

Washington Elks Therapy Program for Children, Inc

The Story of the Therapy Program

We live in a society where government, life insurance companies and group health plans play a huge part in the health status of the American people. There are, however, areas of human suffering where these entities fail to meet the needs of some children and their families.

For them the dream of health and happiness is circumscribed by poverty, accidents, or circumstances over which they have no control.

For them there is no dollar to meet the dream of health and happiness for which we all long.

To bring the dollar and the dream together for these children, the Washington State Elks in 1954 adopted as their Major Project, the Washington Elks Therapy Program for Children. The Elks incorporated it and have supported it with generous contributions, bringing desperately needed therapy services to hundreds of children throughout the State.

Under the Articles of Incorporation, the purposes for which the Program was formed are:

"To raise, receive or accept funds for assisting and aiding in the treatment and rehabilitation of children suffering from cerebral palsy, and for other physically handicapped children, to raise and expend money for education purposes, for establishment of mobile units, staffs of trained therapists, for the treatment and help of children suffering from cerebral palsy, and other physically handicapped children, and for maintaining and assisting in scientific medical research to ascertain the causes of cerebral palsy, and to any and all persons, both with the specific provisions that none of the funds raised shall inure to the private profit of any individual person or persons. To distribute such funds, subject to the provisions of Section 2 of Article XI of the Constitution of the Washington State Elks Association in such amounts and proportions as may from time to time be determined upon by the corporate Board of Trustees, and to raise, receive or accept funds for caring on such charitable activities, either through the Washington Elks Association and/or its members, or from other organizations or individuals, and to do any and all things incidental thereto or necessary, expedient, useful or desirable in connection therewith including the entering into contracts, which this Corporation may lawfully do in furtherance of any or all of such purposes".

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The most appealing features of this Program that led to its support by the Elks were that:

. . . the child with special needs could be treated in their own home or community setting.

. . . the parents could be trained to assist in the therapy.

. . . large hospital and medical expenses are eliminated for the family.

. . . no permanent or costly facilities are required.

From a modest beginning when the first mobile therapy unit was displayed at the 1954 Yakima Elks Convention, the Program has had a substantial growth each year.

Treatment of children with cerebral palsy and other physical disabilities cannot be restricted to the attention of only one profession due to the multiple disabilities of these children. Successful treatment demands the attention of persons possessing many different kinds of training. We must, therefore, point out that the Elks Therapist, working alone in the field, must rely on prescriptions of the physician and must observe and report the actions of the child back to the physician so that further treatment, if necessary, may be prescribed.

The Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists in the Elks Program, in and of themselves, are especially skilled at providing therapy services to children. Tolerance, patience, kindness, plus parental cooperation are necessary requisites in the successful treatment of the child with special needs.

Physical and Occupational Therapy does improve the physical condition of a child with special needs and, in many instances, assists them in becoming wholly independent of aid from others to feed, clothe, ambulate and help themselves. Were it not for the Washington Elks Therapy Program, many hundreds of young people who are walking today would not be doing so. In every playground where children gather, there are several young people who would not be there if it were not for the Elks Therapy Program for Children. "Miracles are wrought by God, who sometimes guides the hand of man to make wondrous things come true."

A number of clients receiving this free therapy could not afford the treatment on the open medical-care market if the Elks Program did not exist.

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The Washington Elks Therapy Program for Children, Inc., a non-profit corporation of the Washington State Elks Association, employs Occupational or Physical Therapists, all graduates and licensed therapists who are dedicated to their profession. Providing therapy for children in their homes requires our therapists to travel through the most hazardous of weather and road conditions along with the inconvenience of working without equipment normally found in a clinical environment.

At the present time, each therapist, Physical or Occupational, travels approximately 2,000 miles per month, administering treatments to their respective clients. Therapy, regardless of the type, needs to be repetitive. The uniqueness of this Program is that the therapist interprets the physician's prescription for therapy, treats the patient on scheduled visits, and teaches the parents to carry out the prescribed treatment on a daily basis between the therapist's visits. The parents then carry on with the daily routine of exercise and muscle stimulation that is so necessary and vital for the Program to be successful. The therapist, on the next of succeeding visits, instructs the parents in other exercises, etc. Both, or rather all three parties, working together (the therapist, parents, and the child) can eventually succeed in making it possible for the child to increase their independence, enhance their development and become a contributing member of society.

The children receiving care under the Program have problems resulting from a variety of causes, some of which include cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, pre-term infants, birth defects, and others. The only requirement established by the Program is that it is restricted to children with disabilities under twenty-one (21) years of age. Each client must have a prescription from his or her physician. Treatment is not restricted to children of Elks, nor is any treatment denied to a client because of race, color, creed, or national origin. There is no charge made to the families of the children receiving the services of the Program. In fact, the parents of those children referred for treatment are never asked if they can afford to pay for the service, however, the therapists are extremely careful to avoid the duplication of available services.

Financing is the greatest problem of the Program, not because the Elks are not generous people, for they surely are. Given the large population of Elks in the State of Washington, reaching each of them with information about the Program is multiplied many times due to the fact that they are not concentrated in any one particular area. There are Elks Lodges all over the State of Washington that are members of the Washington State Elks Association and are participating in the Therapy Program.

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Support is derived from the per capita of the member Lodges of the State Association. This provides \$1.25 per member for the operation of the Program. With the annual budget, the per capita does not provide the substantial percentage of the needed income. The balance is raised in various ways such as Special Events - which include Coin Boxes, Elks sponsored golf tournaments, bequeaths, memorials, return on invested trust funds, and donations from those identified as a "Tall Elk or Tall Lady".

The Tall Elks and Tall Ladies, who are members of the Order, and their spouses, as well as Friends of the Program, are motivated to make further contributions to the Therapy Program. A "Tall Elk" makes a personal contribution of at least \$10 per year. After \$50 in contributions, he/she is a "Silver Member"; after \$100 in contributions, he/she is a "Gold Member"; contributions totaling \$500 makes them an "Emerald Member"; and when they reach a total giving of \$1,000, they become "Diamond Members". Emerald and Diamond members receive a card and pin in recognition of their support. For additional levels of contribution recognition, see Appendix L. Donations of \$500 and less go directly toward the current year operating expenses. Contributions of more than \$500 are placed in a permanent Trust Fund and invested to produce interest income. The earnings from these investments are used for the daily operation of the Therapy Program, and the Trust Fund remains intact. The many Emblem Clubs and Ladies of Elks are contributing generously to the Program which greatly assists in meeting the annual budget.

These Mobile Units collectively average over 2,000 miles a month covering the State for the Program, which is administered by the Therapist Supervisor.

The Therapy Program Trustees, consisting of three per district, and the Chairman are appointed by the President of the Washington State Elks Association and have general custody of the Program. They are required to meet not less than four (4) times a year. An Executive Interim Committee, selected among the Board, meets monthly. The Trustees are responsible for the management, investment and disbursement of all funds designated for the Therapy Program. Each Trustee is responsible for the Washington Elks Therapy Program activities in at least two Lodges in their District. There is no compensation for their services. Through their enthusiasm, dedication, and willingness to sacrifice their time, children with special needs are given a better opportunity in their lives.

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How it all Began

This is the story of how our Major Project, the Washington Elks Therapy Program for Children, Inc. and, incidentally, the Seattle Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center came into being. It also outlines the importance of supporting and perpetuating these very important, worthwhile programs.

Working with handicapped children, as they were then known, the fraternal activity began in 1915. A small hospital with a capacity of 20 beds and two small cottages converted to suit hospital needs, was opened in Atlanta, Georgia, by the Scottish Rite Masons of that City. As a result of the work accomplished at the Atlanta Hospital, the Shriners in 1920 in Portland, Oregon, undertook a similar program. Two years later the Elks Lodges in New Jersey initiated a program for special needs children and very quickly the Elks Lodges in New York and Pennsylvania began similar programs.

In July of 1924, the Washington State Elks Association initiated a similar program. Today Elks Lodges through their State Associations have similar programs. It is a nice feeling to know that in Washington, we're one of the first. Since our inception other states have modeled programs after ours.

Many years before fraternal work with special needs children had begun, a group of women founded the Children's Orthopedic Hospital in Washington State. They began with 1 bed in a local ward and increased that number to 6 before they were able to open a 12-bed fresh air house. A few years later, in 1921, this facility had grown to a 4-story building providing 128 beds, and this had already proven to be inadequate.

The program undertaken by the Washington Elks was called "BUCKS". That name was derived from the official name as incorporated by the Elks, "Birthday Utopian Crippled Kiddies Service". The first letter of each of the words in the corporate title spelled "BUCKS". That humble beginning by the Orthopedic Hospital in 1907 has grown to be an institution with national recognition, and all during those years, the Elks have played a vital part. When our current program, the Elks Therapy Program for Children, was incorporated in 1954, it expanded considerably on anything we had been doing prior to that time and since has grown to a nationally recognized program. Our Program is primarily funded by contributions from Elks that are members of the Washington State Elks Association.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

1. How many children are being treated?

The number of children being treated is, to some degree, a factor of the number of therapists our budget permits us to place in the field. Each Therapist has an average caseload of 25 children most of the time. It must be recognized that these children are dispersed throughout the State, many far remote from central facilities. This results in substantial travel, in many instances, in order to treat a child.

2. What percent of my contribution is used for treatment compared to the administrative cost of the Program?

We are very proud of the fact that the percentage of the contributed dollar utilized for treatment as opposed to promotion, publicity, and administration is as high or higher than any other charitable program we are aware of in the U.S.

This is, to a large degree, the result of the volunteer effort by many people within the state in raising funds and administering the Program. Were we forced to pay for this type of talent and services, we would not be able to allocate such a substantial amount to the prime purpose of the Program. Our most recent statistics indicate that approximately 90% of every dollar is used to provide the care and treatment of children in the Program. This compares to a national average of approximately 50-60% of every dollar and some as low as 30% for every dollar contributed.

3. If I want to provide for the Program in my will, what should I do?

Special explanatory leaflets have been prepared to acquaint attorneys with the Project and encourage them to recommend to their clients this worthy program as a beneficiary when preparing a will. There are many ways the Therapy Program can be designated to receive money or property from an estate:

- a. Outright bequeaths. This is the simplest means of an estate tax charitable deduction.
- b. Residuary bequeaths. When provisions have been made for one's family and others, a portion of the estate remains unassigned.

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c. Codicil. If a will has already been prepared and is up-to-date, a charitable bequeath, if it is not now included, may be provided through the addition of a codicil to the will. This should be prepared by an attorney.

d. Annuity or life income by will. There is a choice of arrangements that can be created by a will to provide an annuity for life income to one's beneficiary with the remainder going to the project.

All of these plans provide an allowable estate tax deduction for the value of the gift. The leaflets referred to above are available through the Lodge committeeman responsible for this portion of the Program.

4. What is the significance of the Therapy Program Trust Fund?

A number of years ago, the Board of the Therapy Program, by resolution, established Trust Funds. Its purpose is to receive contributions which in perpetuity will continue to produce income to support the Program. In the Tall Elks Program, any single contribution of more than \$500 is allocated to the Trust Fund, and only the interest derived from that fund can be used for the operation of the Program. Thus, a contribution of more than \$500 will continue year after year to produce a contribution to the Project. Additionally, any donations received from Memorial Envelopes or Honor Envelopes as well as bequests are added to the Trust.

5. How are the Trust Funds invested?

An Investment Committee from within the Board of Trustees of the Project administers the trust funds. They, in addition, receive advice and counsel from the Union Bank. The funds are invested in a broad spectrum of investments. These include seasoned mortgages and contracts, commercial paper, bank notes, government bonds and other high yield forms of investment.

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