



## Helping Those Who Served!

The Brandon Lodge has a long-standing history to be proud of with supporting Veterans and our lodge has been there for years in various ways supporting the homeless Veterans of Liberty Manor. Liberty Manor for Veterans is a not-for-profit organization that houses homeless Veterans and helps them transition back into civilian life and to be independent and productive citizens.

Recently our Lodge donated \$750 of our awarded Spotlight Grant to help the disabled veterans housed at Liberty Manor. Robin Rutzke, Brandon's Veteran Chair, interacts frequently with Liberty Manor. Robin picked up on a "need" to help the physically disabled Veterans residing there. Their current bathroom consisted of a tub which required them to swing their legs over to take a shower. The Veterans' physical disabilities and/or age made this a challenging and precarious task. Robin saw a need, and our Lodge stepped up to support our Veterans.

With the Spotlight Grant funding, our lodge made a donation to purchase a low base walk-in shower. In March of this year, David Lindsay, the backbone of this organization who donates his time and many talents to the Veterans, did all the remodeling work himself. The Veterans see this upgrade as a true luxury; one that the Brandon Lodge is proud to have been able to provide. Founder and CEO Connie Lindsay said, "The veterans are thrilled to have this walk-in shower completed. It was so necessary due to their limited ability to lift their leg over a traditional tub. This is a true Easter blessing. Thank you to all!"

As Long as there are Veterans they will never be forsaken or forgotten by the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks!

Once again.....Brandon Elks Care and Brandon Elks Share!



## BRANDON ELKS #2383 PARTNERS WITH JAMES A. HALEY HOSPITAL

The Brandon Lodge #2383 has a long-standing partnership with the James A. Haley Hospital. For many years our Lodge has visited the Veterans for holidays, invited Veterans to Wednesday Night Veterans dinners and hosted special Veteran picnics.

On Saturday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, Brandon Veteran Chair Robin Rutzke invited Geoff Hopkins, M.Ed. Chief of Recreation Therapy at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital, to join the Southwest Central District (SWCD) during a planned event for the SWCD visitation of Florida State Elks Association President Rudy Masi and his wife, PER Dolly Masi. Robin asked Rudy if he would do the honor of presenting a contribution to Geoff Hopkins, made possible by the Freedom Grant awarded to our lodge. Anybody who knows Rudy knows anything dealing with supporting our Veterans is extremely dear to his heart.

FSEA Rudy presented Geoff with \$750 in Olive Garden Gift cards along with a check for \$300. Olive Garden works with James A. Haley in meeting the Veterans dietary restrictions. Geoff said the \$300 donation will be put to good use in supporting their annual picnic for their long-term patients. This year, due to COVID, this picnic will be held at the hospital. It is everyone's hope that next year's picnic can again be held and hosted by our Lodge.

Geoff shared that as a child he had fond memories of visiting the Elks with his father. Naturally this led into a conversation inquiring into Geoff's knowledge of Elkdom and resulted in an invitation by President Rudy for Geoff to become an Elk. As a result, Geoff will be sponsored by President Rudy Masi and will be joining the Zephyrhills Elks Lodge #2731 as an Elk.





### St. Patrick Day Picnic for Liberty Manor Veterans

It continues to be a challenge on how best to support and interact with our Veterans during the continuing COVID restrictions. However, Brandon Veteran Chair Robin Rutzke (and retired Air Force Senior Master Sergeant) continues to come up with creative ways to put the awarded Spotlight Grant to good use.

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, Robin, along with fellow veteran Glenn Garvey and SWCD VP Sharon Hammersla, visited Liberty Manor for Veterans with a plethora of goodwill and gifts! Because of the Spotlight Grant, our lodge was able to provide a picnic lunch while Robin, Sharon and Glenn visited with the Liberty Manor residents. The Veterans enjoyed a typical picnic of fried chicken, deli sandwiches, and baked beans along with a St. Patrick's Day dessert. In addition, all the picnic supplies, such as plates, plastic utensils, paper towels, cups and disinfecting wipes were provided. And more importantly, the Veterans enjoyed and appreciated the interaction during the visit.

In addition, our lodge provided Liberty Manor \$700 in Walmart gift cards. Normally our lodge hosts the monthly dinner for the Veterans, however, due to COVID, the Veterans are not able to attend. Connie Lindsay, founder and CEO of Liberty Manor, said the Walmart gift cards will be put to good use to purchase dinners for the veterans as needed. One Veteran even put in his request for pizza for one of their movie nights.

The Veterans were also gifted with an abundance of household items for the kitchen as well as bath towel sets for each Veteran. Robin said it's the little things that are really appreciated by our Veterans, and it touched her to watch each Veteran's appreciation as they picked out their bath towel set. One of our Brandon members made an anonymous donation of a case of cat food and container of treats. One of the Liberty Manor Veterans, while struggling with cancer, has adopted a stray cat which the house has adopted. This Veteran was brought close to tears at the thoughtfulness of this gesture. Sharon said that "our hearts were full."

A total of \$1,364 from the awarded Spotlight Grant was put to good use during this Patrick Day visit with Liberty Manor. Our Lodge is proud to be able to make a positive difference for our Veterans and we are grateful to our Brandon Grant Coordinator, SWCD VP Hammersla for her diligent work applying for the Elk's generous grants. While we Elks don't do this for recognition, CEO Connie Lindsay did present the Lodge a Certificate of Appreciation which was much appreciated.