



GRAND LODGE Convention News

SUNDAY ✨ JUNE 30, 2024

Elks Convention returns to Lone Star State

By Mike Chamernik

Convention News Reporter

Texas is welcoming the annual Elks National Convention — yet again.

The Elks are in Austin this week, the fifth time visiting Texas in 24 years. The convention was held in San Antonio in 2018, Houston in 2016, Austin again in 2012, and Dallas in 2000.

That familiarity has made it easier for the Local Support Committee to manage the event. Many volunteers this year, especially those in leadership positions, worked previous National Conventions.

"We have some experience as a team, and a lot of the members on that leadership team are pretty seasoned," said Kirk Storey, the General Chairperson of the Local Support Committee. "They've been there, done that. We have a little bit of an advantage from that standpoint."

Storey said that more than 300 people have volunteered for the event. And it's not just Texans — Elks from states hosting future conventions (including Colorado and Missouri) have joined in.

"I don't believe in turning a volunteer away," Storey said. "If I can't find something for them to do, they can do what I'm doing and I'll go find something else."

The committee and the volunteers will handle a breadth of tasks: Picking up dignitaries, manning the airport, directing shuttles, setting up the exhibit hall, working the hallways, and coordinating general sessions, workshops, and ritual events. Committee members also promote the convention on social media. One member oversees printing the daily newsletter and the resolutions book.

Larry Baughman, the chairperson for printing and media relations for



The 2024 Elks National Convention is being held at the Austin Convention Center.

convention, is an estimator for printing company with a plant in the Austin area. It will be his job to make sure the daily print editions arrive on time early each morning. He will also fill in at registration, ushering, or wherever else he is needed.

"I saw how much work went into it and I wanted to be a part of it while we host a Grand Lodge here in Texas," Baughman said of his role. "I figured I can use my expertise in the printing field to facilitate helping to get that portion of it done."

Tom Hougham is serving as the treasurer. He's in charge of the money: he collaborated with other committee chairs to put together a budget, and he's in control of the bank account. He monitors expenses, including building booths, gifts for VIPs, and transportation, while balancing income (such as donations and sales of merchandise from the Texas State Association booth) to ensure the event doesn't end up in the red.

Hougham knows what he's doing. He's been the treasurer for all five Texas conventions this century, and he worked in the financial manage-

ment business for more than 30 years. Volunteering was an easy choice.

"I look at it from a standpoint of, I really enjoy the Elks," Hougham said. "And I can use my experience to support those portions of the Elks business that I can. It keeps me busy, gives me purpose."

The Elks are familiar with Texas, but Austin has a flavor and energy that makes it stand alone. The city's vibe is young and laid back, with an emphasis on live music, eclectic public art, and delicious food.

"Austin is a different place," Hougham said. "It's totally different than Houston, than Dallas, than San Antonio. Different from College Station, Lubbock. It is flat different."

The city's famous tagline is Keep Austin Weird. That draws a bit of everyone, from transplants to visitors.

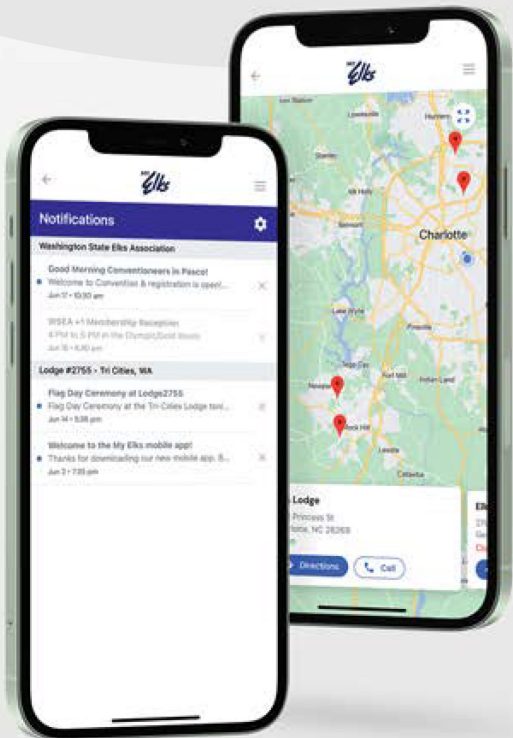
"Austin is kind of the melting pot," Storey said. "One thing about Texas is you can see pretty much everything that you can think of somewhere in Texas, but if you're in Austin, and you hang around long enough, you're going to see all of it. It's very diverse, there's a lot to do in Austin." ★



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STAY CONNECTED GET INVOLVED

ERs: Austin Reports due in October!

Exalted Rulers (or alternate delegates) should be reminded that they are required to attend the Annual Session and submit a Report to their Lodge no later than the first regular meeting in October. [GLS §12.120]

A good suggestion would be to save each edition of the *Convention News*, along with a copy of the Resolutions. Also, record how you voted on each resolution and submit to the Lodge with a cover letter. That will complete the obligation of your report to your Lodge.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON OPENING CEREMONY

04:00	Welcome	Paul R. Ryan, PGER
	— Invocation	Rev. Christopher J. Ford, Grand Chaplain
	Opening and Intro of PGERs	Paul R. Ryan, PGER
	Parade of Flags	William J. Lindsey, GLFC Chair
	Presentation of US Flag and Pledge	William J. Lindsey, GLFC Chair
	Drug Awareness Commission	Millard C. Pickering, PGER, Chair
	Elks National Veterans Services	Robert L. Duitsman, PGER, Chair
	Elks Charities At Work	Michael F. Smith, PGER, Chair
	Hoop Shoot	Makenna Cannon, Youth Programs Manager
	Grants & Scholarships	Deborah Kahler Doles, Asst. Director
	GER Introduction	Paul R. Ryan, PGER
	GER Speech	Randy P. Shook, GER
	Closing	Paul R. Ryan, PGER
	Benediction	Rev. Christopher J. Ford, Grand Chaplain



G/L AUDITING AND ACCOUNTING COMMITTEE

The Auditing and Accounting Committee will be conducting two seminars on Monday and Tuesday to assist Lodges in their accounting tasks.

The *Introduction to Lodge Accounting for Officers seminar* will address the basics of utilizing the recommended software to perform all the basic accounting tasks that a Lodge needs. The session will be conducted using a live session of QuickBooks. It is recommended for all beginners and intermediate Lodge personnel that handle the book-keeping at the Lodge level. The seminar is scheduled for 12:30-1:45 p.m. Monday and 2:15-3:30 p.m. Tuesday, both in Ballroom E in the Austin Convention Center.

The *Advanced Lodge Accounting Topics* session will be addressing six of the most common areas where Lodges have issues with complying with Grand Lodge Statutes or federal and state information return requirements. This session is scheduled for 2-3:15 p.m. Monday and 12:30-1:45 p.m. Tuesday, both in Ballroom E in the Austin Convention Center.

Each session will also have a question and answers segment. Members are also able to stop by the committee's booth in the exhibits area to meet one on one with a member of the committee to address specific issues. The committee looks forward to meeting you.

? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

? YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ?

? How do I submit to the FRS? ?

? What is the FRS? ?

? How do I use QuickBooks? ?

? What's a Restricted Fund? ?

? How do I handle it? ?

? How do I use QuickBooks Desktop? ?

? WE HAVE ANSWERS ?


? Chat with the experts from the Grand Lodge ?

? Auditing and Accounting Committee ?

? and the FRS Applications Specialist ?

? Stop by our booth in the exhibits area during exhibit hours ?

? and pick up your free gift. ?



? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ? ?

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OREGON Booth #600

G/L FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

STATE ASSOCIATION WEBSITE CONTEST WINNERS

FIVE ★★★★★ Awards

- Arizona arizonaelksassociation.org
- Colorado coloradoelksassociation.org
- Connecticut ctelks.org
- Florida floridaelks.org
- Georgia gaelks.org
- Idaho idahaelks.org
- Kansas kselks.org
- Kentucky kentuckyelks.org
- Louisiana laelks.org
- Maine maineelks.org
- MD-DE-DC mddedcelks.org
- New Jersey njelks.org
- New Mexico nmelks.com
- New York nyselks.org
- North Carolina ncelks.org
- Ohio ohioelks.com
- Oregon oregonelks.org
- Pennsylvania paelks.org

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

The court reporter needs to know your Name, Current Elks Title, and Lodge Name and Number. If you are recognized for making or seconding a motion, please come forward at the end of the Session to make sure the reporter gets your information for the permanent record, which will be included in the annual Grand Lodge Proceedings book.

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Thank You All!

The Assistant Officers for the 2024-25 Austin Grand Lodge Convention have been announced as follows:

► Clerks of Election

- Roger S. Quinn – Champaign-Urbana, IL #2497
- Patrick Moran – Milwaukee, WI #46
- James F. Ross – Festus-Crystal City, MO #1721
- Kerry Toomey – Ottawa, KS #803
- Michael A. Johnson – Southington, CT #1669
- Michael A. Delfino – Lexington-Waltham, MA #2204
- Frederick C. Gilbar – Bennington, VT #567

► Assistant Clerks of Election

- Rick Thompson – Decatur, AL #655
- Joseph Pedone – Park Ridge, NJ #2234
- Herbert T. Carey – Hot Springs, AR #380
- J. Curtis Neely – Moscow, ID #249
- David B. Lake – Fort Myers, FL #1288
- Michael Penchenski III – Jamesburg, NJ #2180
- Jody Patterson – Pendleton, SC #2861

► Inspectors of Election

- Craig J. Huch – Gulfport, MS #978
- Cynamon Eshleman – North Platte, NE #985
- Michael Hannigan – Houlton, ME #835
- Ron Hancock – Midwest City, OK #1890
- Donna Warner – Tri-City, RI #14

- James Money – Bridgeport, CT #36
- Anthony N. Thanopoulos – Watervliet-Colonie, NY #1500
- Joseph W. Clancy – Sanford, NC #1679

► Assistant Grand Esquires

- Bill L. Roper – Pulaski, TN #1827
- Tania DeFrank – Liberty, NY #1545
- James R. Stubenbordt – Canonsburg, PA #846
- Ronald Fortenbury – North Little Rock, AR #1004
- Ernest J. Patrick III – Oregon City, OR #1189
- Rudy Masi – St. Petersburg, FL #1224
- Geffrey K. McDaniel – Englewood, CO #2122

► Assistant Grand Inner Guards

- Don Baye – New Orleans, LA #30
- David Babcock – Broken Arrow, OK #2673
- Timothy J. Whalen – Griffin, GA #1207
- Rene Oswald – Marshall, TX #683
- Robert Passonno – Watervliet-Colonie, NY #1500
- Robert E. Lumpkins – Clifton Park, NY #2466

► Assistant Grand Tilers

- Stella A. Kolysko – Ticonderoga, NY #1494
- Angela Meyer – Kent Island, MD #2576
- Shane A. Taylor – Sitka, AK #1662
- Kelly Dorgan Cote – Nashua, NH #720
- Wayne Landry – Slidell, LA #2321
- Robert W. Colie – Lake Oconee, GA #2849
- Glenda Greene – Lordsburg, NM #1813

GRAND LODGE FRATERNAL COMMITTEE

All American Lodge Contest down to 60 finalists

By **RANDALL J. SNELLENBERGER**
Committee Member

It is my pleasure to announce the top 10 Lodges in each of the six divisions for the Contest 'A' - All American Lodge Contest. Here are the top 10 finalists for each division, listed alphabetically.

Division I (1-150 Members)

Duarte, CA No. 1427; Grangeville, ID No. 1825; Green Bay, WI No. 259; Gulfport, MS No. 978; Hackensack, NJ No. 658; La Grange, GA No. 1084; Los Banos, CA No. 2510; Norfolk, NE No. 653; Norfolk, VA No. 38; Pendleton, SC No. 2861.

Division II (151-225 Members)

Cedar Grove, NJ No. 2237; Clawson-Troy, MI No. 2169; Elk Grove, CA No. 2577; Elmwood Park-Paterson, NJ No. 60; Lakeport, CA No. 2704; Livermore-Pleasanton, CA No. 2117; Greater Spokane, WA No. 228; Tri-Cities,

WA No. 2755; Waukesha, WI No. 400; Wheeling, WV No. 28.

Division III (226-300 Members)

Arcadia, CA No. 2025; Gouverneur, NY No. 2035; Grand Island, NE No. 604; Homer, AK No. 2127; Huntington, WV No. 313; Kearny-Belleville, NJ No. 1050; Mena, AR No. 781; Milwaukee, WI No. 46; Negaunee, MI No. 1116; Tucson, AZ No. 385.

Division IV (301-450 Members)

Cynthiana, KY No. 438; East Stroudsburg, PA No. 319; Forks, WA No. 2524; Gainesville, FL No. 990; Kearney, NE No. 984; Lynnwood, WA No. 2171; Middletown, NJ No. 2179; Oak Harbor, WA No. 2362; Putnam, CT No. 574; Tampa, FL No. 708.

Division V (451-700 Members)

Catalina Mountain, AZ No. 2815; Chandler, AZ No. 2429; Danielson, CT No. 1706; Hickory, NC No. 1654;

Lake Hopatcong, NJ No. 782; Potosi, MO No. 2218; Roseville, CA No. 2248; San Rafael, CA No. 1108; Sierra Vista, AZ No. 2065; Vancouver, WA No. 823.

Division VI (701+ Members)

Fayetteville-Springdale, AR No. 1987; Ferndale, MI No. 1588; Garden Grove, CA No. 1952; Groton, CT No. 2163; Manasquan, NJ No. 2534; Middleboro, MA No. 1274; Orange, CA No. 1475; Phoenix, AZ No. 335; St. Louis, MO No. 9; Yuma, AZ No. 476.

I offer my congratulations to these 60 Lodges from 23 states that made the top 10 for this year. Thank you to all the Lodges that participated. We acknowledge their hard work for this year's contest.

The announcement of the first, second, and third place winning Lodges, in each division, will occur during the Tuesday morning Business Session at the Grand Lodge Convention.



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GRAND LODGE ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE

COMMUNITY PROJECT CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED

CONGRATULATIONS to all the Winners! Elks Lodges across the country continued to show that "Elks Care—Elks Share" by conducting Community Projects. These projects were showcased in the Grand Lodge Activities Committee's Community Projects Contest. *The winners for 2023-24 are as follows:*

Division I • (1 – 150 Members)

- 1st Place Mid Westchester, NY No. 535
- 2nd Place Webster-Fairport, NY No. 2396
- 3rd Place Pendleton, SC No. 2861

Division II • (151 – 225 Members)

- 1st Place El Paso TX, NM No. 187
- 2nd Place Mount Airy, NC No. 2061

Division III • (226 – 300 Members)

- 1st Place Madisonville, KY No. 738
- 2nd Place Kearny-Belleville, NJ No. 1050
- 3rd Place Jackson, TN No. 192

Division IV • (301 – 450 Members)

- 1st Place Goldsboro, NC No. 139
- 2nd Place Tampa, FL No. 708
- 3rd Place Cynthiana, KY No. 438

Division V • (451 – 700 Members)

- 1st Place Hickory, NC No. 1654
- 2nd Place Alamogordo, NM No. 1897

Division VI • (701+ Members)

- 1st Place Ashland, KY No. 350
- 2nd Place Bristol County, RI No. 1860
- 3rd Place Brattleboro, VT No. 1499

Every Lodge is encouraged to have a project that it conducts in its community. Does your Lodge have a Junior Golf program, or have you considered starting an Antlers Lodge? Perhaps participating in the Public Service Medal program is the right move for your Members?

By doing a project that benefits the people in your community, your Lodge increases its visibility, and offers opportunities for your Members to communicate to the public about who we are and what we do. Information on the process of developing a community project can be found on the ENF Community Investments Program page of Elks.org. If your Lodge conducts a project in the coming year, remember to showcase it in the Community Projects Contest.

ENVSC

VETERANS CRISIS LINE

On Monday at 3 p.m., join us to learn about suicide prevention and the Veterans Crisis Line. In Ballroom C at the Austin Convention Center, Veterans Crisis Line Deputy Executive Director Kyle Inhofe will share tools and resources for veteran suicide prevention.

Learn how to talk to veterans about emotional health, identify warning signs, and access resources for veterans in need and those who care about them.

The Veterans Crisis Line is a toll-free, confidential resource that connects veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified,

caring U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responders. Veterans and their loved ones can Dial 988 then press 1; chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat; or send a text message to 838255 to receive free, confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care.

Veterans Crisis Line
DIAL 988 then PRESS 1

ELKS NATIONAL VETERANS SERVICE COMMISSION

Elks donate more than 11,000 hides in 2023-24

By Mary K. Morgan

Director, Elks National Veterans Service Commission

The Elks Veterans Leather Program provides services and support that are hard to find elsewhere.

In 2023-24, Elks and volunteers in 11 states donated 11,916 hides to the Veterans Leather Program. Volunteers helped to collect these hides and transport them to our partners, who turned them into leather.

That leather is turned into wheelchair gloves, and Elks across the country distributed 938 pairs of these gloves to veterans last year. Every year, Veterans Leather Program volunteers attend national adaptive sports events to meet with veterans and personally distribute these gloves. Each of these pairs of gloves is emblazoned with the Elks logo.

Finished leather is also turned into craft kits, with help from our longtime partner Help Heal Veterans (HHV). This past year, Elks donated 74,761 square feet of leather to HHV to make craft kits for veterans. In return, HHV helped Elks volunteers in State Veterans Homes and elsewhere hand out 14,188 craft kits directly to veterans. We receive postcards in our office every week thanking the Elks for supporting this program.

Finished leather is also donated directly to VA Medical Centers, which recreation therapists use to plan creative projects focused on helping veterans recover. In 2023-24,



Elks distributed 4,821 square feet of leather directly to facilities for use in therapeutic crafting.

Every year, there's a battle to see which states can contribute the most hides. This year, Missouri came out on top, contributing 5,216 hides. Iowa came in second place with 4,268 hides, and Nebraska came in third place with 1,249 hides. Congratulations to these states!

Thank you to all the Veterans Leather Program volunteers who make this program a success, especially Program Chair Dennis McAleese, and Vice-Chair Chuck Mudge. This is Dennis's last year as Leather Program Chair. Be sure to stop by the ENVSC booth to congratulate him on more than 20 years volunteering with the Veterans Leather Program. His dedication has improved the lives of thousands of veterans, and his commitment to service is an example to us all.

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Elks Youth Eye Service



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James Rice: 1946–2024

James Rice, a longtime member of the Elks Convention Cadre, died in April.

Rice, from Mount Vernon, IL Lodge No. 819, served as an Exhibits & Sessions Coordinator at conventions for more than 20 years.

Roland "Smiley" Seibert, a fellow Exhibits & Sessions Coordinator and Rice's friend for more than 40 years, recalled how Rice underestimated just how much work goes into serving on the cadre when he first joined.

"In 1998, Jim came on the convention commission with me in Anaheim, California," Seibert said. "About three weeks prior to convention, I got a phone call from Jim asking how am I going to get my golf clubs there. I asked Jim, what are you going to do with your golf clubs?"

It's the job of the cadre to direct the professional crews with setting up the exhibit halls and meeting rooms. The convention staff controls everything, start to finish. There's little time to relax.

"When we got there the hall was empty," Seibert said. "[Rice] did not realize we had to set up and tear down because when he got there [in previous years], it was all set up. Surprise! No need for golf clubs."

Rice was not dissuaded, however. He stayed on as a Coordinator through 2022, becoming emeritus last year.



James Rice

DRUG AWARENESS COMMISSION

DRUG AWARENESS HOSTS TWO-DAY TRAINING SESSION

Prior to the opening of the Grand Lodge Session, Drug Awareness Chairs representing the various State Associations throughout our Order attended a two-day intensive training here in Austin. The training consisted of presentations regarding many of the facets of the Elks Drug Awareness effort and included a presentation from the DEA regarding current trends and activities.

The Kent Gade Rookie of the Year Award was presented to Mary Smith, Chair from Connecticut. Smith was recognized for her exceptional participation during the past year. She is the second recipient of the award since it was renamed in honor of longtime National Director, Kent Gade, who retired from the program two years ago.

The Chairman of the Year Award, named after PGER Frank O. Garland, was presented to John McEntire from California. McEntire recently completed his "tour of duty" with CHEA and was recognized for his efforts the past three years and for his untiring efforts in making California/Hawaii one of the leading programs in the nation.

Drug Awareness will be holding a workshop on Tuesday from 1:30-3:00 p.m. in the Ballroom F, located on the 4th Floor of the in the Austin Convention Center. Attendees will have an opportunity to meet and talk with this year's Enrique S. Camarena National Winner, Sgt. Jeffry Foss-Rugan. All are welcome.

G/L GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

GOV. RELATIONS HOLDS SEMINAR

The Government Relations Committee held a training seminar on Saturday for State Chairmen from across the nation. More than 30 were in attendance and explored new methods and ideas to make Charitable Reporting more consistent and even fun, if that is possible! State Chairmen in states that had 100% reporting were recognized with certificates.

ENVSC

VISIT THE ENVSC BOOTH

Check out the new Elks National Veterans Service Commission booth, write your name on our Wall of Service, and pick up your "I'm a Veteran" ribbon.

While there, chat with ENVSC staff about Welcome Home Kits, and learn about your state's Veteran Volunteer of the Year Award winners. Voluntary Service Representatives and Deputy Representatives are invited to stop by for a special gift!

Veterans Leather Program Chair Dennis McAleese and Vice-Chair Chuck Mudge will be sharing their expertise and selling gloves for \$25.

We look forward to seeing you!

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North Carolina State
Elks Association

ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION

2024 MVS Leadership Weekend: More than memories

By Patrick Roelofs

ENF Communications Coordinator

In April, the Top 20 Most Valuable Student scholars got to experience the #ElksFamily firsthand when they came to Chicago for the 2024 MVS Leadership Weekend. Though they were only together for three days, the Top 20 left Chicago with more than just memories.

“The Leadership Weekend taught me that the Elks are not just an organization, but they are family,” said Rohil Agarwal, sponsored by New Port Richey, FL Lodge No. 2284.

The Top 20 winners each receive a \$30,000 scholarship. The weekend’s focus is on leadership programming, cultivating relationships with one another, and gaining a greater understanding of the Elks.

The scholars began their first full day with a visit to the Elks National Veterans Memorial and Headquarters. They got to see the ornate



The Top 20 scholarship winners visited Chicago and spent three days networking, serving others, and learning about the Elks.

beauty and detail of the nearly 100-year-old building.

Service is the heart of what it means to be part of the #ElksFamily. Cradles to Crayons is a nonprofit organization that provides children living in under-resourced areas with essential items they need for home, school, and play. The scholars spent an afternoon sorting clothes from donation bags, keeping

in mind the organization’s belief that quality equals dignity.

Following a day of workshops and panel discussions about maximizing college success, the scholars bonded with their new #ElksFamily by exploring Chicago. They visited Buckingham Fountain and Navy Pier, and took a dinner cruise on Lake Michigan.

“The Leadership Weekend was a revelation, opening my eyes to endless possibilities in service and fostering meaningful friendships,” said Maher Harp, sponsored by Dearborn, MI Lodge No. 1945. “Given the profound impact of that experience, I am wholeheartedly committed to seizing every opportunity to further enrich my involvement with the Elks community.”

For more information about the MVS scholarship program, including eligibility and deadlines, visit elks.org/scholars.



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ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION

ENF Chairs' Challenge Contest Winners

April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024

STATE WINNERS

	Members	Score
1. Wisconsin	6,917	601.802
2. Rhode Island	7,264	573.476
3. Connecticut	22,788	521.145
4. Maryland, Delaware & District of Columbia	20,222	469.886
5. Minnesota	6,887	464.024

LODGE WINNERS

Division I — 150 Members or fewer

	Members	Score
1. Tri-Cities, TX, Lodge No. 2877	83	942.000
2. Texarkana, TX, Lodge No. 2771	86	897.500
3. Berea, OH, Lodge No. 1815	122	896.000

Division II — 151 to 225 Members

1. Katy, TX, Lodge No. 2628	181	956.000
2. Portage, WI, Lodge No. 675	192	914.000
3. Scotia-Glenville, NY, Lodge No. 2759	193	872.000

Division III — 226 to 300 Members

1. Kerrville, TX, Lodge No. 2081	294	1,000.000
2. Milwaukee, WI, Lodge No. 46	243	881.000
3. Plymouth, NH, Lodge No. 2312	233	851.000

Division IV — 301 to 450 Members

1. Fairhope, AL, Lodge No. 1879	386	1,000.000
2. Cranford, NJ, Lodge No. 2006	446	1,000.000
3. Oak Harbor, WA, Lodge No. 2362	340	980.000

Division V — 451 to 700 Members

1. Owatonna, MN, Lodge No. 1395	601	1,000.000
2. Sheboygan, WI, Lodge No. 299	530	1,000.000
3. New Castle, IN, Lodge No. 484	641	1,000.000

Division VI — More than 700 Members

1. Greater Cape May, NJ, Lodge No. 2839	1,886	1,000.000
2. Groton, CT, Lodge No. 2163	898	1,000.000
3. Waterville, ME, Lodge No. 905	1,005	980.000

In the event of a scoring tie, place was determined by categories listed in the Chair Challenge Guidelines. For information, visit elks.org/ENF/ChallengeRules.cfm.

ENF Per Member Contest Winners

April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024

STATE WINNERS

	Mem.	Donations	Per Mem.
1. Texas	13,876	\$305,823.92	\$22.040
2. Mississippi	2,651	\$54,621.04	\$20.604
3. Utah	3,568	\$71,839.81	\$20.134
4. Minnesota	6,887	\$134,116.60	\$19.474
5. Wisconsin	6,917	\$127,071.76	\$18.371

LODGE WINNERS

Division I — 150 Members or fewer

	Mem.	Donations	Per Mem.
1. Pendleton, SC, No. 2861	47	\$22,387.00	\$476.319
2. Wells, ME, No. 2738	68	\$11,920.00	\$175.294
3. Kaukauna, WI, No. 962	38	\$6,526.00	\$171.737

Division II — 151 to 225 Members

1. Lindsay, OK, No. 2351	158	\$21,864.80	\$138.385
2. San Angelo, TX, No. 1880	158	\$17,880.74	\$113.169
3. Crestview, FL, No. 2624	180	\$19,836.00	\$110.200

Division III — 226 to 300 Members

1. Cuyahoga Falls-Akron-Barberton, OH, No. 1923	271	\$23,266.69	\$85.855
2. Fairview Heights, IL, No. 664	252	\$13,767.00	\$54.631
3. Arcadia, CA, No. 2025	250	\$11,910.00	\$47.640

Division IV — 301 to 450 Members

1. Fort Wayne, IN, No. 155	387	\$32,625.00	\$84.302
2. Fort Collins, CO, No. 804	328	\$20,739.50	\$63.230
3. Sierra Vista, AZ, No. 2065	416	\$23,539.00	\$56.584

Division V — 451 to 700 Members

1. Louisville, KY, No. 8	453	\$29,615.75	\$65.377
2. Springfield, OR, No. 2145	453	\$19,279.00	\$42.559
3. Amarillo, TX, No. 923	539	\$21,821.00	\$40.484

Division VI — More than 700 Members

1. Mission Viejo-Saddleback Valley, CA No. 2444	1,273	\$83,130.59	\$65.303
2. Gallipolis, OH, No. 107	848	\$42,238.00	\$49.809
3. Nashua, NH, No. 720	939	\$35,502.14	\$37.809

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Hoop Shoot champs honored at Opening Ceremony

By Patrick Roelofs

ENF Communications Coordinator

For many participants, it's a distant dream to win the Lodge, district, state, and regional levels to advance to Chicago for the Hoop Shoot National Finals. For Ainsley Weaver, sponsored by Chillicothe, OH Lodge No. 52, getting that far seemed impossible.

Less than two years ago, when Weaver was encouraged to participate in the Hoop Shoot by her teacher, she was excited to give the program a try. There was only one problem—she didn't know how to shoot a basketball.

After plenty of practice with her patient parents, Weaver learned how to get the ball in the basket. Before long, she couldn't miss.

Leading up to this year's National Finals, Weaver was the top free throw shooter in the Girls 8-9 division, hitting an incredible 92% of her regulation attempts. When she finally reached the National Finals in April, Weaver's story got its



Beckett Jilka and Ainsley Weaver pose with Bart Powell, son of the first National Director of the Hoop Shoot program Getty Powell, at the Hoop Shoot National Finals in Chicago in April.

Hollywood ending: A win in the shootoff earned her the Frank Hise National Championship and the Getty Powell Award for the highest-scoring girl.

Beckett Jilka, sponsored by Hoxie, KS Lodge No. 2415, didn't have an easy road to Chicago, either.

At the regional contest, he had to make his final 15 free throws to tie

the leader of the Boys 10-11 division and force a shootoff. With the odds against him, Jilka sank all 15, outlasted his opponent in the shootoff, and punched his ticket to the National Finals.

But Jilka's story of grit and determination didn't end there. With all eyes on him at the 10,000 seat Wintrust Arena, Jilka made every shot at the National Finals—the only perfect score of the day—en route to his Frank Hise National Championship, Getty Powell Award for top-scoring boy, and Emile Brady Award for a perfect score.

Weaver, Jilka, and their parents were guests of the Elks this past weekend and attended Opening Ceremony, where they were introduced.

The Elks have been unleashing gritty kids through the Hoop Shoot program for more than 50 years. For 2024-25, the Elks National Foundation allocated more than \$1.5 million to fund the program. For more information, visit elks.org/hoopshoot.

CIP grants build stronger communities in Texas

By Patrick Roelofs

ENF Communications Coordinator

Through Community Investments Program grants, the Elks National Foundation helps Elks build stronger communities—including here, in Texas.

San Antonio, TX Lodge No. 216 used its Beacon Grant to create Smile Bags. In partnership with a local nonprofit, bags full of toys, chargers, and other kid-friendly items were donated to 300 children undergoing cancer treatments. Along with the Smile Bags, Lodge Members participate in hospital events throughout the year.

"With the Smile Bags," said Grants Coordinator Lee Hinchler, "we are able to brighten their days during some of the darkest times."

New Braunfels, TX Lodge No. 2279, used its Gratitude Grant to help a local crisis center. As the city of New Braunfels experiences a rap-

id population increase, the crisis center has seen an increase in demand. Also, the crisis center's permanent building recently burned down, forcing them to find a temporary space while they rebuild.

To ensure that the crisis center remains a safe and welcoming environment, the Lodge used its grant to donate and deliver food and other necessary supplies to the center. The recipients were so grateful that they requested Elks membership applications and invited the Lodge to the groundbreaking ceremony of the new building.

With its Spotlight Grant, Gonzales, TX Lodge No. 2413 hosted a community baby shower. Expectant mothers and community leaders listened as nurses gave tips about pregnancy, and Members of the Lodge shared information about the Elks. The presentations were delivered in both English and Spanish.



Gonzales, TX Lodge No. 2413 hosted a community baby shower with funds from a Spotlight Grant.

"The event underscored the community's commitment to supporting expectant mothers," said Grants Coordinator Henry Salas. "It was two fun-filled hours of education and celebration."

In Texas, and across the nation, Elks are building stronger communities with CIP grants. If your Lodge wants to make an impact, visit elks.org/CIP.