

## **The Elks and Youth**

Of everything that the Elks do, perhaps nothing is more important than their work with the country's youth. The efforts of the Elks on behalf of the young--in Scouting and scholarships, sponsoring athletic and artistic endeavors, youth camps, and drug awareness programs--sow the seeds of accomplishment and commitment that benefit the nation. The work and generosity of the Elks help today's youth become tomorrow's scientists, industrialists, academics, artists, athletes, and much more.

In the 1940s, the Elks made a commitment to "lay a solid foundation for the future; building the moral and physical character of American boys and girls, the leaders of tomorrow." Since then, the Elks have done much to fulfill that self-charged responsibility--and not for fanfare or publicity, but simply because they knew it was the right thing to do.

### **Youth Activities**

In many communities, Elks Lodges sponsor Scout troops, offering the Lodge as a meeting place and also providing equipment. Lodges also support Boys and Girls Clubs; 4-H programs; youth athletics and arts programs, including Little League, football and soccer teams, debate and speech programs, fine arts contests, and other local youth organizations.

One of the Order's most impressive youth programs is the Elks "Hoop Shoot" National Free Throw Contest. With more than 3 million participants annually, ages 8-13, the odds of making it to the championship round of the Elks "Hoop Shoot" are more than 40,000 to 1. The odds of capturing one of the six national titles that are up for grabs each year are more than 500,000 to one!

At an Elks "Hoop Shoot" Free Throw Contest, boys and girls in one of three age-groups, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, attempt to sink 25 free throws--10 in the first round, 15 in the second, with ties being resolved by five-shot shoot-offs. The competition's fierce, but fun. And that's one reason that the Elks "Hoop Shoot" has grown, since 1946, from a local youth activity at Corvallis, Oregon, Elks Lodge to the largest coeducational sports program in the country.

### **Handicapped Youth**

Nationally and locally, the Elks have worked diligently to better the lives of handicapped youngsters. The Order has a long history of supporting Special Olympics events, donating special equipment and supplies to the families of disabled children, sponsoring the treatment and research of many illnesses that affect children, and arranging for medical personnel to provide free in-home therapy services.

### **Drug Awareness**

The BPO Elks, both at the local level and through its national Elks Drug Awareness Education program, has done stellar work in informing the nation's youth and their parents about the dangers associated with using illegal substances, tobacco products, and alcohol. Since 1983, the Elks have distributed more than 150 million pieces of educational literature to students, educators, and parents. But besides their educational efforts, the

Elks work with other organizations and agencies to provide youth with healthy and safe alternatives to using drugs and alcohol. Local Lodges sponsor drug- and alcohol-free post prom and graduation parties and dances as well as a host of other activities. The Elks also provide financial support to law enforcement agencies for their efforts to curb the growth of drug use and encourage children and young adults to make healthier decisions.

### **Scholarships and Grants**

With monies from local Lodges and from the national organization, the Elks typically donate around \$8 million in scholarships each year. On the local and national level, Elks award scholarships and grants to Boy and Girl Scouts; exemplary high school seniors through the Elks "Most Valuable Student" scholarship program; the children of Elks, through the Elks Legacy Awards and Emergency Education Fund Grants; and the disadvantaged. The Elks rank as one of the largest providers of college scholarships in the United States.

### **The Presidents' Summit for America's Future--America's Promise**

In the spring of 1997, the BPOE publicly announced its current goals for laying a solid foundation for the leaders of tomorrow, making several pledges to America's Promise: The Alliance for Youth. One of the pledges was to commit \$34.9 million a year in support of Scouting, athletic programs, and other youth organizations and programs by the year 2000. Each year since the Order has surpassed that goal, which is due in large part to the efforts of local Lodges. Another one of the commitments made by the Order to America's Promise was to pledge to commit \$12.1 million a year in aid and treatment for children with disabilities as well as in drug education and prevention programs by 2000, and this goal was exceeded long before 2000. The BPOE had also pledged to commit \$6.5 million a year in scholarships by the year 2000, another goal surpassed.

### **Celebrating Our Youth**

Like no other fraternal organization, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks is committed to celebrating the accomplishments of the country's youths. The first week in May each year, the Order holds its Elks National Youth Week, recognizing young people for their involvement with and achievements in the community. Traditionally, the Elks present awards and plaques to outstanding youngsters during this week, in addition to hosting programs, similar to the ones that are held all year, that provide youths with even greater chances to play an active role in their communities.

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.