

GER Ron Hicks Featured in Wolf Point, Montana Herald-News



Wolf Point Elks Host First State Convention

The first photo is Smiley Johnson, exalted ruler of Glasgow Elks Lodge No. 1922, with Wolf Point Elks Lodge Exalted Ruler and new Montana State Elks Association President Darla Downs in front of Johnson's 1957 Chevy with the elk hood ornament at the MSEA summer convention in Wolf Point Friday, July 17. The second picture is Wolf Point Elks Lodge Exalted Ruler and Montana State Elks Association first vice president Darla Downs (center) presenting the Grand Exalted Ruler of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks Ronald Hicks (left) of Fredericksburg, Va., with a Montana Silversmith belt buckle to commemorate his trip to Montana during the MSEA's Grand Exalted Ruler's banquet Friday, July 17. Hicks was installed as the national GER in Indianapolis, Ind., two weeks ago. Past Exalted Ruler Gene Pronto (right) served as emcee for the evening. Downs was elected and installed as Elks state president Saturday.



Wolf Point Elks Lodge No. 1764 hosted the Montana State Elks Association Summer Convention for the first time Thursday



through Saturday, July 16-18.

A highlight of the convention was the election and installation of Wolf Point Lodge No. 1764 exalted ruler and Herald-News and Searchlight publisher Darla Downs as Montana State Elks Association president. She becomes the youngest MSEA president in its 113-year history.

Another first for Wolf Point was the official visit of Elks 2015-2016 Grand Exalted Ruler Ronald Hicks and wife Nancy Hicks of Fredericksburg Va., making their first stop in Wolf Point on their official road trip since his installation as GER two weeks ago in Indianapolis, Ind. It was their first trip to Montana.

Hicks' theme for the coming year is "Elks pride and community focus," which he stressed during the convention.

"I applaud Montana," he said, thanking Montana Elks lodges for community service across the state. Hicks called community service the "great heart of Elkdom."

He urged a can-do spirit from each lodge.

"Every lodge across this country has issues. I know you're working to make your lodge a success," Hicks said.

He stressed that boosting membership must be a priority for a lodge to be a success.

"One person can make a difference. One person can be a spark in your lodge," Hicks said.

"Don't dwell on the negative," he said.



Hicks urged to Elks to communicate.

“So much depends on the exalted ruler and the lodge secretary. Let them know who you are. Put a face on your lodge,” he said.

Hicks reminded the people attending the convention that the only requirements to join the Elks are being 21 years old or older, a belief in God and to pledge their allegiance to the flag of the United States.

Downs, who was unopposed for state president, was unanimously elected along with two other people seeking offices without opposition.

Those people were Fred Barrett of Thompson Falls, first vice president; and Bob Stephens of Kalispell, secretary/

treasurer.

Susie Larson of Bozeman defeated Dan York of Stevensville for second vice president.

Dennis Cooper of Deer Lodge was reelected as a trustee, defeating Marcus Burnham of Hamilton.

The 2016 summer convention will be held in Deer Lodge. The annual summer convention has been held in the past in Glasgow and in Sidney in 2014, but never before in Wolf Point. The local lodge hosted a mid-winter state Elks meeting in 1985.

(Written by John Plestina, Photos by John Plestina)