

North
Carolina



News



February March 2025



NCSEA ELKS HOOP SHOOT

NORTH CAROLINA ELKS SEND TWO TO NATIONAL FINALS

North Carolina State Hoop Shoot Winners

8-9 Girl -- Hadley Misenheimer / Salisbury Lodge; 8-9 Boy -- Bryce Haddon / High Point Lodge

10-11 Girl -- Marlie Steele / Salisbury Lodge; 10-11 Boy -- William Pate / Southern Pines Lodge

12-13 Girl -- Caelynn Strader / Reidsville Lodge; 12-13 Boy -- Quinn Dady / Raliegh Lodge

South East Central Region Hoop shoot Winners advancing to National Hoop Shoot Finals

10-11 Girl—Marlie Stelle / Salisbury Lodge; 12-13 Girl—Caelynn Strader / Reidsville Lodge





Message from State President Joe Clancy

As I sat down to write this letter, I realized this will be my last newsletter to the you as President of the North Carolina Elks, the best group of people on earth. Back over the past year, it feels like only a couple months ago when we were at the Spring Convention, and I became your State President. Since our Spring Convention, Yenly and I have traveled to the neighbors in Virginia and South Carolina to attend their State Conventions. The highlight as President was at the National Convention in Austin Texas where I had the honor of carrying the North Carolina State Flag and presented it during the Opening Ceremonies. This year also included visits to the Lodges across North Carolina and meeting many Elks, several we had met over the years and others for the first time.

I am proud of our members all across our state, as we continued to support our major projects, Camp Carefree and the North Carolina Veterans Homes. Also, in our communities we are involved with our Youth with Hoop Shoot, Americanism Poster Contest and Essay, Drug Awareness, Elks National Foundation, Scholarships, Soccer Shoot, North Carolina Charitable Trust and many other programs.

Over the last two months, Yenly and I have been spreading Elkdom across our State. We traveled to Western North Carolina in both February and March, with a group from our Disaster Relief Committee to assist our neighbors in the west with food boxes, propane, firewood, water, hot meals from Big Yummy food truck, fresh vegetables, sheets, blankets, heaters, shovels, rakes and much more. While we were there in March, we planted 4800 seeds in plant trays of vegetables and left them in a greenhouse, with a friend we met in Weaverville, to germinate and we will return the last weekend of April to share with the people in the area.

We also attended the Camp Carefree Gala at Greensboro Lodge in early March, where I had the privilege of presenting Camp Carefree with a check for over \$52,000 from the State Association. The Gala Committee is still totaling the contributions from the Gala.

The Leadership Committee conducted our annual training, in late March, for all incoming Lodge Officers and anyone who was interested in learning more about our order.

Continued on next page.

State Presidents Message Continued

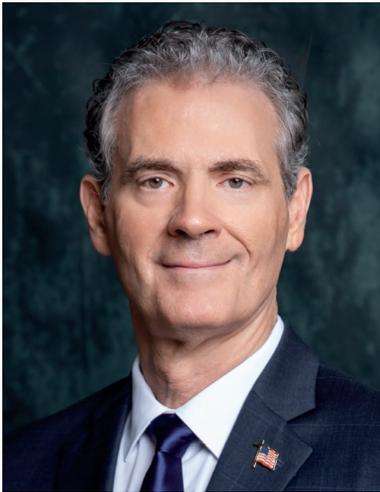
The Convention Committee has finalized most of the details for our upcoming Spring Convention in Winston-Salem and registration is available online. We will have a special guest, South Carolina's State President, Tony Smith and his wife Jane will be joining us. At the convention, our next State President, Mark Couch from the Hickory Lodge will be installed, along with all the officers for the upcoming year. Please plan to attend and show your support for Mark and our next First Lady, Julie Couch. Good Luck Mark and Julie! The Thad Eure Award is the highest honor an Elk in North Carolina can receive, and we will be presenting this year's recipient at the Spring Convention in Winston-Salem.

Membership is the life blood of our organization, and this year has been a difficult year for several of our Lodges as they struggled with their pools and as a result have lost members. Meanwhile, several Lodges showed growth this year but not enough to offset our losses. We are looking forward to bouncing back next year and resume our growth we have had the last several years. Remember we all must continue to work together to retain our current members and bring new members into our Great Organization!

I would be remised if I didn't take a moment to thank several people who made Yenly and my adventure possible. Lee Littiken, my mentor for the past several years, the members of the Sanford Lodge and many others from the East Central District. Mark and Julie Couch for all their hard work at both the National Convention and State Conventions. Our District Vice Presidents, Roger DePuyt, Addison Johnson, Kim Fuquay Black and Robert Brisben for their assistance this year. To all the Committee members and chairs that made my life much easier this past year and all the State Officers, whom many of them work tirelessly behind the scenes to make this State Association one of the best in the country. And the biggest THANK YOU goes to my wife, Yenly, who without her being by my side over the last number of years, supporting every step in my journey to my State Presidency would not have been possible. I will be forever grateful.

In Closing, I want to remind everyone of my slogan this year TOGETHER WE CAN DO MORE!! I challenged each Lodge to do one new activity this year to help strengthen our presence in our communities and show everyone that the Elks are a group of people that want to give back to our community and make them better. Thank you to all, for the honor of being your North Carolina State Elks President for the fraternal year of 2024 – 2025, it was truly a year I will not forget.

Together WE Can Do MORE!!!



Message from Grand Exalted Ruler Douglas Schiefer

Incoming Leaders Start Year With Proactive Mindset

April is here and spring has finally arrived. It always feels like a new beginning in April, especially if you live in the colder regions of our country.

A new fraternal Lodge year begins. I want to congratulate all the newly installed Exalted Rulers and Lodge Officers. It is a proud moment to be installed and take on the challenge of providing leadership within your Lodge. Be sure to review and implement the programs of the 2024-2025 Grand Lodge Program booklet so you can continue showing “Elkdom’s Heart For America.” Make sure that you have all your committees prepared and that committee members know their responsibilities. Communication is the key.

Financially, it is the Trustees and Officers who need to submit a budget to the Lodge for adoption no later than the last regular meeting in April or the following regular meeting. Your Lodge should be ready to present a sound budget to your Members. The annual report for the previous year is also due May 1 so make sure that your FRS financial reporting system is up to date.

On a housekeeping note, you should review any by-laws or house rules and regulations that need to be updated. It’s for the good of the Lodge to make everything orderly and that you always prioritize the integrity and safety of the Lodge.

On a festive note, it’s time to make a calendar of social events for your Lodge. Create reasonable, achievable monthly events that will excite and attract your membership. Outside of your Lodge you are encouraged to establish a community project that emphasizes charitable work. Your Lodge life should always have a balance of what you do inside your Lodge and outside in the community you serve. Don’t forget to set aside May 1-7 as Elks National Youth Week. All Lodges are urged to sponsor programs dedicated to the youth of our country.

Julia and I wish you a blessed Easter season. It is a celebratory time for our family. God bless you and God bless America!

ELKDOM’S HEART FOR AMERICA

NCSEA PRESENTS GOLF CART TO VA OUTPATIENT CLINIC

The North Carolina State Elks Association along with the Elks National Veterans Service Commission presented a golf cart to the VA Outpatient Clinic in Charlotte NC. The golf cart will be used to transport veterans from their parked vehicles to the main entrance.

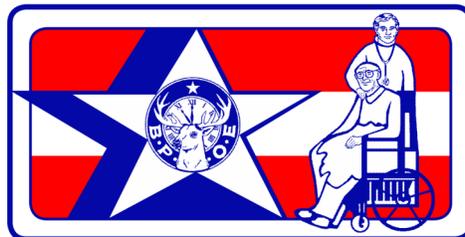


Pictured L-R; Kimberly Davis, USAF, Retired, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Coordinator; Fred Griffith, owner of Charlotte Golf Carts; and North Carolina State President Past State President Mark Alderman.

Handing the keys to the golf cart to Kimberly Davis, USAF, Retired, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement Coordinator is Michael Flock, Chairman of the Veterans Activities Committee.



**Elks National
Veterans
Service Commission**



"Serving Our Nation's Veterans"



**NC STATE ELKS ASSOCIATION, INC.
2025 SPRING CONVENTION, WINSTON-SALEM**

**The Hawthorne Inn
420 High Street Winston Salem, NC 27101**

NC Elks Welcome

*South Carolina State President Tony Smith and First Lady Jane
Virginia State President Vince Brandtner and First Lady Barbara*

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

Friday May 2, 2025

8:00 AM

10:00 AM – 7:00 PM

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM

3:30 PM – 5:00 PM

3:00 PM – 11:00 PM

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM

7:00 PM - 10:00 PM

NC Elks Golf Outing

NC Elks & Guests Registration - 2nd Floor

Charitable Trust BOD's Meeting - Laurel Learning Center

PSP Advisory Board Meeting – Laurel Learning Center

NCSEA BOD's Meeting – Laurel Learning Center

Long Range Planning – Executive Boardroom

District Hospitality Rooms - 7th Floor - *Admittance by Convention Badge Only*

Advisory Board Social - Presidential Suite 302 - *Invitation Only*

Advisory Board Dinner and Dance - Sycamore Ballroom

**Ticketed Event - Purchase required (see registration form for details)*

Saturday May 3, 2025

7:00 AM – 11:00 AM

9:00 AM – 11:30 AM

9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

12:30 AM – 2:00 PM

NC Elks & Guests Registration – 2nd Floor

NCSEA Business Meeting – Sycamore Ballroom

Spouses & Guests Social - West Central Hospitality Room

NCSEA Luncheon – Sycamore Ballroom - *Admittance by Convention Badge Only*

2:30 PM

State Sponsor Frost Meetings – Executive Boardroom

2:30 PM

Educational Breakout Sessions – Grill (1st floor)

Secretaries

ER's & Lodge Officers

Budgets & FRS

2:30 PM

Ritual Contest – Sycamore Ballroom

3:00 PM

Vice President Training – Sycamore Ballroom

3:00 – 4:00 PM

Grand Lodge Judiciary with David Doherty – Grill (1st Floor)

4:00 PM

PER Auction & Shootout – Laurel Learning Center

4:00 PM – 11:00 PM

District Hospitality Rooms – 7th floor - *Admittance by Convention Badge Only*

6:00 PM – 7 PM

Presidents Social – Presidential Suite 302 - *Invitation Only*

7:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Presidents Dinner – Sycamore Ballroom - *Invitation Only*

Sunday May 4, 2025

8:30 AM

NCSEA PER Breakfast & Meeting – Sycamore Ballroom

All Invited - Admittance by Convention Badge Only



Mark your calendar!!!

**The Spring meeting of the NCSEA Will be held in
Winston Salem at the Hawthorne Inn May 2nd—4th.**

**Plan now to spend the weekend and take in all the
convention activities and all that Winston Salem has to offer.**

**Registration for the conference and golf tournament
Is online at ncelks.org**



NCSEA ADVISORY BOARD

Dinner & Dance



FRIDAY, MAY 2, 2025
HAWTHORNE INN - WINSTON-SALEM, NC

\$35 PER PERSON

INCLUDES 1 FREE DRINK COUPON

DINNER 7PM - SYCAMORE BALLROOM

DJ FROM 8 - 10 PM

CASH BAR

Special Guests

SC President Tony Smith & Jane

VA President Vince Brandtner & Barbara

NCSEA District Vice Presidents

BUSINESS ATTIRE - NO JEANS OR SHORTS

**TICKETS MUST BE PURCHASED
WITH ONLINE REGISTRATION
NO LATER THAN APRIL 11, 2025**



PAST EXALTED RULER



REMEMBER TO ATTEND THE PAST EXALTED RULERS
AUCTION, SATURDAY AFTERNOON

May 3rd 3:30 PM

AT THE SPRING NCSEA CONFERENCE

PROCEEDS WILL BE USED TO FUND THE PER ASSOCIATION
COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

EACH LODGE IS REQUESTED TO BRING A NEW OR ITEM OF
VALUE TO BE AUCTIONED OFF

CONVENTION ATTENDEES MAY ALSO DONATE AN ITEM

RITUAL CONTESTS

Start practicing now!!!

At the Spring meeting in Winston Salem, the NCSEA will be conducting ritual contests for the Eleven O'clock Toast and the American Flag Charge. The Toast competition will have two divisions. One division will be for current Exalted Rulers and the Open Division will be for anyone else. The Flag Charge competition will be for all comers.

The highest scoring ER or PER in each contest will have the privilege of representing North Carolina at the Grand Lodge competition in Kansas City.

Start working on your Toast and Flag Charge!

For more detailed information, please visit

<https://ncelks.org/members-only/ritual-contest/>

or contact David King, NC Ritual Chair.

11 O'Clock Toast



THE NCSEA SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE ANNOUNCES 2025 WINNERS!

MVS NATIONAL FINALIST (Minimum \$1,000 each year for 4 years)			
Male National Finalists (3)		Female National Finalists (4)	
Student Name	Lodge Name & No.	Student Name	Lodge Name & No.
Giovanni Robinson	Greensboro-602	Aanandi Thakur	Hickory-1654
Rishi Gottimukkala	Raleigh-735	Addison Adams	Hendersonville-1616
Sumedh Kotrannavar	Raleigh-735	Indu Gadiraju	Lake Norman-392
		Kaitlyn Wood	Kinston-740
STATE ALLOCATED (40) – (\$1,000 one-year award)			
Male Winners (20)		Female Winners (20)	
Student Name	Lodge Name & No.	Student Name	Lodge Name & No.
Derek Lund	Goldsboro-139	Isabelle Guevarra	Fayetteville-1081
Christopher Hall	Greensboro-602	Zyann Saunders	Fayetteville-1081
Vivek Gottimukkakala	Lake Norman-392	Haley Wingate	Goldsboro-139
Pranav Somalraju	Lake Norman-392	Emma Shell	Greensboro-602
Mahip Sompura	Lake Norman-392	Noelle Haulihan	Hendersonville-1616
Kebron Teshome	Lake Norman-392	Marlee Little	Kinston-740
Vishnu Vanapalli	Lake Norman-392	Sydney Lewis	Lake Norman-392
William Abernathy	Morganton-1852	Karli Rockness	Lake Norman-392
Christopher Behrendt	New Bern-764	Jade Smith	Lake Norman-392
George Oliver	New Bern-764	Peyton Smith	MHC-B'ft-1710
Varenya Katta	Newton-1327	Stella Hayes	N. Wilkesboro-1846
Anil Chintapalli	Raleigh-735	Amaya Allen	Raleigh-735
Benjamin Roach	Shelby-1709	Saachi Arun	Raleigh-735
Miller Aho	Winston-Salem-449	Abigail Salvador	Reidsville-1723
William Boyd	Winston-Salem-449	Kendall Brewer	Sanford-1679
Jack Harrison	Winston-Salem-449	Lilian Rempell	Wilmington-532
John Howell	Winston-Salem-449	Ogechi Ezeigbo	Winston-Salem-449
Ryan Martin	Winston-Salem-449	Bailey Huff	Winston-Salem-449
Isaac Ross	Winston-Salem-449	Mary Lopina	Winston-Salem-449
Bradley Swayne	Winston-Salem-449	Emma Norman	Winston-Salem-449
NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS (10) – (\$1,000 one-year award)			
Student Name	Lodge Name & No.	Student Name	Lodge Name & No.
Savannah Howell	Fayetteville-1081	Lily O'Neal	Mt. Airy-2061
Jackelyn Uribe	Hickory-1654	Carmen Buck	Shallotte-2854
Brooke Cumbo	MHC-B'ft-1710	Briley Conner	Shallotte-2854
Saylor Gray	MHC-B'ft-1710	Sara Fowler	Shallotte-2854
Abigail Epperson	Mt. Airy-2061	Morgan Davis	Winston-Salem - 449

EAST DISTRICT NEWS

CALABASH ELKS BINGO DONATES TO LOCAL NON PROFITS

The Calabash Elks Charity Bingo finalized its 2024 year with donations totaling \$25,000 to ten local non profits. The Elks Lodge holds bingo every Tuesday evening during the year and has a very dedicated group of players who show up weekly. It is these players who choose the organizations that receive the charity donations from the Bingo Committee.



MOREHEAD/BEAUFORT ELKS BINGO DONATES TO MARTHA'S MISSION

Morehead/Beaufort Elks bingo presented a \$3000 check to Martha's Mission.

Pictured L-R: ER John Goodman; Leading Knight Frank Sutton; and Mary Schronce of Martha' Mission



CALABASH ELKS AID VETERANS WITH DONATION TO LIFECARE

The Veteran's Affairs Committee of the Calabash Elks Lodge recently made our third \$1000.00 donation to the Lower Cape Fear LifeCare Veteran Services. As a member of the We Honor Veterans Program of the Department of Veteran's Affairs, the mission of this Program is to assist hospice and palliative care patients and their families with navigating veteran benefit options, answering questions they may have, and honoring their service throughout their time with Lower Cape Fear LifeCare.

Pictured (Left to Right) are: John Ewell, VAC Member; Anne Hewett, Lower Cape Fear LifeCare Senior Fundraising Executive; John Corbett, VAC Chairman; Sue Scott, VAC Member.



OAK ISLAND ELKS PARTICIPATED IN HONOR FLIGHT OF THE CAPE FEAR AREA (HFCFA)

Oak Island Elks Lodge is participating in this year's Honor Flight of the Cape Fear Area (HFCFA). Honor Flight of the Cape Fear Area honors WWII, Korean War, and Vietnam War era Veterans by taking them all-expenses-paid to Washington, DC for a day of remembrance and honor as they visit the memorials and monuments built in their honor. This year's flight is Saturday, April 26th.

HFCFA is an all-volunteer organization that received official recognition from the national Honor Flight Network in February 2020. HFCFA is a local 501(c)3 organization and they are actively raising funds to pay for upcoming flights. HFCFA flies annually in the spring to Washington, DC for the day with 75 Veterans, 75 Guardians (one-on-one escorts for each Veteran), a team of medical professionals, and a small administration team. Oak Island Elks Lodge will be sending two Guardians and one Korean War Veteran on this year's trip, while also providing volunteers to work at the event.

OAK ISLAND LODGE DONATES TO COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS



The Oak Island Elks Lodge recently donated \$1300.00 to Communities in Schools of Cape Fear. Communities in Schools surrounds students with a community of support, empowering them to stay in school and achieve in Life.

Pictured L-R: Elks John Borklund; and Emily Madison from Communities in Schools.

OAK ISLAND ELKS DONATE TO HOPE HARBOR HOME

Oak Island Elks Lodge #2769 recently donated \$2000.00 to Hope Harbor Home.

Hope Harbor Home strives to break the cycle of domestic and sexual violence in Brunswick County, NC with safe shelter, advocacy, and education.

Pictured L-R; Sara Howe; Megean Batton; Karmen Custer; Elk John Borklund; and Rachael Rankin



CALABSH ELKS MARCH IN ST. PATRICKS DAY PARADE



On Saturday March 15th Members of the Calabash Elks participated in the North Myrtle Beach St. Patrick's Day parade.

CALABASH LADIES DONATE TO HOPICE

On Thursday, March 20th, 2025 the Calabash Elks Auxiliary donated \$1000 to the Lower Cape Fear Hospice Organization. The Lower Cape Fear Hospice Organization serves more than 750 hospice and palliative care patients in Bladen, Brunswick, Columbus, New Hanover, Onslow and Pender counties in North Carolina. Pictured from left to right Dian Pliakos; Kathy Baldino, Auxiliary President elect; Anne Hewett, Lower Cape Fair Hospice; Peggy Haughey, Auxiliary President; Kathy Kelly; Donald Arsenault, Leading Knight.



OAK ISLAND LODGE DONATED TO CAPE FEAR HOSPICE

Oak Island Elks Lodge #2769 recently donated \$2000.00 to The Lower Cape Fear Hospice.

Cape Fear Hospice's mission is To provide access to the highest quality LifeCare, education, and supportive services to our patients, their families, and the communities we serve.

Pictured L-R: Elks John Borklund; and Missy Combs from Cape Fear Hospice



OAK ISLAND SUPPORTS NEW HOPE CLINIC WITH DONATION

Oak Island Elks Lodge #2769 recently donated \$2000 to the New Hope Clinic. The clinic's mission is to provide quality medical, dental and pharmacy services to low income uninsured Brunswick County adults in a caring patient centered setting.

Pictured L-R; Elk John Borklund, and Sheila Roberts from New Hope Clinic



SHALLOTTE LODGE AWARDS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

The Shallotte Elks Lodge Exalted Ruler Griff Sperry recognized scholarship winners, both from the local Lodge and North Carolina State Elks Association.

A \$500.00 Lodge scholarship was given to local students, Ethan Trexler from Leland and Hannah Underwood from Shallotte and \$1,000 Nursing scholarships were given to South Columbus High School students: Briley Conner, Sara Fowler and Carmen Buck. These 3 women were among the 5 scholarships to female nursing candidates from the NCSEA.

Recipients enjoyed fellowship and dinner with their families and Shallotte Elks on Monday March 10, 2025.



Nursing Scholarship winners pictured are Sara Fowler and Briley Conner. Carmen Buck is not pictured.

Local scholarship winners pictured are ER Griff Sperry with Hannah Underwood and Ethan Trexler



EAST CENTRAL DISTRICT NEWS

RALEIGH ELKS BINGO DONATES TO HELP THOSE WITH FOOD INSECURITY

A Place at the Table is a "pay what you can" restaurant focusing on helping those with food insecurity. At "Table" patrons can pay the suggested price or volunteer an hour of their time in exchange for a meal. They can also pay what they can afford even if that is nothing.

A very proud \$1000 donation was made to A Place at the Table from the Bingo Committee of the Raleigh Elks Lodge.

Pictured left to right front: Jody Cush; Maggie Kane, Executive Director; Norm Starr; top: Gary Bush, ER Brian Madigan, Beth Hall, Liz Mitchell, Cheryl Howard



RALEIGH ELKS PRESENT SERVICE DOG TO VETERAN

From the first discussion between Raleigh Elks Members retired Master Sergeant Jim Pendergast and Staff Sergeant Anthony Crincoli, sometime in 2022 until February 1 2025, so much work and fundraising by the Raleigh Elks Lodge was done to make the presentation of a service dog to a deserving veteran. One of our most awesome events ever! We cannot forget the tireless work by The Raleigh Service Dog Committee!

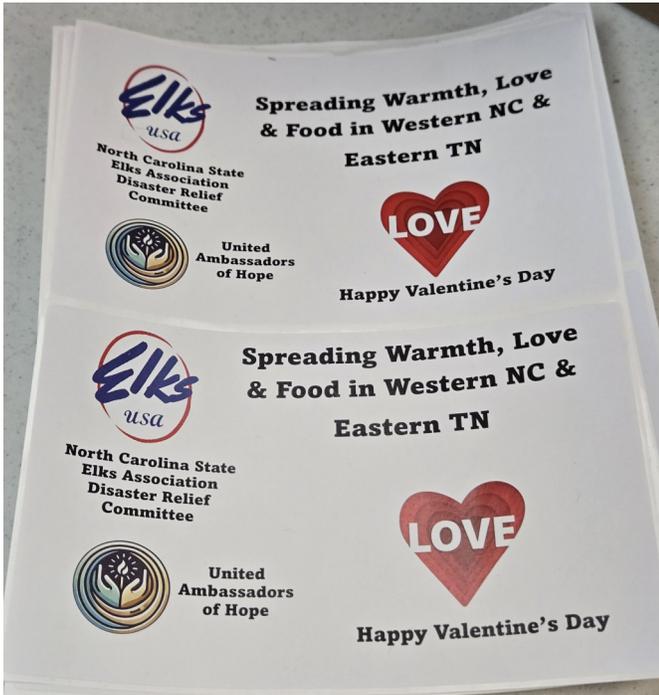
On February 1, we presented Retired Master Sgt. Brian Blumer with his service dog, Remi! Also in attendance was Raleigh Elks ER Brian Madigan and NC State President, Joseph Clancy.

Pictured left to right: Brian Madigan; Brian Blumer; and State President Joe Clancy



RALEIGH ELKS AND BOY SCOUTS PACK FOOD BOXES

Raleigh Elks Members and Boy Scout Troop #104 packed 200 amazing food boxes and toiletry bags for another NC Elks Disaster Relief Committee adventure to Western NC to spread Warmth, Love and Food to Western NC and Eastern TN over Valentine's Weekend!



WEST CENTRAL DISTRICT NEWS

SALISBURY ELKS SPREAD LOVE TO VETERANS ON FOR VALENTINES DAY

Happy Valentine's Day from the Salisbury Lodge to our veterans! Though it was a chilly and rainy day, none of the 60 veterans and staff seemed to notice at the Salisbury Veterans Home on February 12. Lodge members served up hot chocolate, coffee, donuts and some "old-time" valentine candy with the heartfelt greeting cards. "We are very blessed to have the Veterans Home here in Salisbury," said ER Kenny Martin. "It may have been a cold day outside, but we had many warm hearts today showing our love and appreciation to our veterans and to those who care for them." So long as there are veterans, the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks will never forget them.



**THANK YOU
VETERANS**

SALISBURY LODGE SENDS TWO HOOP SHOOT WINNERS TO REGIONAL SEMI-FINALS



Kenny Martin, Salisbury ER, shares a winning smile with Marlie Steele, age 11, and Hadley Misenheimer, age 8, who won first place at the State Hoop Shoot Championships in Greensboro on February 8. It's the first time the girls have participated in the free throw contest. It's also the first time Salisbury has ever sent two players to the regional semi-finals in the same year. Congratulations Marlie, Hadley and Lodge #699!

SALISBURY GIRLS WIN 1ST & 2ND IN REGIONAL HOOP SHOOT



Salisbury Elks #699 had two hoopsters competing in the Southeast Central Region 10 Hoop Shoot Contest held in Charlottesville, VA on Saturday, March 8. Marlie Steele sank 17 of 25 free throws to win first place in the Girls 10-11 age group. Hadley Misenheimer won 2nd place in the Girls 8-9 division. The girls are pictured with ER Kenny Martin.

MARLIE STEELE WILL REPRESENT NORTH CAROLINA IN CHICAGO

Next stop for Marlie and the Steele family is Chicago for the 2025 National Finals and a weekend of events from April 24-27. It's not the first time our lodge has sent a player to the National Finals. Back in 2002, Howard Hurt, Jr., formerly of Rockwell, competed in the Boys 12-13 division. He made 21 of 25 free throws and finished in 6th place (of 12).



WEST DISTRICT NEWS

Hickory Elks Lodge Awards & Recognition Ceremony

The Hickory Elks Lodge held the 2025 Americanism Awards & Recognition Ceremony honoring a select few within the Hickory community and surrounding areas who have demonstrated their love of country and community through their actions, deeds, and selfless service.

Participating in the ceremony included elementary and middle school students who participated in the Hickory Elks annual Americanism Essay Contest. This year's essay theme was "What does Patriotism Mean to Me?" A total of 204 essays were submitted by students. Winners from Hickory Lodge went on to win the district competition are as follows: **A)** Div 1/5th grade students: 1st - Emmy Elder (Jenkins); 2nd – Korrie Ballard (Jenkins); 3rd – Ruby Cunningham (Jenkins). **B)** Div 2/6th grade students: 1st – Scarlett McGuire (Northview); 2nd – Taylor Fisher (Northview); 3rd – Nadia Tellez-Chavez(Northview). **C)** Div 3/7th grade students: 1st - Dax Bellamy (Northview); 2nd – Genevieve Melon (Northview); 3rd – William Gonzalez (Northview). **D)** Div 4/8th grade students: 1st – Ava Scheepers (Northview); 2nd - Asher von Allmen(Northview); 3rd – Leah McCandless (Grandview). Each of the winners received a commemorative plaque and cash awards of either \$75, \$50, and/or \$25. These winning essays were submitted to the NC Elks West District for competitive judging along with the other Lodges within the same District. These 12 essay winners also won the district level judging and were then forwarded on to the state judging for a chance at representing the NCSEA at the national level. The national essay winners, the top three in each of the four divisions, will be announced in July during the Grand Lodge National Elks Convention in Kansas City, MO.

The Hickory Elks annual ceremony also recognized the exceptional service of the following: HPD Officer of the year – MPO Trent Rothko; HFD Firefighter of the year - Sr. Firefighter Jonathan Holden; NCSHP Trooper of the year - Joseph Conner; Catawba Co Deputy Sheriff of the year - Deputy Larry Barker; City of Hickory Public Services Employee of the year – Joey Corn. Each were nominated by their departments based on their job performance and service to their community. Plaques and cash awards of \$100 each were presented.

Five military veterans, each representing one of the four branches along with the US Coast Guard were each recognized and honored as the Hickory Elks EMSPY awardees for 2025. These Veterans were selected by cadets from our area JROTC high school programs: SSG Luke Conley (US Army) – Fred T Foard's CDT LTC Owen Conley; SSgt Rusty Sims (US Marine Corps) – RS Central's CDT 1st Lt Lawrence Sims; LCDR Chad Hunsucker (US Navy) – St Stephens' CDT Ensign Jack Fisher; Major Edward James Bujold (USAF) – Maiden's CDT 2nd Lt Gabby Hernandez; Commander Kevin S. Nash (US Coast Guard) - Newton-Conover's CDT Lt Jessie Gobbler. Each Veteran was recognized by a commemorative plaque with a \$100 cash reward.

JROTC cadets from each school participating opened the Ceremony with the Presentation of Colors. Our National Anthem along with additional patriotic music selections were provided by Hickory Lodge member, Ulysses Long, a noted musician who was a finalist in the America's Got Talent series.

NEWS FROM THE SHELBY LODGE

Shelby Lodge partnered with Loaves and Fishes to purchase and deliver needed go bag supplies for Fireman working the Table Rock fire.



Shelby Lodge donated Gratitude Grant funds to the Boys and Girls Club of Cleveland County.

HICKORY LODGE PROVIDES WELCOME HOME KITS

The Hickory Elks Veterans Committee provided two Welcome Home Kits to veterans referred to us through Melissa Bolick with Veterans Services of the Carolinas. These veterans were overwhelmed with what this program is able to do for them. There were some tears and gratitude when they realize that most of these items were purchased for them and not hand-me-downs.

The Elks National Foundation through our Elks National Veterans Service program provides the funding to allow us to purchase these household items for veterans who have recently obtained new housing after a period of homelessness. Your veterans committee partners with community programs that provide the housing assistance or subsidy for veterans.

It is deeply rewarding to get to shop on behalf of another and provide necessary items to veterans who have served our country.

Pictured below: Samantha Bowman, Veterans Committee Chair with Veteran, Brian Gill.

Pictured below; Kevin McCutcheon, Hickory Elks Lodge member on right with Veteran Randall



This publication is produced for and by the North Carolina State Elks Association.

The NCSEA Communication Committee encourages all member Lodges and Committee Chairmen to submit articles to be included in future issues.

All submissions may be forwarded to Ashley Buckwell, Editor at ashbuc@atmc.net