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Elks member helps kids

By **Sametta M. Thompson** STAFF WRITER March 20, 2008

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If you ask Bob Santoro to tell you what it means to be a part of Middletown Elks Post 2179, the 47-year-old father of three will proudly rattle off a list of answers.

"It's to help out the kids," said Santoro, a township resident for 35 years. "I like to do anything that will make somebody feel better

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that's in an unfortunate situation — just down on their luck."

Santoro has been an active member of the Elks for five years. It's an organization he holds near and dear to his heart.

"I know what it was like when I was younger and I didn't have the opportunity to do anything," he

said. "But now that I have a little bit of opportunity, I try to give back."

Santoro is chairman of the veterans committee.

"We try to reach out to the veterans of Middletown," he said, and "let them know we still care about what goes on with them, even though they may be restricted to a wheelchair or in a home where nobody comes to visit them anymore."

He enjoys taking part in the Poker Run, an annual fund-raising event put on by the Elks for special-needs children in the township.

"I'm just proud to be associated with a bunch of good people," he said of his fellow Elks. "It's not just me. It's everybody. I am proud to stand next to these people, shoulder to shoulder, when we do things. Everyone of us gives in a different way, but we're all aiming for the same goal."

The more time he spends with the group, the more good Santoro sees, he said.

"You wouldn't believe what they do there," he said.



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The main thing that keeps him going, he said, is the satisfaction of seeing people's faces.

"When you do something for somebody and they look back at you and they really appreciate what you're trying to do for them. That's enough satisfaction for me."

When Santoro is not dedicating his time helping others in the community, he works long hours at his full-time job on a dock. But, he said, being a part of the Elks also serves as a place of relaxation.

"I spend sometimes 80 hours a week here (at work). It's good to know I can go some place and unwind and laugh a little and do something good, too, at the same time. This is what brotherly love is all about."

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