to Facebook.com. Log out if your computer automatically signs you in. Click on “Create A Page” It will then take you to a log-in page. Use your Lodge primary email contact/administrator’s email address. Facebook will send you a confirmation email. Follow instructions. (You can assign additional “Page Administrators” by asking those persons to “LIKE” your new page. Then you simply go to your “LIKES” and the box to the right of that person(s) name will drop down to read “Make Admin” click on the box.
- Once you get to the “Create a Page” page, select the center box entitled “Company/Organization or Institution” this is the best option and allows for greater virility.
- Follow all instructions to set up your Lodge’s Page. It’s easy!
- Daily posts are best - keep your ‘Lodge voice’ consistent; always address your Members and ask them to “LIKE” and “SHARE” your news when appropriate. And always feature a photo/video to keep it exciting.