

These young people will be coming to Hampton and McGuire VAMC in March. Details later.  
Don De Lap, Chairman, VEA State Veterans Commission



**Re-Creation and the B.P.O.E. are entering their 25<sup>th</sup> year of partnership in serving America's Hospitalized Veterans in a nation-wide program of therapeutic entertainment.**



The Elks National Veterans Service Commission, the local VAVS representatives and the Elks at large continue to play a vital role in Re-Creation's ability to travel the nation in this unique service!

And we thank you! Your generosity makes a substantial difference in the healing and rehabilitation of America's heroes...and they are grateful:



***"We are extremely grateful to the cast and crew, who gave their time and talents to entertain our veterans. Their renditions of favorite songs did so much to boost the morale of our patients! We sincerely appreciate the support of the Elks National Service Commission for their continued commitment and dedication and, without whose support, performances like this would not be possible." (Wilkes Barre, PA VAMC)***

We've recently been fielding a number of questions from local and state representatives alike concerning the program. And with the approval of Bob Hennings, Director, B.P.O.E National Veterans Service Commission, we're endeavoring to answer some of those questions.

#### **HOW ARE VA & STATE HOME SHOWS SCHEDULED?**

Re-Creation now receives more than 240 active requests per year from federal VAMC's and State Veterans Homes. Having a set schedule is not possible. We generally schedule a tour 4-5 months in advance. We've found over our 25+ year tenure of touring, that this time frame is ideal for the VA Centers...not too much time, yet enough to make arrangements. Re-Creation, in cooperation with the Department of VA, contacts VA Medical Centers & State Homes and a performance date & time is set. Practical factors such as distance, weather, time, and availability all are considered when scheduling tours. VA & State Home facilities that are not visited one year are scheduled as early as possible the next.

#### **DO THE LOCAL ELKS HAVE ANY SAY IN WHEN THE SHOW IS?**

No. The VA contact in Recreation Therapy or Voluntary Service is offered a specific day. They have the freedom to pick the time. If there are any conflicts, those folks call us to see if a rearrange is possible. Very seldom does the prospected tour change...the facilities are so eager to have Re-Creation that 95% of the time, the day we've structured into a practical travel schedule, is the day the hospital accepts.

#### **HOW MANY ROOMS DOES RE-CREATION REALLY NEED?**

The best possible housing arrangements for the Re-Creation cast members are five (5) clean, safe hotel rooms. As these young people...who are all *volunteers*... travel 35,000 miles a year serving our nation's veterans, the Elks provide one of the most important components in their travels...their ability to rest! These kids sing 300+ shows a year to fund the VA program and they need down-time. They need the ability to 'spread out' and really, truly rest.

#### **WHAT ABOUT STAYING AT LOCAL HOMES?**

The "staying-at-homes" thing has become problematic for two main reasons...courtesy and safety. Our schedule is tight...and sometimes the cast has to leave at 4:00 a.m. or won't be able to get into a town before 11:00 p.m. We've learned that asking folks to adjust to our schedule is impractical and discourteous. Secondly, we've had far too many "inappropriate" scenarios with various "stay-at-our house" folks. The successes far outweigh the dangers for now...but we can't in good conscience allow our young members spend a night with anyone we don't know. This kind of thing has caused major concern in the past.

#### **I WANT TO GET THE MONEY SET IN MY BUDGET; CAN YOU LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU'RE COMING ANY EARLIER THAN 5 MONTHS?**

Maybe. If knowing a general time frame like, "Re-Creation will be coming through next spring," would be helpful to you, then we'd be glad to try and oblige. We do this with some Elks already. Just call the office and ask to be alerted as far ahead as possible as to the probability of a Re-Creation tour through your area.

Now you must be aware that this will be a general "guess" and in no way will commit the group to any specific month. And the VA will not be informed until the actual tour is set. So we'd respectfully ask that you do not confuse the situation by contacting the VA. Let us structure the tours the way we have for the past 25+ years.

But we do understand planning ahead, and the challenge, in this economic climate, to securing funding for all your programs. We appreciate your wanting to keep Re-Creation at the forefront. So we'll be glad to try and give you a "heads-up" if we can.

### **WHY DO YOU SOMETIMES ASK FOR TWO NIGHTS?**

Our first commitment is to the VA facilities. We combine our knowledge of the area with what we've done historically and with what we know about traveling the nation to pull together the best tour.

Typically, requests for multiple nights' housing are made in relation to distance from or to the next stop, needed rest for the cast members and or requests from Elks lodges themselves.

Some lodges indicate that they can't help. So we try to structure the housing in a way that all dates are covered.

Some VA facilities are more than a day's drive apart. The requested extra night is crucial in our ability to maintain a realistic pace for the young people.

Requests for multiple nights are never made frivolously. If we've asked at all, there's a good reason.

But the request is just that...a request. We will gratefully accept whatever you can do. Contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

### **WELL, WHAT DO OTHER ELKS LODGES DO?**

We get this question a lot! I guess folks are interested in the broad picture. We all understand the need to allow these young missionaries to rest and relax...to let down...when they can. And many, many Elks across the country are fabulously generous with rooms, meals, even trips and special events.

**Hotels:** Whether the Motel 6 or the Hilton...we are grateful. Some lodges consider it their mission to help uplift these young missionaries, and have placed them at beautifully appointed, upscale hotels. What's necessary is that the rooms be clean and safe. There have been a few instances where we've had to very delicately tell the local Elks that the choice of hotel was simply not safe; that we would not allow the group to stay there. And in all cases, once the Elk was apprised of the situation, he or she was quick to agree.

**Meals:** Many Elks across the country enjoy the opportunity to feed the Re-Creation cast. We've never made such an offer a 'requirement'...but we're extremely grateful! From outdoor steak cookouts in AZ, to buffets at local Elks in TX to daily breakfasts, lunches and dinners in MI, we have been truly blessed to have such conscientious folks see to the needs of the cast.

**Special Expressions:** Some Elks lodges go out of their way to give the young people of Re-Creation something special in return. They understand that these entertainers give so much of themselves for years at a time and they want to make sure they're well appreciated. Boat trips, passes to amusement parks, extra spending money for food, practical gifts of food or toiletry items...all are appreciated!

Please understand, we don't list these examples as a way to ask you to do likewise...we simply wanted to apprise you of the enthusiasm of your fellow members.

Our primary concern is the housing location...everything else is a bonus!

### **CAN WE SCHEDULE A SHOW AT OUR LODGE?**

Surely! We offer the show to local Elks lodges at a fraction of our normal contract rate. And we'd love to celebrate with you and your fellow members. We do many shows in Elks lodges all across the country...we'd be glad to add you to the list. But we'd need to know *before* we set the tour. Contact us any time!



Nathan Olweiler, Re-Creation's General Manager, has a database of all of our Elks contacts, and we can make a note in your profile that you'd be interested in having Re-Creation at the lodge for a show.