



## **President's Message**

As I begin my year as your VEA State President, I want to thank everyone that got me to this point. It has been a journey that started in my lodge, Richmond No. 45, and continued, thanks to many mentors, members and friends that offered words of encouragement and support. The most important person to thank is my wife, partner and greatest supporter, Joanne. Without her support and help, I would not be where I am today.

The challenges that face all of the lodges is membership. We talk about this every year and we "continue to do the same things expecting different results". Albert Einstein is attributed with saying that this is a sign of insanity. We cannot continue to expect our membership to grow unless we are willing to make great changes both within our lodge and within our own minds.

Henry Ford was quoted as saying "Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success." We have to push a reset button in our minds to help the leadership in the lodges understand that they must bring the membership together before we can begin to succeed in promoting Elkdom or our programs. Encourage your members to help with a program or event. Call them on the phone, text or email them to ask them to participate. There are many members in your lodge that will help if just asked. You have to reach out to them personally. You cannot expect people to respond to a plea in the newsletter, website, or Facebook page.

PGER and our State Sponsor Ron Hicks has long promoted having a great Indoctrination program in the lodges. That is where you begin to familiarize the new members with all of the programs that we do. There are many lodges that the Exalted Ruler and officers are not familiar with the programs that we are supposed to be doing. Perhaps it might be a good start by having an Indoctrination program for all the members or at least the officers. Invite the members and have a free event to talk about the things you need to accomplish and things you want to accomplish this year. Maybe ask some of the Past Exalted Rulers to participate by explaining a program and how it can be facilitated. Often, we see programs explained in concept but don't have a plan to implement it. An example might be the Drug Awareness program. We know that we are supposed to get the word out to the youth in our community but we don't have a specific way to do that. The Drug Awareness chairman needs to explain what is in store for the year.

The goal of the Virginia Elks Association is to promote and support our State Major Projects, the Virginia Elks Youth Camp and the Safety Glasses Program, as well as offering scholarships to deserving students and supporting the Hoop Shoot program. Through our committees we promote the Drug Awareness program, Membership, and our Veterans program. We also offer workshops at our State Convention and Fall Meeting and promote fellowship for all lodges. It is a great opportunity to network and to get to know more about Elkdom and to meet some new friends and great Elks. We encourage all lodges to promote these meetings and get Elks excited to attend. I am excited about my year as your State President and am hoping to spark some excitement in our members and lodges. To quote John Maxwell "Team Work makes the Dream Work!" So let's get started!

**Donnie White**