

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Forty Years of Healthcare Donations for the Ruby Valley from the Virginia City Elks Lodge**

By Debra McNeill

Sheridan, Montana – The Virginia Elks Lodge #390 recently donated \$2,000 to the Ruby Valley Hospital for the purchase of a Thermal Angel blood warmer, the latest in a 40 year history of donations to benefit the healthcare needs of the Ruby Valley community. The donation was presented to Ruby Valley Hospital Trustee, Carol Braach, and Nurse Donna Stump by long-time Elks Lodge member, John Benedict. John Benedict is one of the many members who have helped distribute the Elks' donations throughout the past four decades and he has enjoyed being an active participant in the Lodge's tradition of supporting local communities.

In the 1970's, the Montana State Elks Association created a statewide project to support the small hospitals of Montana. One of the Virginia City Elks Lodge's earliest donations to the Ruby Valley Hospital under this initiative was \$3,000 for a portable EKG Cardiac Monitor. That donation was presented in 1979 by Exalted Ruler John Benedict to Nurses Carol Braach and Helen Stone. "We have truly appreciated all the support the Elks Lodge has given to the Ruby Valley Hospital for life saving equipment for all these years," says Trustee Braach, who retired from nursing in 1998 and joined the board of trustees in 2008. The blood warmer is used in emergency situations to prevent hypothermia and mitigate shock.

To obtain the donation from the Elks Lodge, the Ruby Valley Hospital had to apply for a precise medical equipment need. "The Elks would let us know when we could expect a donation. We needed to apply and specifically tell them what we needed and why. There's always a need," says Braach. "The hospital keeps a running list of what is needed most."

The typical donation from the Elks Lodge for medical equipment is \$1,000 to \$3,000. John Benedict estimates that total donations to the Ruby Valley Hospital and the Madison Valley Medical Center total about \$80,000 over the past 40 years. The donations from the Elks Lodge have allowed the Ruby Valley Hospital to purchase a variety of life saving devices such as cardiac monitors and defibrillators, IV equipment and lab equipment.

To support its donation activities, the Elks Lodge regularly sponsors dinners and dances at their facility in Virginia City. "We used to also have huge crab feeds, prime rib dinners and Rocky Mountain oyster fests to raise funds but we had to pull back on these events because we don't have enough young members," says Benedict. "Our purpose is to help veterans, children and communities and we would like to do more."

In addition to the donation to the Ruby Valley Hospital this year, the Elks Lodge has given \$1,000 for the Virginia City Ice Rink and \$1,000 to build dugouts at the Virginia City ball field. “We have some extra funds for another donation this year,” says Benedict. “Local charitable organizations can apply to the Elks for a donation to a specified project.” Applications can be sent to The Virginia City Elks Lodge #390, P.O. Box 147, Virginia City, Montana 59755.

Besides his nearly lifelong membership with the Elks, Benedict has served on the Ruby Valley Hospital’s Board of Trustees since 2008 and was recently appointed as a member of the Virginia City Preservation Alliance. He also served the Ruby Valley community in a wide variety of volunteer positions including EMT, the fire department, the Ruby Valley Hospital Foundation, the church vestry and city council. With his wife, Micki, John has been the producer of the Virginia City Players for thirteen seasons. “I’ve enjoyed a great variety of volunteer and community activities over the years, but I’ve always been an Elk!” says Benedict.

If you would like more information about the Elks Lodge, visit [www.elkmt.com](http://www.elkmt.com) or call (406) 843-5464.

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John Benedict of the Virginia City Elks Lodge #390 presents a donation for the purchase