



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters, it is indeed a true honor to now stand before you to serve as your Virginia Elks Association State President – what a humbling feeling. I want to thank all of you for your kindness, support, and confidence in April and me and for allowing us to be your ambassadors of Elkdom in the great Commonwealth this year. A special thank you to all the dedicated men and women that are serving our wonderful state association this year.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my family, friends (now and those who are no longer with us), and God Almighty for the love, guidance, and encouragement to be able to be active as an Elk for all these years. Thank you Montie Largin, for your friendship and mentoring me, showing me the real meaning of being a true and upright Elk. You allowed me the opportunity to serve my lodge and community, a place to be introduced to my true sweetheart, and getting to become friends with so many other dedicated Elks around the state. Most of all, thank you April for your love, support, help, and being by my side - always.

Many lodges face the grim reality of diminishing numbers of members and worse yet, fewer volunteers. Membership is the key and the life blood of our honorable brotherhood. New York Times bestselling author Nate “Rusty” Berkus is quoted as saying “There comes that mysterious meeting in life when someone acknowledges who we are and what we can be, igniting the circuits of our highest potential.” Just as Montie and many others have done for me, I implore you to embrace my motto for the year, “Lead by Example.” Go forth and be a leader in your lodge – befriend and mentor a new member, whether proposed by you or not – show them how to be an active member and how to honor the society in which all of us here believe so strongly. Be the shining example of an Upright Elk in your community – show others that it is okay to love God and to do good things for those less fortunate than ourselves. A quote from Dr. Anil Kumar Sinha; “Leadership is not a position. It consists of action with transparency and to set a high example of integrity, honesty, and to strive for the welfare of all”. It is up to each and every one of us to play this role - to show others what it is to be one of the Best People On Earth!

“Leadership is not about titles or positions..... it is about one life influencing another” – anonymous. If you make the effort, the rewards will be evident. Lifelong friendships and feelings of satisfaction for a good deed performed will abound. Be loud and proud of our good works. Share them with members, potential members, the media, and everyone you can. We must lead to promote and to grow our order - it begins with us.

Let me once again thank all of you for this once in a lifetime opportunity to serve and to be a part of this great and impressive association of Virginia Elks. I leave you with Matthew 5:16 which says “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works.” Remember that it is in God we trust to guide us and all good Elks. May God bless us all.

Robert Fender
President