

Letter from Justin Reiter, VEA Membership Committee Chair



Dear District Membership Chairs,

By way of this letter I would like to introduce myself. My name is Justin Reiter and I will be serving as General Chairman of the Membership Committee for Virginia Elks Association 2015-2016.

I am honored Special Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler Dr. Robert Hinkle recommended me to Virginia Elks Association President Geoffrey Cox. I am looking forward to working with each of you to grow, strengthen and increase VEA new membership and retention.

Last month I was fortunate to attend VEA training day hosted by Charlottesville Lodge #389. While the day was filled with great information about the upcoming year, including words from endorsed candidate for Grand Exalted Ruler Ron Hicks, the highlight for me was a presentation by Grand Lodge Membership/Public Relations Manager, Rick Gathen. If you have not already reviewed Rick's presentation, it can be found at Virginiaelks.org under Membership Committee. I encourage you to review both the long and short version of the presentation.

In the presentation Rick outlines specific goals and how to achieve them. Even better his process is free. That's right free! You don't have to spend Lodge money on fancy rack cards or new slick booklets, just follow the simple steps outlined and you may see one of our own VEA members at the top of the recruitment list on Elks.org.

While you are browsing Elks.org take a look at the Annual, 5 year trend and membership reports provided by the Grand Lodge. These reports will offer you some terrific talking points when talking to your Districts local Lodge Membership Committees. I would encourage you to share Rick's presentation and valuable reports with them as well. As they say, "it takes a village" and you are the front lines to make that happen.

The goals are simple: Increase local lodges membership by 10%, increase National Membership by 10,000, Drive enthusiasm and results with highly visible recognition programs, focus on adding quality more than quantity, reduce non-pays and dimitts by 20,000 and focus on payment solutions and inspired collection campaigns.

Sounds simple right, yet no one wants to take the proverbial “Bull by the Horns” and make it happen. We consistently hear, “someone else will step up,” “nobody wants to hear about membership,” “doesn’t the Secretary take care of that?”

It is time for a change. A change in focus to help new members and members remember what the Benevolent Protective Order of Elks is and what we stand for. As Rick Gathen likes to point out, we are the best Charitable Organization in the United States. Let’s put that front and center.

I think we can all agree that the social aspect of our Lodges is the predominate reason for new membership. But some of the most successful active Lodges were Elks Lodges with a bar...not active bars with an Elks Lodge. They have passionate recruiters, provide family friendly environment and display good understanding of the Order’s programs and how they translate back to the community.

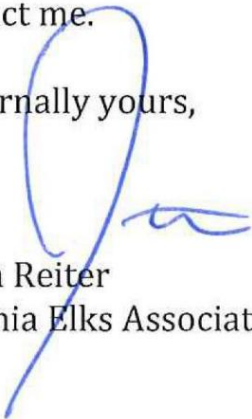
As we embark on this New Year, we as VEA members have a special responsibility. For the first time in decades one of our own will be Grand Exalted Ruler. Ron Hicks of Fredericksburg Lodge #875 is the endorsed candidate for Grand Exalted Ruler. Not only will this put Ron in the Elkdom spotlight, but also the Commonwealth of Virginia and VEA in the spotlight. It will also give us a unique opportunity to promote Elkdom in a way unavailable to us for sometime. Wouldn’t it be special if we could show Ron we have his back, by hitting all of our membership goals, including leading the Nation in new membership and membership retention.

My hope is not to Chair this committee from arms length letter and email management, but to visit as many lodges as I can this year. I will also send out a weekly email that I hope will be informative and engage you to help your District Lodges Membership Committees succeed.

I look forward to spending time with you at our Convention in Chesapeake in June and hopefully see you in Indianapolis the first week of July.

If I can be of any service to you throughout the year, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Fraternally yours,



Justin Reiter

Virginia Elks Association General Chairman – Membership and Lapsation.