



GRAND LODGE CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS



The 151st grand lodge Session of the Benevolent and protective Order of Elks was held July 5-9, 2015 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The convention activities began with our State Association Breakfast which was well attended. The breakfast featured an invocation by PSP Jamie Peace, Pledge of Allegiance by Paul Erkkinen and the Nation Anthem lead by Sue Erkkinen. State president John Jacques introduced the dignitaries in attendance and Past Grand Exalted Ruler Peter T. Affatato addressed those attending.

The opening ceremony took place that afternoon. Past Grand Exalted Ruler David Carr served as Master of Ceremonies and welcomed those attending during the opening ceremony and had the honor of introducing the Past Grand Exalted Rulers and Past First Ladies. State President John Jacques had the honor of carrying and presenting the New York State Flag during the opening ceremony. National Scholarship winner Sarah Jiudice, representing Southampton Lode, graciously addressed the convention attendees. She was escorted to the Dias by State President John Jacques, State Scholarship Chair Jennifer Neaton and Southampton Exalted Ruler Thomas Bruzdoski. During the Tuesday session, Past State President Ron Olson, Area 1 GL Activities Committee, presented his report before the membership. He was acknowledged by then Grand Exalted Ruler for his commitment to the committee. That afternoon our District Deputy designees attended a training session with Grand Exalted Ruler elect Ronald Hicks and had photos taken with him. The day concluded with the NYSEA Formal Dinner. The dinner was attended by approximately 280 members and guests.

Our State Association had several highlights during the convention. In addition to the recognition of National Scholarship winner Sarah Jiudice, Micheal Dubray of Glens Falls Lodge #81 was recognized during the Veterans Commission presentation for an award winning Veterans message that aired on Veterans Day, 2014. He received NYS Broadcasting Award for Excellence for his work on the message. Charlie Sullivan of Herkimer Lodge #1439 served as a Grand Lodge Ritual Judge and was recognized for his efforts during the Ritual presentation. Edgar Manwaring, PER and Bill Gebhardt, PDDGER, served as session coordinators. Edgar worked the sound booth and Bill worked the floor detail. Our State Association Major Project booth was recognized with a Five Star award. The NYSEA Grand Lodge Representatives for 2015-2016 are: Reverend Michael T. Martini, who was re-appointed as Grand Lodge Chaplain, PDDGER Stella Kolysko – Special Deputy, PSP Ron Olson – Area 1 Activities Committee, and PSP Bruce Hidley, Area 1 Government Relations.



Past Grand Exalted Ruler Peter T. Affatato is pictured as he addresses the State Association members in attendance at the NYSEA during the State Association breakfast.



Past Grand Exalted David Carr served as Master of Ceremonies during the opening ceremony. He is pictured as he spoke to the convention



Watertown Lodge #496 Exalted Ruler Jill Bruce-Wiley is pictured speaking with NYSEA Major Project Chairman Jamie Peace at the Major Project Booth.



National MVP Scholarship winner Sarah Jiudice is pictured with Past Grand Exalted Ruler Peter Affatato, Past Grand Exalted Ruler David Carr and Southampton Exalted Ruler Thomas Bruzdoski following her opening ceremony speech. Sarah was sponsored by Southampton lodge #1574. During her speech, when thanking the Elks, she noted "I didn't just win the 2015 Most Valuable Student Scholarship, I won a family. I won a community of individuals that share the same goals as me. I won a gateway to continue helping others for the rest of my life". During an ESE interview with Sarah, she reported she graduated at the conclusion of the recent school year and will be attending UCLA this fall where she plans to major in Exercise Physiology. She credits the scholarship as the reason she can attend UCLA. Attending UCLA has been her dream since 8th grade. Sarah played softball, soccer and basketball while in high school and noted she will miss sports. She plans to focus on school and would like to participate in intramural sports when she can. She spoke about her experience at the Leadership Conference with the 20 finalist that was held in Chicago in April and indicated "it was one of the best, if not the best, experience of my life". She noted all of the finalist had "the same goals and motives and a common bond developed between them". She spoke highly about the ENF Team's dedication and organization. When asked about the personal impact of winning the National scholarship, Sarah reflected she didn't think she had realized the full impact yet, that it was "bigger than I expected. And that she is "humbled by the experience". When asked about speaking at the convention, she was nervous but "couldn't wait to get up there to thank everyone". Sarah mentioned that words cannot describe how proud her mom is of her and she was tearing during the speech. Sarah noted she has made a lot of connections because of the New York State Elks!



National MVP Scholarship Winner Sarah Jiudice is pictured with her mother Monica and State Scholarship Chair Jennifer Neaton prior to delivering her speech to the convention membership.

