



**Rochester Lodge #24** hosted a breakfast for 28 Veterans from the VA hospital in Canandaigua, NY. Also in attendance were 10 Elk members, 7 volunteers, and 7 girl scouts and 4 mothers from troop 698, working on their community service badge. The Veterans were provided with a full breakfast that included stuffed french toast, steak and eggs. At the conclusion of the breakfast, each Veteran was thanked for their service and presented with an American flag, engraved flag stand, and American Flag lapel pin.



**Herkimer Lodge #1439** hosted a free dinner for Veterans in the area to say THANK YOU on Saturday, November 17, 2012 from 1:00-4:00 pm. A traditional turkey dinner was served. Pictured is Scott Pizer, Herkimer Exalted Ruler, with the Veterans attending from Country Manor. From Left to right-Albert Adamco, Harold McVay, Scott Pizer, and Bernie Blask.

**Boonville Lodge #2158** visited the Syracuse Veterans Hospital. Volunteers Elks gathered from our charitable community lap blankets, puzzles, warm socks, toiletries, playing cards and the veteran's favorite's home-made pies. Visiting the hospital saw the smiles on the Veteran's faces as they received a gift from the lodge.



**Colonie Lodge #2192** Veterans Standdown, held on September 29, 2012. Over 500 homeless veterans received free healthcare check-ups, breakfast & lunch. Also an opportunity to pick up new clothes at no cost to them. Hopefully this can be added to the NYS website and the national magazine. From L-R: PER Doug Williams, Standdown director; DD Ernest (Jay) Heassler, State Capitol District Cobleskill #2040; SVP John Kochan, State Capitol Colonie #2192; SP Larry Contratti, New York #1; ER Marjorie J. Hurlburt, Ticonderoga #1494, presenting a check to Ed Baniak, PSVP VA/VS for use at the Stratton Medical Center; PDDGER Peter Roach, New York #1.

**Bath Lodge #1547** members visited the Bath VA Medical Center and donated decks of cards to more than 150 veterans being treated there.

**Mechanicville-Stillwater Lodge**

**#1403** members attended a Memorial Service for 53 area veterans who were killed in action during WW II. Family members of the fallen veterans were presented with the Saratoga County WW II Service Medal during the ceremony.

**Saratoga-Wilton Lodge #161** used a \$ 2,000.00 ENF Gratitude Grant to make donations of \$ 1,000.00 each to the Guardian House of Saratoga, which provides temporary housing to homeless female veterans and the Vet House of Saratoga County, which provides temporary housing to homeless male veterans.

**Middletown Lodge #1097** sold beverages and food during the lodge's Elk of the Year celebration and raised \$ 510.00 for the Soldiers and Family Assistance Center at West Point, which assists wounded troops and Department of Defense civilians and their families.



**Massena Lodge #1702** hosted a very successful Veteran's Day dinner. The Lodge prepared a traditional turkey dinner and served approximately 180 Veteran's and family members. The Lodge received volunteer support from three Massena High School students who served the Veterans; Dan and David Elman and Evan George. Some of the many that attended are pictured with District Deputy Tim Welp, Exalted Ruler Bridget LaVigne and State Vice President Tom Portolese. The Veteran's Dinner is an annual Lodge tradition.

**Carthage Lodge #1762** members John Gallagher, a Carthage High School JROTC instructor; PER Sean McHale, a Carthage High School Teacher; and Exalted Ruler Wayne Moore teamed up with Carthage High School Senior Honors Students and visited disabled Veterans at the VA Hospital in Syracuse NY. The students entertained the veterans with a round of Bingo and helped serve dinner after.

**Carthage Lodge #1762** sponsored a white water rafting trip on Black River for Military and Wounded Warriors stationed at Fort Drum. The event was a great day out for our troops and the Lodge was grateful to have the opportunity to give back to our Service members who dedicate their lives to defending our nation. Lodge Veteran Committee Chairman James Sheets and Exalted Ruler Wayne Moore accompanied the soldiers on the rafting trip.

**Peekskill Lodge #744** held a dinner for Veterans. The lodge served over 60 veterans from around the area. The dinner was well received and the veterans got a choice of steak, chicken or fish. All agreed that they would be back again next year.

**The Elks National Veterans Service Commission** is the major source of hides

and tanned leather used for recreational and occupational therapy throughout the Veterans Administration health care system. **Elks Leather** has become a national by-word among veteran patients everywhere.

Time between visits from friends and families can make hospitalization a drudgery for our veterans. Leather provides a form of relief by keeping minds active as well as providing exercise for injured and unused muscles. Veterans often enter wallets, clothing, belts and moccasins in Arts and Crafts shows sponsored by the Elks.

Recently, a program was initiated by Elks whereby tanned leather is cut and sewn into specially designed gloves which are furnished to veterans confined to wheelchairs, thereby protecting their hands during movement.

**BACKGROUND**

The Elks Leather Program was initiated in 1948 when the Elks of California launched a hide-gathering program in their State during hunting season. The raw hides were collected at central points, salted and shipped to a Los Angeles tannery for processing. Finished leather, in brilliant colors, was made available to Veterans Medical facilities throughout the State.

To make this popular program available to all VA Medical Centers (VAMC), the Elks National Veterans Service Commission arranged funding to pay for tanning and shipping of the hides nationwide. Today, over nineteen States donate or are developing plans to support this program. All States are invited to donate hides, make use of the "Gloves for Wheelchair Veterans" program and participate in the tanned leather distribution.

Since the government does not budget money for leather for wheelchair gloves for veterans, it falls upon the Elks to keep the supply line open.

The Elks National Veterans Service Commission has pledged that: "While there is a committee of Elks on the job, therapists will never experience a shortage of leather".

**PURPOSE**

In order to continue Serving Our Nation's Veterans, the donation of animal hides (which are abundant and often disposed of in many States) is an important part of the National Veterans Service Commission Leather Program.

Proper preparation of hides prior to shipment to the designated tannery is extremely important. Spoiled hides which are shipped to tanneries must be discarded. This inflates the freight charges and causes unnecessary wasteful expenses.

**LEATHER AND GLOVE PROCUREMENT**

To procure tanned leather or gloves, a requisition (as shown in the National Veterans Service Commission Manual) must be submitted to the National Veterans Service Commission office in Chicago, by the Elk VAVS Representative or the Elk Representative at a State Veteran's Home. The Elk submitting the form must fill in their name and address, as the leather and gloves will be shipped to no other person. Leather cannot be shipped to post office boxes.

The form must be signed by the Chief of Occupational or Recreational Therapy at VA Medical Centers or the person who will supervise the program at State Veteran's Homes.

Requests that are exceptions to this policy must be approved by the Director in Chicago.

It is the responsibility of the Elks receiving the leather and gloves to see that they are only used for intended purpose. It is recommended that the gloves be presented to wheelchair bound veterans by Elk members to receive maximum effect for the veterans and our organization.

**CLOSING**

Our veterans responded willingly to our call, and now it is only fitting that we respond to their needs.