



Elks
National
Foundation, Inc.

InstaGrants

2016 Gratitude Grant Edition

Gratitude Grants offer Lodges endless opportunities to meet local community needs. Grant funds can be split between multiple projects so if you're looking for a few ideas, consider adapting one or more of these highly successful projects in your own community.

Project #1: Back Pack Program: Many children from food-insecure households depend on their school's breakfast and lunch programs for their most nutritious meals and in some cases, their only meals of the day. Elks are helping to meet the needs of children at risk of hunger by providing them with nutritious, child-friendly food to take home on weekends and school vacations when other resources are not available.

How to get started.

Is there a school in your area that has a need for a backpack program? Contact school personnel to schedule a meeting with the principal.

How to make this project a success.

A strong and dependable group of volunteers will be essential to keeping your program organized and successful. Consider working with youth groups such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Elks scholars and/or Antlers who may also be available to volunteer with the program.

How to make it your own.

Depending on the needs of the community, Lodges can consider providing school supplies, toiletries, or even adding additional food for younger children in the weekly back packs.

Elks in Action: Okmulgee, Okla., Lodge No. 1822 supports the local Back Pack Buddy Program by shopping, storing, and packing bags for distribution. The program serves children from Okmulgee and Preston elementary and middle schools.

Project #2: Visiting Seniors: Elks promote the health and well-being of residents in care homes by offering important opportunities for socialization.

How to get started.

Consult with the activities director at the local nursing home to assess real needs. Working with the staff will help ensure that your activity has the greatest, most lasting impact.

How to make this project a success.

Let the activities director know that the Lodge is coming at least two weeks in advance. Since visitors may be rare, the activities director will probably add your visit to the calendar of events so that residents can look forward to it.

How to make it your own.

Elks can coordinate a wide array of activities including hosting arts and crafts, planning a barbecue with musical performances or even delivering much needed toiletries to residents.

Elks in Action: Plymouth, Mass., Lodge No. 1476 hosts an annual cookout for the veterans

who reside at the V.A. Boston Healthcare System, Brockton Campus. Each summer, the Lodge opens their doors to two busloads of residents for an afternoon of fun and camaraderie.

Project #3: Pet Adoption: Millions of cats and dogs are euthanized in animal shelters every year because there are more pets than there are responsible homes. By hosting a pet adoption drive, Lodges can secure wonder homes for our furry friends.

How to get started.

Begin by contacting local animal shelters and rescue groups to participate.

How to make this project a success.

Choose a location that is well-known and easy to find. To increase attendance and excitement throughout the event, consider inviting a local radio station to provide live coverage.

How to make it your own.

There are a variety of ways to support the program such as through purchasing equipment, absorbing the costs of spaying/neutering or providing lunch for participants.

Elks in Action: Brooksville, Fla., Lodge No.2582 collaborates the Hernando Humane Society, Greyhound Adoption Center and a host of other community organizations to host an annual Adopt-a-Pet day. In addition to assisting with event coordination, the Lodge underwrites the costs of neuter and adoption fees for new pet owners.

Project #4: Operation Stand Down: According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, on any given night, nearly 50,000 veterans are homeless. In partnership with organizations across the nation, Elks are working to reduce that number.

How to make this project a success.

Find out if there is a Stand Down in your community. Reach out to organizers to see how the Lodge can play a role in the event's success.

How to get started.

Invite local organizations that serve veterans to attend and offer their services. Successful Stand Downs require the help of volunteers. Consider contacting high schools and colleges for volunteers looking for hands-on community service opportunities.

How to make it your own.

Lodges can provide meals for veterans at the event or distribute duffel bags filled with items such as socks, hats, soap, and deodorant. Some Lodges have even provided transportation so that veterans experiencing homelessness can attend.

Elks in Action: Houston, Texas, Lodge No. 151 works with the Veterans Affairs Commission of Houston to host the annual Stand Down. The event brings veterans experiencing homelessness into a safe area and where they are given an opportunity to register with the VA, receive medical attention and a meal. During the event, approximately 50 members help purchase, prepare and serve lunch to homeless veterans at the Latino Center Houston.