

ELKS ADOPT-A-VETERAN PROGRAM

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks of the United States of America have long been supporters of our Military Veterans and were the first organization to build Veterans' Hospitals in World War I. The Elks have made a promise that "So long as there are Veterans, the Elks will never forget them". One of the many programs to insure that we keep that promise is the Adopt-A-Veterans Program. Every Lodge should periodically remind its membership of that promise and this program and ask all of their members if they can find the time to adopt a veteran.

Which Veterans are adoptable? Vets in hospitals; Assisted Care Facilities; Nursing, Convalescent, Retirement Homes and Senior Living Centers; Veterans living at home who are shut in, lonely, don't drive, have few family or visitors; any Elks who qualify in the above; Veterans in Homeless Shelters.

Where do I find Veterans to adopt? Call your District or Lodge Chairperson if you want help in identifying Veterans who need adopting. Talk with someone in your local VFW or American Legion Post. They can help you identify Veterans that need attention and assistance from time to time. Obtain lists from the hospitals. You may have to visit the hospital to get the names. Nursing homes usually have an Activities Director or Social Services representative who can give you names of veterans, especially those who have no family or few visitors. Churches, the American Legion, V.F.W. or other groups, may give you the name of a veteran who is shut in or lonely. In your Lodge, the Veteran member who doesn't come to the Lodge much, one who doesn't drive any more, and is shut in because they have few family members and disabilities. Ask your Lodge Secretary if they know of such a member. Homeless Shelters: Contact the local Veterans Resource Center and ask them what kind of help is needed for the homeless Veterans that they are in contact with. There should be a continuous drive for clothing and comfort care items. Have a meal for them at the Lodge or shelter or the Veterans Resource Center, if possible. You may also want to check with the "Catch the Spirit" (CTS) Project Manager, Bob Burns, Jr. at 916-799-5968 to see if he can put you in contact with a Guard or Reserve unit and to identify any Veterans needing your support. Thanks to an ENF Impact Grant, the CTS Project is now a year-round program to provide assistance to Military Organizations, individual Veterans, and their families in the form of food, clothing, furniture, equipment, and other provisions, and can act as a facilitator to bring people and resources together to meet the various needs.

Now that you have adopted a Veteran, what do you do? Send them a card on their birthday. Send cards on holidays. Send a letter, note, or postcard at any time. Give them gifts on holidays or birthdays. Take them to dinner at the Lodge or elsewhere. Visit them and just talk about their service, sports and current events. Phone to check on them and chat. Sponsor a tour, boat ride, picnic or party. Some may have computer access and Email.

And don't forget to report your hours and mileage and any other kind of donation you have made to your Lodge or District Veterans Chairpersons so that we can continue to justify our non-profit organization status.