



December 19, 2007

Dear Fellow Elk Members,

Even though we moved the 2007 Christmas Basket Program up a week this year it was a huge success. We distributed over 9 tons of food in 228 baskets to 747 citizens in the Sevier County area. Baskets weighed almost 80 pounds each and contained a fresh ham, canned vegetables, dry goods, fresh produce, bread, milk, and cookies.

I don't remember each of your names that helped, and there are too many of you to list anyway. So whether you contributed cash, donated toys, participated in fund raising events throughout the year, assembled boxes, packed baskets, distributed baskets, helped with planning or just cheered the rest of us on, I am deeply grateful and sincerely thank you for a job well done. It was a pleasure to see the spirit of the season alive and well in all those present on basket packing night. May God bless each of you.

Our food suppliers were also a tremendous help this year ensuring the amount of food we were able to purchase with the available funds would provide an adequate Christmas dinner for families as well as provide a little extra to help them through the holiday season. Had we purchased at normal retail prices, the average basket cost would have exceeded \$72.00, but our suppliers gave us great discounts which kept the actual cost at about \$39.00 a basket. Please help me in expressing thanks to Parkway Market-Gatlinburg, Food City-Gatlinburg, Merita Bread Outlet-Sevierville, and Flav-O-Rich Dairies-Knoxville. It was through their generosity that we were able to achieve these savings. Let them know how much we appreciate them.

As with any year we learned and know we can always improve on how we implement our Christmas Basket Program. We were short again this year on volunteers to help deliver baskets that had no Elk sponsor. Special thanks to John & Lou Hicks, April & Matt Stewart, Barbara Marson, Kerry & Erma Richardson, and Jack Parton & Crew for making sure these baskets were delivered to those in need. And a special thanks also to my wife Debbie for putting up with me during the past few months as we planned and prepared for this year's distribution of baskets.

As we enter a new calendar year, please include in your plans some time to help out with lodge activities. The lodge is in desperate need of volunteers to work on various committees throughout the year. Maybe you can help on Youth Activities, Veterans Activities, Americanism, Community Activities, Entertainment Events, or the Christmas Basket Program. Each of you has a talent, find your niche and share your talent with us. Together let's continue to show those in our communities by our actions that Elks Care-Elks Share!

Hope to see you soon at a Lodge meeting.

***Steve Tanner***

Esteemed Leading Knight