



How Eagle River Elks Contribute to our Community

Description

Quality of Life Matters

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Flag Day is June 14 but it was celebrated on Saturday, June 12 this year at the Eagle River Elks Lodge.

Quality of life is improved throughout Alaska by works of the members at 15 Elks Lodges around the state, and one of the best lodges in the herd is in Eagle River. I spent Saturday, June 12 attending a **Flag Day** ceremony and talking to one of the spark plugs of the organization, **Gary Washburn**.

*I believe we may be the most active lodge in the state, explained Washburn. The Eagle River lodge has received the **Lodge of the Year Award** the last five times it was awarded. This is based on our activities, membership, donations to charities, and administrative functions like doing taxes on time.*

The Municipality of Anchorage must appreciate this because the Eagle River lodge annually pays some \$15,000 taxes on the building where the organization initiates so much good.

Other than that the Muni pretty much leaves us alone, Washburn added. We are doing something good and we don't cause any problems. The only time we have municipal services here is when we need to call an ambulance for a member who was sick or fell down. Through the Covid shutdown they spread some of the money around to help non-profits and they have not been a hinderance to anything we are doing.



Flag Day is a Big Deal for Elks



Officers of the Eagle River Elks Lodge #2868 prepare for the **Flag Day** program under flags of all our armed services.

The Elks Club gained recognition of **Flag Day** during the Presidency of **Woodrow Wilson**. The stated purpose of the service I attended this year is *to honor our country's flag, to celebrate the anniversary of its birth, and to recall achievements attained beneath its folds*. Further, the organization maintains: *It is quite appropriate that such a service should be held by the **Order of Elks**, an organization that is distinctively American, intensively patriotic and without counterpart.*

*The Fraternal aims of the **Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks** is to inculcate the principles of Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love and Fidelity; to promote the welfare and happiness of mankind; to uphold our country and its laws; and to quicken the spirit of American patriotism.*

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Some might recognize this as an old fashioned commitment to *America First*.

As stated during the **Flag Day** ceremony: *The American Flag is emblematic of Justice for all and the symbol of Brotherly Love. Charity, justice, brotherly love and fidelity are the cardinal principles of the **Order of Elks** and they are exemplified in all services done as an organization.*

It is easy to take all of our bounty as Americans for granted. Flag Day is an opportunity to remember what our flag has symbolized through our history as a country.

From the service: *Heraldry is as old as the human race. The carrying of banners has been a custom among all people in all ages. These banners usually contain some concept of the life or government of those who fashion them. Evolution of the American Flag marks the progression of the government of the American people.*



The Snake Flag established by the Southern Colonies of the US.

Local Scouts brought examples of each flag as it was explained by the speaker at the ceremony.

- In 1775 the *Pine Tree Flag* was [REDACTED]
- Continental forces in the **Battle of Bunker Hill**.
- The Southern colonies from 1776 to 1777 used the *Snake Flag*.
- In 1775 the Continental Congress considered the question of a single flag for the 13 colonies and recommended a design of 13 alternative red and white stripes with an azure field in the upper corner bearing the red cross of St. George and the white cross of St. Andrew.
- In response to a general demand for a banner more representative of our country, the Congress on June 4, 1777 established: *The flag of the United States be thirteen stripes of alternating red and white; and that the union be thirteen stars, white on a blue field, representing a new constellation.*
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- First flag of the United States with 13 stars representing the original states.
- The first official salute to the Stars and Stripes was given on February 14, 1778 by France, on the French Coast, when the *Ranger*, under the command of **John Paul Jones**, was saluted by the French fleet. This flag, carried by the *Ranger*, was made by the young women of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, from stripes of their best colored silk dresses and the white wedding gown of a recent bride.
- Additional stars were added to this flag as new states were added to the *United States of America*. It was the sight of a 15-star flag, flying over Fort McHenry, on September 14, 1814, that inspired **Francis Scott Key** to pen the words of what was to become our national anthem *The Star Spangled Banner*.
- **On July 4, 1959 a star was added for Alaska, our first non-connected state and a year later, Hawaii, our island state added a fiftieth star.**

The Stars and Stripes, flag of the United States of America! The world-wide hope of all who, under God, would be free to live and do His will. Upon its folds is written the story of America—the epic of the mightiest and noblest in all history.

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Elk Trustee wearing his trustee wearing his canvas ritual apron. - 1982

The canvas apron was the cheaper ritual apron made for members to wear with their lodge name or # given!

Posted by Jason Castlebury - Temple #19

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What Elks Do

Washburn explained his involvement: *I became Secretary in 2014 and we had 316 members. We weren't doing a lot. Every year since then we have added events—tomorrow we have the trap shoot in support of our **Wounded Veterans Project**. That was added five years ago, or so. When you are active and doing meaningful things people see that and want to be part of a winning team. Some of us just picked up the banner and ran, hoping somebody was following us. They did, and so we just keep adding ways to involve our community in wholesome activities.*

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Today the Eagle River Elks Lodge has 453 members, including me because I recently transferred my 13-year *Juneau Elks* membership to this lodge. The original Juneau Lodge building was site of the first *Alaska Legislative Session*.

*Another thing we added was the **Dictionary Project**, continued Washburn. Just before Christmas Break we give every 3rd Grade student in Eagle River elementary schools a dictionary of their own. Last year, we had to give them without any ceremony because of the virus, but usually we go in with our mascot, **Elroy**, and give them a little talk about staying away from drugs, the importance of learning how to read, and how to find a word they don't know in the dictionary—if they listen to their teachers and graduate, and stay away from drugs they can grow up to be whatever they want to be!*

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2019 Ritual Contest - 2019

2019 National Ritual Contest First Place: Kenton, Ohio Lodge No. 157.

Posted by Diane Gleason #782

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Washburn continued: *We have been doing this five years so now some kids in 8th grade still have their dictionaries in their back packs. We also give them copies of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, information about all of the states and countries of the world. Last year there were 300 third graders in the six elementary schools in Eagle River/Chugiak. Four years ago there were some 420—just third graders! We had no idea there were so many.*

As a retired Alaska teacher I recognize the value of this effort. I taught anti-drug curriculums such as DARE, and prayed for children whose parents use drugs like marijuana in the family home.

Third grade is a pivotal time in the education of children. Alaska is among the lowest 4th Grade reading scores in the United States.

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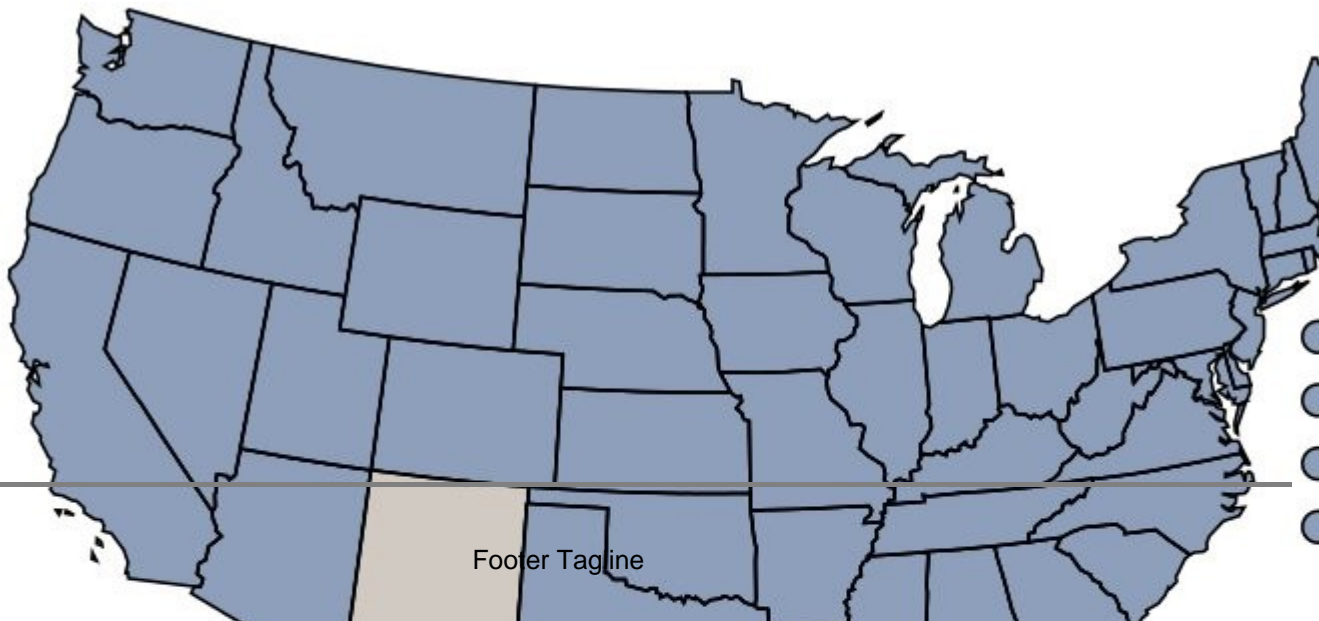
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The Nation's Report Card

Overall Results

- In 2019, the average score of fourth-grade students in Alaska was 204 lower than the average score of 219 for students in the nation.
- The average score for students in Alaska in 2019 (204) was not significantly different from their average score in 2017 (207) and was lower than the average score in 2003 (212).
- The percentage of students in Alaska who performed at or above the *Proficient* level was 25 percent in 2019. This percentage was lower than 2017 (28 percent) and was not significantly different from that in 2003 (25 percent).
- The percentage of students in Alaska who performed at or above the *Advanced* level was 53 percent in 2019. This percentage was not significantly different from that in 2017 (56 percent) and in 2003 (58 percent).

Compare the Average Score in 2019 to Other State Jurisdictions



Washburn concluded: *I like to think that the Elks Lodge is a major contributor to the quality of life in Chugiak/Eagle River. We support a lot of good causes but we aren't good at blowing our horn.*



<https://www.elks.org/loдges/home.cfm?lodgeNumber=2682>

We now have a lot more younger people, the Exalted Ruler is a woman, **Dena Sessler (Dennis)**. We support Meals on Wheels, the Food Pantries, Scouts, and we sponsor a Little League team. We contribute greatly to the Boys & Girls Club. We do holiday parties—Halloween, Christmas—Trunk-or-Treat turned out fabulous last year!

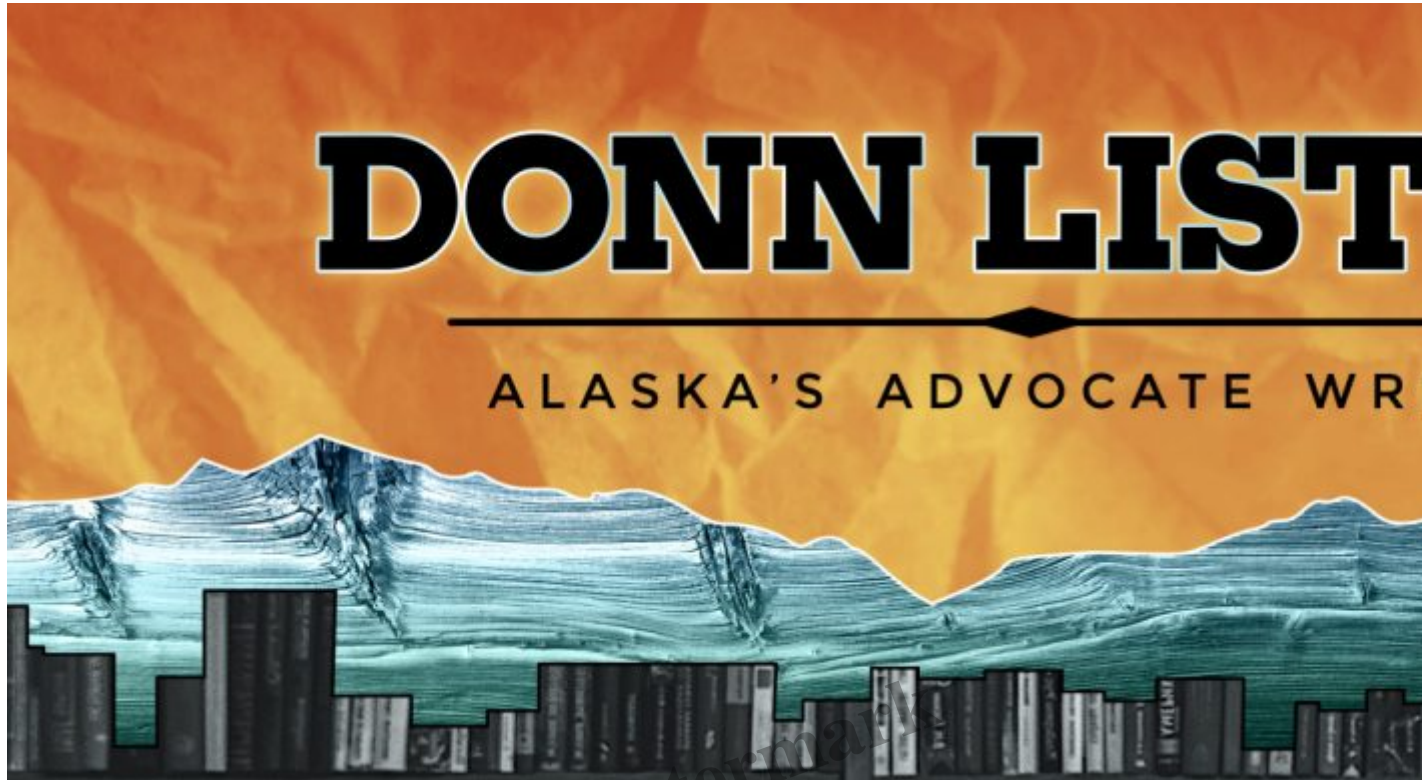
We do major efforts to support our vets; we support **Fisher House**—we do Christmas and Thanksgiving there every year—our state association also contributes \$500/month to buy whatever they need. We do a lot through our state association, too. We have a youth camp up in Sutton.

We move Veterans who come out of the domiciliary, help homeless vets, move furniture in and take them shopping to buy \$300 worth of stuff they need.

Moving back to Southcentral Alaska in 2003 I had lost track of some of the things that were once important in my life in Juneau, like the Elks Club. It was nice this year to return to membership in time for the Flag Day celebration.

Try this Flag Day quiz:

https://www.theepochtimes.com/take-our-flag-day-quiz_3855777.html



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