

Brother and Sister Elks and Ladies of the Royal Purple,

It is hard to believe I am writing this entry as Provincial President of the Alberta Elks Association. It is a title I hold near and dear to my heart and one that I will work hard to honor.

My journey in Elkdom started out at a young age. I grew up around the ELKS, the members and their spouses. I listened to the stories of the members past, I learned about the Order and ultimately fell in love with the Elks. Volunteering also started early. In elementary school I became the official courier of the Lodge transporting letters from my dad to my teachers who were also members. Around the same time, I became the "official" bingo card stamper of Tuesday night bingos. From there it turned into running the bingo concession, to waitressing in the lounge, to becoming a member, to District Deputy and Exalted Ruler to writing to you today as Provincial President.

It has been fun, frustrating and maddening, it has made me laugh, and made me cry, but at the end of the day it has been one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. It has been such an amazing adventure and what a ride it has been. The one thing about this journey that has never waived or changed is that WE MATTER, YOU MATTER.

When I was little, I had a sales pitch for the Elks and I still remember it today - "My Dad is a member of the Elks. He buys medical equipment for kids. If your kid needs an operation in the city and you can't afford to go my Dad will pay for it." Fast forward to present day and that story has come full circle. You do matter. Better yet you matter to me and my family. I became the one with the medical child, the child that needs medical equipment, that needs surgeries. I became the one that sits in the support groups with the medical parents, and listens to financial hardships on the park bench. YOU MATTER more than you will ever know.

It is strange to think of myself as President, when in reality I am a very small piece of an outstanding organization with exceptional volunteers. I'm so proud of every member, every Lodge. It is because of you Alberta is able to donate thousands of dollars into communities, to individuals.

My theme this year is TOGETHER WE CAN. Together we can keep this going, together we can continue to grow our membership, together we can continue providing the children's hospitals with toys, and grads with gowns. Together we can push forward to sponsor schools, hospitals and communities. Together we can because we have too, because what we do matters, we matter. Don't let being a member of the Elks be something you do that goes unspoken. Stand up, be proud, tell your friends, family and coworkers.

Together we can become stronger, and better. Together.