



HEARTBEAT

ELKS NATIONAL FOUNDATION NEWS

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Ainsley Weaver (left), sponsored by Chillicothe, Ohio, Lodge No. 52, and Blake Ensfield, sponsored by South Haven, Mich., Lodge No. 1509, faced off for the 2024 Getty Powell Award for the top overall girls' participant.

2024 HOOP SHOOT: MORE THAN FREE THROWS

IN THIS ISSUE

- Standing in the Hall of Fame:
National Champions 3
- Elks Hoop Shoot
Hall of Fame 4
- 2024 MVS Leadership
Weekend 5
- The Content Doesn't
Stop Here 6
- Making a Meaningful
Impact 7
- Continuing the Legacy 8
- Double Your Impact 9
- Ask the ENF 9
- Foundation Fellowship 10

Basketballs bouncing. Hearts pounding. Fans watching with bated breath. The tension at the 2024 Elks Hoop Shoot National Finals was palpable, but for the 72 National Finalists, it was all just noise—or perhaps, a lack thereof.

From April 18 to 21, Hoop Shoot National Finalists, their families, and Elks traveled to Chicago for a weekend that was far more than just a free throw contest. Though the National Finalists knew they had to compete on Saturday, that didn't stop them from making friends and enjoying one another's company.

"I think it's a good experience for everybody," says Rylan Buhr, a National Finalist sponsored by Sheboygan, Wis., Lodge No. 299. "You get to meet different ages, people from everywhere. And it's fun, super fun."

Competitors swapped personalized trading cards, attended family-friendly trivia and movie nights, and even went to historic Wrigley Field for a Cubs game.

"Most people, they don't get to do this much stuff," says Caroline Kooman, a National Finalist sponsored by Northglenn, Colo., Lodge No. 2438. "It's really fun to get these experiences."

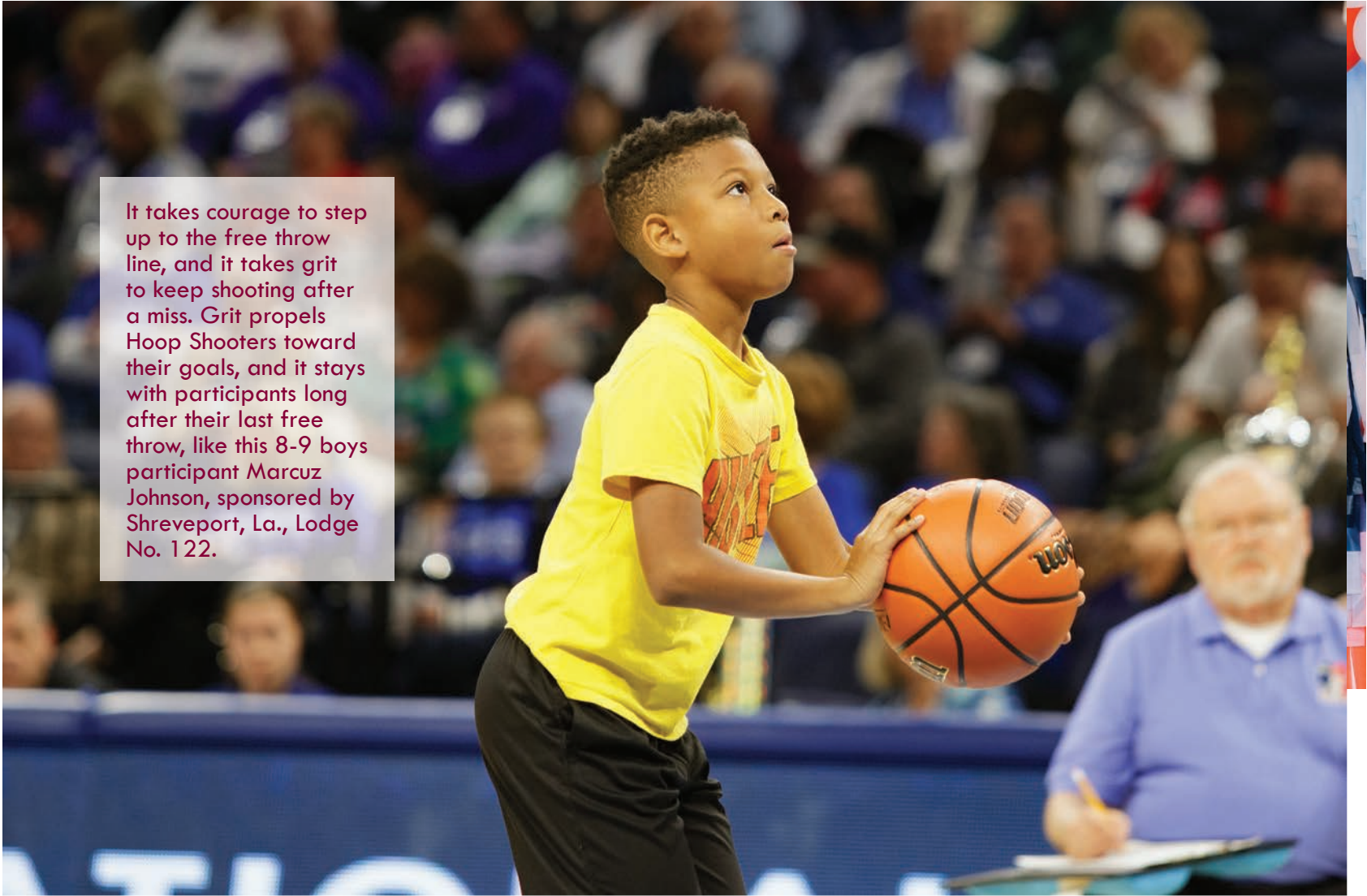
see Hoop Shoot, continued on page 2



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It takes courage to step up to the free throw line, and it takes grit to keep shooting after a miss. Grit propels Hoop Shooters toward their goals, and it stays with participants long after their last free throw, like this 8-9 boys participant Marcuz Johnson, sponsored by Shreveport, La., Lodge No. 122.

Hoop Shoot, continued from page 1

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

AUGUST:
Fidelity Club Month

AUGUST 1:
2025 MVS Application Launch

AUGUST 15:
Impact Intent Deadline

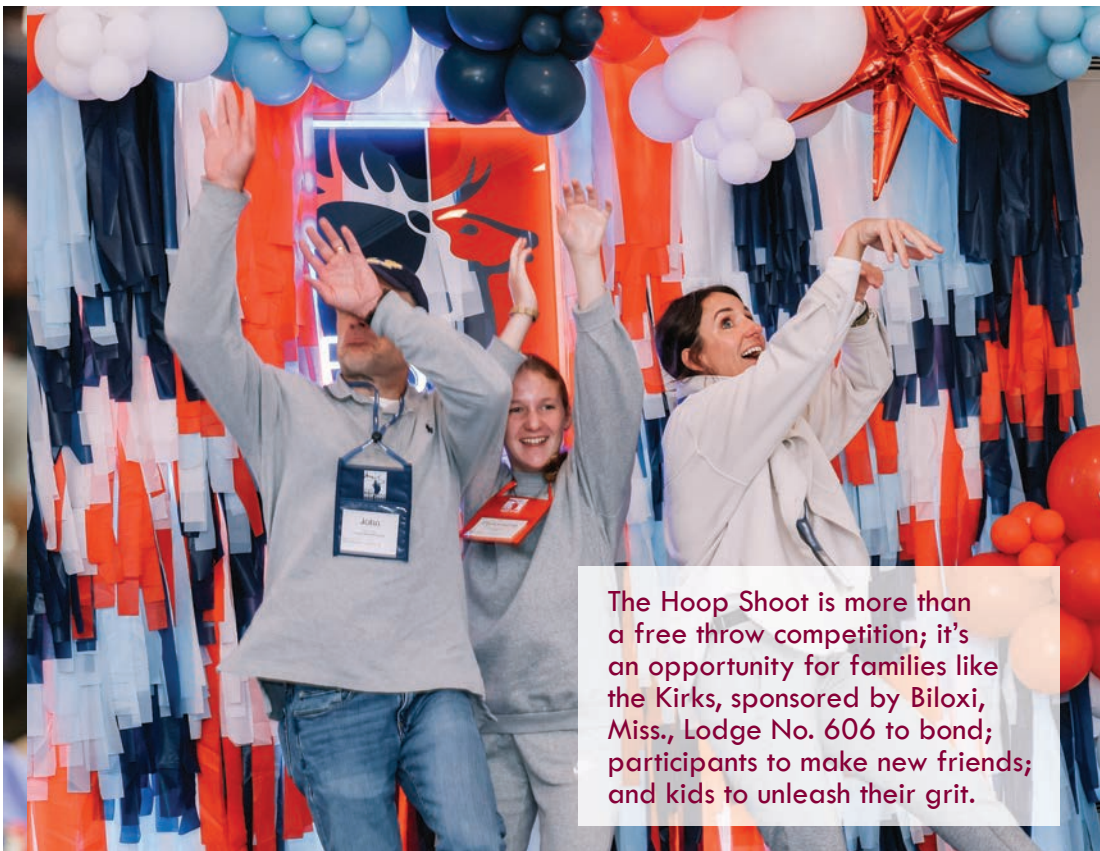
SEPTEMBER 1:
2025 Legacy Awards
Application Launch

The free throw line is a familiar place for every National Finalist, but in a new environment, even the most familiar place can feel foreign. Friday morning, competitors got the chance to shake off the rust and get re-acquainted with the free throw line at the practice gym. The competitors weren't the only ones shaking off the rust, though—members of the Hoop Shoot Alumni Advisory Board, aka the BackBoard, prepared for their role in the contest by catching the shots that were made or chasing down the shots that were missed. With the amount of practice the National Finalists put in, it's safe to say the BackBoard did not have to do much chasing.

Then, it was time for the contest.

As the first Finalists stepped up to the line at Wintrust Arena, home of the WNBA Chicago Sky and DePaul Blue Demons, the 10,000-seat arena was silent, outside of the occasional bouncing ball or pounding heart. With all eyes on them, six competitors were able to dig deep, unleash their grit, and rise above the rest.

In the 8-9 divisions, both Ainsley Weaver, sponsored by Chillicothe, Ohio, Lodge No. 52, and Parker Moeller, sponsored by Mercer County, Ohio, Lodge No. 2170, won their Frank Hise National Championships in shootoffs, after sinking 24 free throws in regulation.



The Hoop Shoot is more than a free throw competition; it's an opportunity for families like the Kirks, sponsored by Biloxi, Miss., Lodge No. 606 to bond; participants to make new friends; and kids to unleash their grit.

STANDING IN THE HALL OF FAME: NATIONAL CHAMPIONS

The 2024 Hoop Shoot National Finals saw six of the best youth free-throw shooters in the country take home the title of Frank Hise National Champion. Their names and pictures will be displayed in a digital exhibit at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass. The champions are:

Ainsley Weaver*, Girls 8-9, 24/25, 5/5, Chillicothe, Ohio, Lodge No. 52

Blake Ensfield, Girls 10-11, 24/25, South Haven, Mich., Lodge No. 1509

Ava Cumicek, Girls 12-13, 23/25, 14/15, Green Bay, Wis., Lodge No. 259

Parker Moeller, Boys 8-9, 24/25, 5/5, Mercer County, Ohio, Lodge No. 2170

Beckett Jilka*, Boys 10-11, 25/25, Hoxie, Kan., Lodge No. 2415

Ayden Birch, Boys 12-13, 24/25, 5/5, Midwest City, Okla., Lodge No. 1890

*Denotes Getty Powell Award winner as the highest-scoring girl and boy overall.

To learn more about the Finalists, Champions, and Elks Hoop Shoot Hall of Fame, visit elkshoopshoot.org.



Getty Powell Award Winner Beckett Jilka poses with Keynote Speaker and head coach of the Northwestern men's basketball team, Chris Collins.

determined, there was still one title to award: the girls Getty Powell Award winner. Because Ainsley and Blake both sank 24 shots in regulation, one more shootoff was required to determine the overall winner. With all eyes on her

No shootoffs were needed in the 10-11 divisions, however. Beckett Jilka, sponsored by Hoxie, Kan., Lodge No. 2415, posted the only perfect score of the day en route to his national title, while Blake Ensfield, sponsored by South Haven, Mich., Lodge No. 1509, ran away with the girls' contest by hitting 24 free throws.

The 12-13 divisions must have enjoyed the drama earlier in the day, because they also required shootoffs to resolve. Ayden Birch, sponsored by Midwest City, Okla., Lodge No. 1890, and Ava Cumicek, sponsored by Green Bay, Wis., Lodge No. 259, stepped up to the line, ignored the pressure, and became the final Frank Hise National Champions of the day.

Though all the National Champions had been

see Hoop Shoot, continued on page 4



ELKS HOOP SHOOT HALL OF FAME

Please join us in honoring the 2024 Elks Hoop Shoot Hall of Fame inductees: Competitors David Sickler and Maggie Goltz, and Contributors Jud and Deb Good.

The Goods served as the Regional Director team for Region 11 for 11 years. Their journey with the Hoop Shoot started long before they became a Regional Director duo.

“Jud has always had a love of sports and a love for what sports can mean in a person’s life,” says Vern Larson, former director of Region 2, who served in the position for 26 years. “When he was told about the Hoop Shoot,

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Hoop Shoot, continued from page 3

once again, the 9-year-old Weaver drained all 10 of her extra shots and joined Jilka as the other Getty Powell Award winner.

After a long day of free throws, the National Finalists were honored at the Awards Banquet. While the newly crowned national champions were celebrating, those who came up short likely felt some sense of sadness—but they weren’t alone. Keynote speaker and head coach of the Northwestern University Men’s Basketball team, Chris Collins, shared that same feeling when he came in fourth place at the 1984 Hoop Shoot National Finals.

“I’m 50 years old now, and I competed in this when I was a 9-year-old kid,” said Collins. “Coming in here brought back memories of all the times I practiced, all the competitions I went through, and coming up short in the National Finals.”

Though Collins didn’t achieve his goal, he picked himself up, went back to work, and achieved greatness.

“For all of you going forward,” Collins said, “I hope this has shown you that when you put your mind to something, you can be great in whatever it is. I was a kid who wanted to be great—and now here I am.”

Whether they achieved their goal or not, the 72 National Finalists all have what it takes to be great—and should walk away feeling like champions.

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 videos, news from the court, and more information about the Hoop Shoot, visit elks.org/hoopshoot.



The Most Valuable Student Leadership Weekend is a chance for scholars to meet other service-minded students in the #ElksFamily.

2024 MVS LEADERSHIP WEEKEND

The senior spring semester of high school brings a wide range of emotions: excitement, relief, sadness, fear. No matter how prepared one may feel for the next stage of life, a strong support system is important to help cope with these feelings.

An Elks scholarship is more than financial aid; it's an invitation to join a strong, supportive community: the #ElksFamily. The Top 20 Most Valuable Student scholars got to experience this community firsthand in April, 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," says Rohil Agarwal, sponsored by New Port Richey, Fla., Lodge No. 2284. "I constantly felt welcomed and inspired by the Elks team, the scholar leaders, and the other 2024 Elks MVS Finalists."

After an opening night that included warm welcomes at the airport, initial icebreakers, and a competitive game of trivia, the scholars began their first full day of the weekend with a visit to the Elks National Veterans Memorial and Headquarters. The scholars' jaws dropped when they saw the ornate beauty and detail of the nearly 100-year-old building.

Once the initial shock dissipated, the scholars explored the building with a scavenger hunt and listened to presentations about the Community Investments Program, the Elks Hoop Shoot, and the Elks National Veterans Service Commission.

"I really enjoyed learning more about the ENF at the Elks National Veterans Memorial," says Leslie Monter, sponsored by Easton, Md., Lodge No. 1622. "Prior to the MVS Leadership Weekend, I had very basic knowledge regarding the Elks and their mission; the scavenger hunt was a great way to learn about the rich history of the Elks."

After visiting the Memorial, the scholars partook in another Elks' tradition: service.

see MVS, continued on page 6

the first thing he did was put together the first shoot for the Plano Elks Lodge. It was a small but great beginning."

Though Jud held many leadership roles in the Elks, his time with the Hoop Shoot always meant the most to him. While he was president of the Texas State Elks Association, Jud's philosophy was: "You can't do it alone. You have to have a team."

Jud never had to go it alone, thanks to the most important member of his team, his wife, Deb. Together, Jud and Deb made sure that every contestant that participated in their contests left with the feeling that they were winners by simply competing.

Deb brought that same approach to the National Finals, where for many years, she interacted with nearly everyone who attended the Finals as the manager of the mostly volunteer registration crew. Deb also served as Linda Cronk's right-hand person, and in that capacity, she worked behind the scenes with professionalism, diligence, and a design sensibility that enhanced the look and feel of all the signage and printed material at the Finals.

The 2024 inductees are joining a roster of Hoop Shoot greats: competitors who distinguished themselves in the program or went on to do great things and contributors who helped them get there. You can learn more about Sickler, Goltz, and the rest of the Elks Hoop Shoot Hall of Fame online at enf.elks.org/EHOF.



Chloe Sow (from left) from Washington, Rukhshona Tursunova from Kentucky, Ella Brie Mayor from California, and the other Top 20 scholars served with smiles at Cradles to Crayons, where they sorted clothing donations for Chicagoland youth.

MVS, continued from page 5

THE CONTENT DOESN'T STOP HERE

Do you like what you see in this issue of *Heartbeat*? If so, good news: There's more content where this came from!

Whether you want to meet the Top 20 Most Valuable Student scholars, hope to learn more about the Hoop Shoot, or just would like to stay up to date on all things ENF, our YouTube channel is the place for you.

If you have a couple of hours, you can relive every moment of the Hoop Shoot National Finals by watching the contest livestreams. Or, if you only have a few minutes, catch the best

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"I greatly appreciated the volunteer work that we did at Cradles to Crayons," says Monter. "I think that the core of the Elks is about community and service, so I enjoyed being able to give back to the Chicago area through an organization like Cradles to Crayons."

Scholar leaders kicked off the next morning by hosting workshops that were designed to maximize college success, including building one's personal brand. In the afternoon, esteemed alumni Sean Loosli, Jay Little Cunningham, Bryce Caswell, and Scholar Advisory Board President Liz Radway hosted a panel for the students to ask questions about college and beyond.

That night, scholars were given the chance to continue forming bonds with their new #ElksFamily by enjoying some of the best Chicago has to offer. They took pictures by the iconic Buckingham Fountain, then made their way to Navy Pier for a dinner cruise on Lake Michigan.

As they enter their next stage of life, these scholars will feel a wide range of emotions; with their new #ElksFamily, they will never be alone.

"The Leadership Weekend was a revelation, opening my eyes to endless possibilities in service and fostering meaningful friendships," says Maher Harp, sponsored by Dearborn, Mich., 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 2024-25, the Elks National Foundation allocated nearly \$2.9 million to fund the Most Valuable Student scholarship program, which includes 500 four-year scholarships ranging from \$4,000 to \$30,000. For more information about the Most Valuable Student scholarship program, including eligibility and deadlines, visit elks.org/scholars.



Elks Scholar Service Trips give scholars an opportunity to explore and serve a new community while also building community of their own with other members of the #ElksFamily.

Service, continued from page 7

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

In April, 350 high school seniors received Legacy Awards scholarships, which are available to the children and grandchildren of Elks.

“Receiving an Elks Legacy scholarship is a profound honor that represents not only financial support but also recognition of my family connection to the Elks community,” says Denton Wiggins, a Legacy scholar sponsored by Perry, Fla., Lodge No. 1851. “It signifies a legacy of service, generosity, and commitment to education passed down through generations.”

Legacy Awards recipients receive \$4,000 scholarships, and they are required to serve with

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The scholars exemplified Elks values through their service, as well. On the trip, they served with three different organizations: Cradles to Crayons, which addresses clothing insecurity; Urban Growers Collective, which fights food insecurity; and the Lincoln Park Conservancy, which promotes environmentalism.

“The Chicago Service Trip was an amazing opportunity to meet other Elks scholars and volunteer with different organizations,” says Angelina Lovato, a 2022 Legacy Awards recipient from Westminster, Colo., Lodge No. 2227. “Volunteering alongside other Elk scholars with these various organizations made our impact feel so much more meaningful. It was such a cool experience.”

The scholars also visited the Elks National Veterans Memorial and Headquarters, where they learned about the history of the Elks. This visit gave the scholars the opportunity to connect their scholarships to the broader work of the Elks and Elks National Foundation. Many of them realized that their scholarships are so much more than just a check—they are an invitation to be part of the #ElksFamily.

So why do our scholars serve? Are they actually able to make a difference in only a few days?

The differences they made through sorting clothes, preparing soil beds for crops, and cleaning the park will be felt by the Chicagoland area, but the differences in their own lives will be even more impactful. After such an incredible week, the scholars are left with something that will last far beyond next season’s crops: community.

The Elks National Foundation offers three Elks Scholar Service Trips annually. These trips provide scholars the opportunity to learn about societal issues, serve those in need in the name of the Elks, and connect with their #ElksFamily from across the country. For more information about the trips, visit enf.elks.org/ScholarServiceTrips.



Just like Elks scholars can double their impact when they serve together, you can double the impact of your gift by checking to see if your employer has a matching gift program!

DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

The Elks National Foundation would not be able to accomplish everything in this issue of *Heartbeat* without your support. Whether it's unleashing the next generation of gritty kids, like Ainsley Weaver and Beckett Jilka, through the Hoop Shoot; supporting the top young minds in the country, like the MVS Top 20, through the scholarship program; or helping Lodges address the most pressing needs in their communities through CIP grants, every donated dollar makes a tremendous difference.

But what if there were a way to *double* the difference a dollar makes? Well, there is! Many employers will match gifts given to non-profit organizations by employees and spouses, meaning that for every dollar you donate to the ENF, your company will donate another dollar and sometimes more! Some employers even match gifts from retirees. Don't miss this chance to make an even bigger difference in Elks communities!

To see if your company is eligible, check with your human resources department or go to secure.elks.org/DoubleYourGift, and encourage the high school seniors in your life to apply.

an Elks Lodge at least three times in the four years they receive financial aid.

See the entire class of 2024 Legacy Awards recipients at elks.org/scholars. The 2025 contest starts on September 1, 2024. Visit secure.elks.org/leg for more information.

For 2024-25, the Elks National Foundation allocated \$1.4 million to fund 350 Legacy Awards scholarships for the children and grandchildren of Elks. For more information, including eligibility and deadlines, visit elks.org/scholars.

ASK THE ENF...

Q I heard the ENF gives much more back to my state than my state donates, but that must be a mistake. Where can I see how much we actually receive?

—Skeptical in Schenectady

A Hello Skeptical, Believe it or not, it is true! Each year, the ENF strives to grant more money back to each state than it received from that state in donations. These grants help fund the state Elks associations' major charitable projects, which include aid for people with disabilities, cancer research, children's hospitals, youth camps, and safe havens for abused families. The state associations also use these grants to fund their Hoop Shoot, Soccer Shoot, Drug Awareness, scholarship and veterans service programs, as well as other charitable and philanthropic projects.

This year, the Elks National Foundation will grant nearly \$11.2 million to the state Elks associations. To learn how the ENF is helping your state, go to secure.elks.org/YourState.

Have a question for the ENF? Email us at enf@elks.org.

FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP

We salute the following members of the 2023-24 Foundation Fellowship who contributed \$1,000 or more to the Foundation from April 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024. If you've reached one of these levels since April 1, 2024, you'll see your name in the Foundation Fellowship Honor Roll for the first half of 2024-25 in Issue 81. To learn more about the Foundation Fellowship and to view the benefits for each level, visit enf.elks.org/fellowship.

(+ Denotes deceased member; ^ Denotes ENF Trustee; > Denotes John F. Malley Society;
* Denotes Fidelity Club; # Denotes Loyalty Club; < Denotes Named Scholarship donor)

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