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**Michael Bloss**  
**State President's Message**

It has been a long and enjoyable journey to this point in my career in Elkdom. I have met many people who have helped me in countless ways to grow as a leader and grow as a person.

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Many people have asked me why in the world I would want to do this. Well, there are several reasons. As a person who does not seek out the limelight, I do think I'm a good leader. Part of my development as a leader has been as a result of my experiences in Elkdom. Having been an Officer since the age of 23 and working through the many positions I have held, I have learned so much about myself and dealing with people, how to get things accomplished, team work, even public speaking. You name it. I have had a very rewarding career at the Department of Labor and done very well based on my skills and training. But my success is based more on my leadership ability and willingness to work with people than knowledge or technical skill, much of which can be attributed to my experiences in Elkdom. I think I can continue to help our Order in the role as President and then as a Member of the Advisory Board. And I am approaching this year as an opportunity to give back to our Organization that has given me

I would like to take a few minutes to introduce my Program for the year. The Order is having success despite the decline in Membership. Our charitable Programs and fund-raising continue to improve based on per capita measures. The totals are not what they once were due to our lower Membership rolls. The bottom line is: We know what to do and how to do it. The trick is now to engage more people and encourage them to join our ranks. In my eyes, our most critical issues lie with our Subordinate Lodges that are struggling on several different levels. If Lodges continue to have difficulty in attracting quality Members and meeting their financial obligations, whatever success we enjoy today could end abruptly. How do we turn the tide? The themes of the past are all still true: Hard work; New Members; Keep the Members we have; All things that we've been working on for years, but there has been no real broad based improvement. I would like us to focus on a somewhat different approach:

Make a commitment to meet our problems head on; Look at what makes Lodges successful; Keep a positive attitude and embrace the need to make changes.

My Solgan this year is "Meeting the Challenge". The challenge is - the need for each Lodge to identify and then address issues at the grass roots level and commit to the changes necessary to attract new, enthusiastic Members. We need to develop a culture of continuous improvement that will foster the positive practices of critically evaluating what we do and why we do it, that will identify actions every Lodge can take to make improvements.

My Symbol for the year is the triangle depicting the three areas that in my opinion, make any Lodge successful: Strong leaders; Community involvement; Lodge activity.

These three aspects of Elkdom feed off each other and are required in equal measure to be successful, hence the image of the triangle. I hope each of you will wear my pin this year and think about what it means each time you look at it. I will speak more about this tomorrow night.

Over the past several years our First Ladies have also had a message that they have promoted during the year. Pat's message is in response to an experience our family went through almost eighteen years ago. In 1992, Pat began to feel poorly and went to several doctors, and after a few weeks it was determined that her liver was failing - but no one could tell us why. After two weeks in the hospital in Schenectady, we were told she would need a liver transplant. Something we knew almost nothing about. So, we went to New York City and a week later Pat received a new liver. We were very lucky. It sounds funny now to hear that, but it was very true:

Pat was not sick for very long; She was in otherwise good general health; We were close to home, and had family in the New York City area; Great doctors; Spectacular result; All medical expenses covered by

insurance.

Many people across our Country are very ill and have been for a long time. They live at home waiting for the phone call that could come at anytime, but often does not. They incur great expenses in travel and Lodging an medical expenses, and due to the shortage of available organs, seventeen people die every day waiting for the gift of life.

In keeping with our theme of giving back, we're beginning an Organ Donor Awareness Campaign. Pat's pin is the National Donor Awareness Pin with a ribbon that bears her name and the Website where we can all register as an Organ Donor.

Hundreds of people die each year waiting for organ transplants because no Donor can be found. Let's help these potential recipients "Meet their Challenge" by considering becoming a registered Organ Donor.

Speaking of Challenges, our outgoing State President offered a challenge that I accepted at his homecoming celebration a month ago. Dave and Penny raised over \$5,000 for the State Major Project during his year. Our goal is to meet and exceed this impressive total. As I make my rounds this weekend and throughout the coming months, I will be accepting donations when I sign cards or distribute pins. I won't ask, but your generosity would be greatly appreciated. The first effort in this regard started with our Demonstration. All the participants who have the black shirts and sunglasses all made a \$5.00 donation to Major Projects. Thank you all for your participation. Let's all get behind this fund-raising effort and make this a banner year for our Primary Program that truly helps many of the most unfortunate members of our Communities.

Thank you all for the good wishes. Pat and I look forward to visiting with all of you this coming year.

On August 4, 2010, we learned that James Barrie, Past State President of East District passed away. He was a member of Patchogue Lodge #1323. Jim Barrie became a Member of Patchogue Lodge on September 15, 1960. He advanced through the Chairs and was elected Exalted Ruler in 1984. The following year he was elected Secretary of the Lodge, a position he held for twelve years. Recognized for his leadership abilities, in 1990 he was appointed by then Grand Exalted Ruler James Damon to serve as District Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler for the East District. He's also served the New York State Elks Association as Chairman for Elks Memorial Sunday, Community Activities and Drug Awareness.

To those who have worked with him in the Order of Elks, knew how much effort he put into his Lodge, the District and the State Association.

Jim was a man of many talents who was prepared to devote all of them to the promotion of the programs of our Order. He lead our State Association to greater prestige and accomplishments.

**Elks Care Elks Share**