The Educational Loan Fund: ELFin Magic

There is ELFin Magic! Not the cookie kind - but P.E.O. ELFin Magic. ELFin Magic is located where P.E.O.s are found. Most often it is tucked in the heart of a P.E.O. ready to be shared when a woman in need of some Magic in her life is found. Local chapters can share this Magic with sisters or with other women in the community. ELFin Magic abounds; just look around.

The 'Moments of ELFin Magic' that follow are designed to be used during a local chapter meeting by the chapter EDUCATIONAL LOAN FUND chairman when the chapter president calls for committee reports. Since each local chapter is the source of our Magic, the chairman might want to have a Magic wand to wave or a blue ELF hat to put on when the report is given to help focus the chapter's attention. A “MOMENT” has not been included for each meeting; as each of you have many creative ideas to share and ELF stories to tell.

Additional programs are available from local chapter files (please remember to update information before giving to chapter) and from the state chapter ELF chairman.

RESOURCES FOR LOCAL CHAPTER CHAIRMEN

- Local Chapter Chairman's notebook or file (Chapter records and history)
- P.E.O. RECORD (POLICES AND PROCEDURES, May/June issue; regular articles)
- PROCEEDINGS of International and State Conventions (kept in President's Box)
- CONSTITUTION and Bylaws of the P.E.O. Sisterhood (Bylaws: Article VII)
- OUT OF THE HEART, by Stella Clapp (see Index)

MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #1:
Our Founders emphasized the value of education from the very beginning of P.E.O. The first project was the Educational Fund, which was begun with surplus funds from P.E.O. Day at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904. A total of $658.88 was turned over to Supreme Grand Chapter with the suggestion that the money be used as a memorial to the P.E.O. Founders. Delegates at the 1905 convention voted to increase the amount to $800, and chapter and individual gifts enlarged the fund to $2,000 by 1907. At the convention of Supreme Grand Chapter in 1907, it was suggested that the money be used for either 1) a printing plant, 2) scholarships (or loans), or 3) a P.E.O. home. After much discussion, the convention voted to have this memorial fund be loaned for educational purposes, and to call it the Educational Fund.

MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #2:
The first loan, for $300, was made in May, 1908, to a student attending Iowa State Normal School to fulfill requirements for her degree. Thirteen other loans were made during the 1907-09 biennium. The Educational Loan fund “caught the imagination of P.E.O.s possibly because of its
purpose: Helping to educate worthy young women, that they might help themselves.” (Out of the Heart, p. 210) Gifts and bequests continue to be made to the Educational Loan Fund. These gifts are perpetual, as the money can be used over again as loan recipients repay the loans they have been given. Since the beginning of the Educational Loan Fund in 1907, more than $69,000,000 has been loaned to over 35,000 women. The growth of this great project is evident in this striking comparison: 14 loans were approved in the 1907-09 biennium. From April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004, Oregon Chapters sponsored 18 women for ELF loans totaling $93,000.

MOMENT OF ELFIn MAGIC #3
The first board of trustees was appointed in 1909. Presently a five-member board, each serving a five-year term, administers the P.E.O. Educational Loan Fund. The current board members are listed on the front inside page of the RECORD. The three newest trustees are reviewing trustees and alternate review of completed files. The chairman and vice chairman are approving trustees and alternate approval of files and other duties. Each of the trustees takes her task seriously because this is your money that is being administered. The five-member office staff in Des Moines is hard working dedicated to the continued success of the “Loan Fund with a Heart.” The staff members compile files from applicants and chapters, as well as expediting action on loan requests.

MOMENT OF ELFIn MAGIC #4
The loan default rate for the Educational Loan Fund is less than 1%. The trustees and local chapters should be proud of this figure. Through a knowledge of applicants recommended and continued support as they progress toward completion of their course of study, local chapters make that low default rate a continued reality. Changes in the amount of the loan, repayment period, interest rate and policies have occurred over our 96-year history. We are pleased now to have a maximum loan of $9000, a repayment period of 6 years from the date of the loan and an interest rate of 2%.

MOMENT OF ELFIn MAGIC #5:
Local chapters are very important links to applicants from the time the chapter decides to look for an applicant until the applicant has repaid her loan. Chapter II, Kansas’ Educational Loan Fund Chairman, Christie Thurlow said it like this: “Our chapter’s involvement with xxxxx began with one of our members, who looked out beyond her own self, family, and circumstances to find this worthwhile person earnestly struggling to achieve her goal. With the true meaning of P.E.O. in mind, our member told xxxxx of P.E.O. and the ways P.E.O. helps women. Now, our chapter, having heard of xxxxx’s determination and purpose are behind her and desire to help her achieve her goal. Our chapter recognizes the value of moral support and has several activities in mind to let xxxxx know we are here to help her in any way we can. Regular cards and phone calls as well as goodie baskets during finals week will let our members know best how to help xxxxx and will also allow us to be enriched having played a part in the success of another human being.

MOMENT OF ELFIn MAGIC #6
Early applicants to the Educational Loan Fund were mainly young women working toward their bachelor’s degree in education. Today applicants are interested in a wide range of subjects and
specialties from the performing and therapeutic arts; business and law, both domestic and international; education from preschool to university professor; health professions including medical doctors of all specialties, dental hygienist, dentists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, pharmacist, and veterinary medicine; human services including psychology; social work; counseling and nutrition; graphic arts; design; philosophy; political science; religion; languages; the sciences from anthropology to computer science to engineering to industrial hygiene and more. Of all applicants from 7/1/91 – 6/30/92, 12% were P.E.O.s and 32% were relatives of P. E. O.s. (Check with the current second vice president of Oregon State Chapter for updates)

MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #7
(Chapter chairman, please take some time and review your chapter history with Educational Loan Fund. A few ideas are included for your use, but let your creative talents be your guide.) How has your chapter participated in the Educational Loan Fund? If you are a member of an older or larger chapter who has been very active, you may wish to highlight the most recent applicants. If your chapter has never sponsored a student, you may wish to share ways to sponsor a student. Look around you. Are there sisters, family members, friends or acquaintances that need a wave of the ELFin Magic wand in their lives?

MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #8:
Applicants share their stories both through the articles in the RECORD and through letters of thank you. Their state chairman, Breta Hutst, forwarded two letters from chapters in Nebraska. “Going to school this year will be much easier in so many ways. One of the biggest is the fact that I will not have the money worries of last year, thanks to the generosity of the P.E.O. organization. I only hope that you realize how much this money has meant to me and my family in helping us to fulfill our dream and family goal. I hope to be able to help others achieve their goals someday also.” And from a second letter, “I would just like to close by saying that because of the P.E.O. Sisterhood I am financially able to reach my goal. Your support for me not only financially and scholastically but also personally has been wonderful and I am very grateful!”

MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #9
Current policies for Educational Loan Fund loans: The maximum loan amount is $9000, which may be drawn in one year by a senior, a graduate student, or a student who already has a bachelor's degree but is returning for more undergraduate study or certification. Other students may receive up to $4500 in one year. To be eligible for a loan, a student must be within two years of completing her course of study. Current interest is 4%, which is paid annually on the unpaid balance of the loan. This interest covers administrative costs of operating the loan program; all gifts and bequests to the Educational Loan Fund are used for loans. A loan is due to be repaid six years after being granted. Full policy information is printed in the May/June RECORD.

MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #10:
Selecting an Educational Loan Fund applicant: A local chapter must sponsor an applicant for a loan. The procedure is as follows: a chapter learns of a woman needing financial assistance to
reach her educational goals. The chapter committee interviews her and recommends her to the chapter, which then votes to sponsor her (the number of votes must be entered on the Chapter Recommendation Form). The Chapter Recommendation Form and a letter of recommendation are sent to the P.E.O. Executive Office in Des Moines, after which an application and other forms are mailed to the applicant. Chapter members can offer help to applicants in completing forms. After the application and other forms are completed and returned to the ELF office in Des Moines, the entire packet is forwarded to the trustees. After review and approval, the packet is returned to the office in Des Moines and the loan is forwarded to the student.

**MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #11:**
Corrine Hoffart, Montana State ELF Committee Chairman in 1990-1991, shared some information about ELF in an ELFin Magic way in a recent newsletter: "ELF goes round like the world. It is a revolving loan fund--repaid loans benefit other needy and deserving women! $10,962,446 committed in loans presently; 76.07% fund usage.” “If you find a candidate, HANDLE WITH CARE - tender loving CARE, that is - displayed by keeping in touch and by giving HELP with forms and answers to questions.” “THINK BLUE - P.E.O. ELF BLUE! It is the symbol of HOPE. HOPE it has brought to more than 35,000 women since established in 1907.” “The Educational Loan Fund loans are intended for woman of all races, creeds, or ethnic backgrounds if the citizenship requirement is met. A loan with 4% interest is an incredible aid to women of little means; realize, however, that poverty is not required of an applicant. Remember, too, P.E.O. s and relatives are eligible applicants.”

**MOMENT OF ELFin MAGIC #12:**
As a trustee, the time that I spend in the world of ELFin MAGIC is extremely rewarding. The applicants may not know my name; the chapters may not know my name; but there is definitely an honor and true sense of service to each that encompasses all tasks of a trustee.

I strongly urge you to look around and see the potential for our ELFin MAGIC in the smile or tears of someone close to you. If you are unable to find an applicant now, send a gift to the Educational Loan Fund in honor or memory of that special ELF in your life. As we all know, you can get bogged down but look up and see the woman who needs the joy of our support. You are the Magic in Educational Loan Fund! You are the sparkle in the eyes of the ELF! I challenge each of you to get involved and be a part of the ELFin MAGIC!