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CALIFORNIA

# FREEMASON



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## Hallway Hero

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Principal Jim Dierke

*brings hope back to public education*

James Dierke gives Visitacion Valley  
Middle School

*and the surrounding community*

a sense  
of hope

that hasn't existed  
there for many years.

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# 12 FEATURE

## *Hallway Hero*

Since the first apprentice, Masons have looked after the education of young people. Today, Visitation Valley Middle School Principal James Dierke looks after hundreds of them. Dierke – a National Principal of the Year – battles everyday to provide a safe and inspiring place for his students to learn, even in the face of budget cuts and neighborhood violence. Here’s a look at how he helps his students succeed, and how California Masonry’s new education initiative can help.



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CALIFORNIA  
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# EXECUTIVE MESSAGE

William J. Bray III, Grand Master



## *Picking Up Where Charles Adams left off*

In 1920 California's public schools were in crisis, struggling to survive the teacher shortages brought on by World War I. California Masons, led by Charles Albert Adams, helped lead the way out of it. We insisted on putting the crisis front and center in the public's attention with Public Schools Week. Today, we continue that tradition with Public Schools Month every April.

Why the long history of championing public education? As Masons, we value knowledge, and the freedom that comes with it. We value equal access to education, for every child, in every neighborhood. We helped create our nation's democracy, and we know that sustaining it depends on a strong system of public education. Beyond that, we are fathers, grandfathers, uncles, leaders of youth organizations. This is personal.

In 2011 our schools are in crisis again, especially here in California. California was once the No. 1 state in the country in per pupil spending; now it is among the bottom ten. Our education budget has been slashed repeatedly over the past years, with state and federal dollars redirected to other causes.

Once again, we Masons must rise to the occasion, and help find a solution. No matter what challenges California faces, we can insist that our public schools remain a priority in our lodges and communities.

This issue of California Freemason is dedicated to the California Masons who already lead the charge. Even though we draw special attention to the cause with Public Schools Month in April, these members and lodges support public schools every day of every month. Members give their time and resources to volunteer with students. Brothers who are principals and administrators work on the legislative end to steer public schools to a brighter future. Lodges have started partnerships with their local schools, helping with fundraisers, or scholarship dollars, or manpower to renovate a playground or stuff envelopes.

As a fraternity, we're about to do more. The Masons of California strategic plan for 2010-2015 makes it a priority to develop a unified approach to public schools support. On the next page, you'll read about the California Masonic Foundation's three-part plan to help our schools, which involves all of us. In 1920, our schools were in trouble, and we stepped up. They're in a crisis again, and we won't let them down.

This is our chance to continue what Charles Albert Adams started in 1920. Once again, it's our chance to make a profound difference in public education. ♦

### WEB EXTRA

*Masonry and Public Schools: Throughout history, Masons have been connected to education. Read more about this partnership in the online edition of California Freemason magazine.*



# CHANGING MORE LIVES MORE OFTEN

## A STRATEGY TO MAKE A PROFOUND DIFFERENCE FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

by Heather Boerner

Since the Middle Ages, when operative Masonry relied on a system of apprenticeship, the fraternity has made education a priority. Today, Masonry's attention has widened from individual apprentices to millions of public schools students. In the Golden State, the California Masonic Foundation (CMF) is turning to a new plan of statewide support for public schools.

"We want to lead the way, to be a model for how a statewide organization can step forward and support public education," says Art Weiss, CMF president.

Through extensive conversations with experts, educators, and administrators, CMF has come up with a three-part plan targeting some of the most critical problems in California schools: elementary-age reading, eighth grade algebra, and pathways to higher education for students who might not otherwise go to college.

### **1. Reading fundamentals**

Research shows that if a student leaves third grade without the ability to read at grade level, he has a one in ten chance of ever catching up. There's a good reason for that, says Terry Bergeson, executive director of the San Francisco Schools Alliance and former superintendent of schools for the state of Washington.

"The early years of literacy form the most important foundation, the building blocks for kids' ability to learn for a lifetime," she says. "The little guys in kindergarten and first and second grade are learning to read. But then, in third grade, they start reading to learn. It's a big shift – they go from learning to read to reading about science and social studies in third grade. If haven't gotten the core literacy skills, they're struggling forever."

What's more, reading helps a student's conceptual understanding of all subjects; some studies have even found that students who read at grade level by the third grade perform better at higher-level math in later years.

To help children as early as possible, the CMF campaign will focus on kindergarten and first grade reading, says Doug Ismail, CMF executive vice president.

"Developing a love of reading is important early on," Ismail says. "Unfortunately, in most households where kids historically don't read at grade level, there are no books. They have no access to reading."

The campaign will hinge on members and lodges sharing their love of reading with young learners. CMF is encouraging lodges to participate any way they can: volunteer at your local school; invite children to read to you; open your lodges as a drop-off center for donated books or for book fairs.

*Continued next page*



“These are things every lodge can participate in, whether they have money to donate or not,” says Weiss. “And why not? We have this space. Let’s use it as a place where kids can get a leg up for their futures.”

## **2. Abstract algebra**

Students may think they’ll never use the math they learn in school, but research suggests otherwise. Algebra, for instance, isn’t about numbers as much as it’s about abstract thinking and critical problem-solving. Solving for  $x$  requires a different skill set than adding or subtracting.

“It’s important to understand the difference between arithmetic and mathematics,” says Weiss. “Kids need to be able to understand abstract concepts to succeed down the road.”

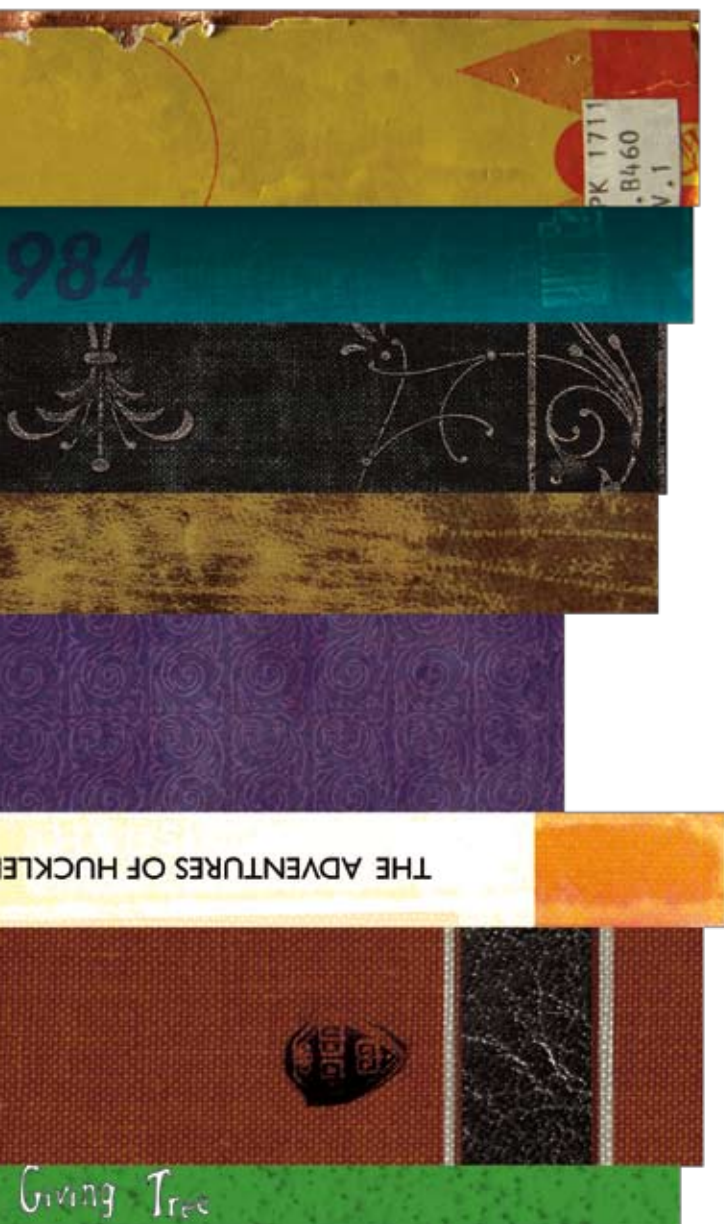
It’s also important for practical reasons, says Bergeson. “Students need a solid foundation in math by ninth grade at the latest in order to access most careers in the work world – not just for today’s world, but where we’re going in the future in terms of competing with other nations,” she says.

Right now, only half of all middle school students reach eighth grade prepared to take algebra. At the same time, eighth grade math teachers are only required to have a general teaching credential. That could be a problem, since teaching algebra requires specialized training. Add the fact that the California Board of Education recently adopted national standards that call for middle school algebra, and the pressure’s on.

The solution to such a broad challenge is bound to be complex. The Masons are gathering statewide education leaders to jump-start the process.

“If we’re going to be involved in public education, we need to be involved in the areas experts truly see as the problem,” says Weiss. “In the past, we’ve figured out what the problem was on our own and tried to convince others of it. This time we’re taking a different approach.”

CMF is working with thought leaders in education at the state Department of Education, at the California State University





system – where 70 percent of the state’s teachers are educated – and with Masons who work in the field.

“We can play a role in bringing people together to come up with a solution,” Weiss says.

As one of those thought leaders, Bergeson thinks the strategy is on point – and that the Masons are the right group for the job.

“If there’s any organization that has the core values of this country in mind and the support of public schools in mind, it’s the Masons,” Bergeson says. “I’m so happy that Masons state-wide have made K-12 education their top priority. I’m ecstatic.”

“There are many things people in education label as the most important areas for improvement,” she adds, “but benchmark literacy and the tipping point of middle school math are two of the top priorities.”

### **3. Investing in success**

The hard truth is that even students who read at grade level and who think critically sometimes fall through the cracks. To help, CMF will direct a portion of its nearly \$1 million scholarship fund to those students.

A new scholarship, called the Investment in Success scholarship, will be awarded to more than a dozen students in the pilot cities of San Francisco, Pasadena, and San Diego this year. The scholarship targets students who show promise, but aren’t able to compete academically for most scholarships. For these young people, college is not a foregone conclusion.

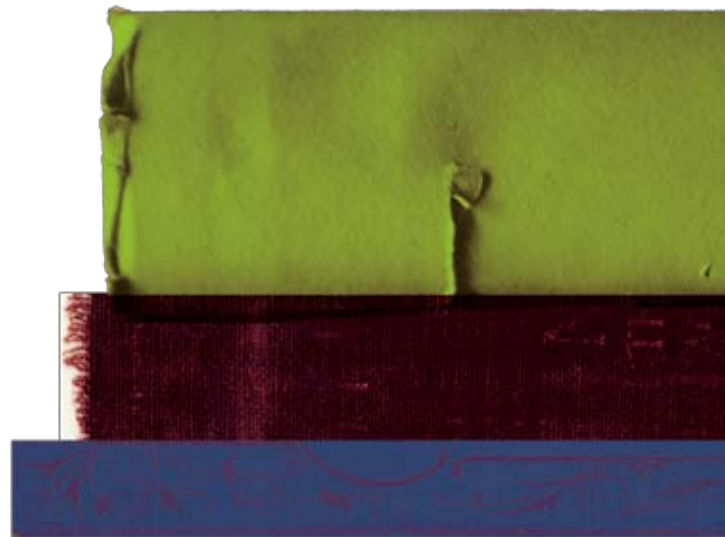
“We are asking teachers to point out kids about whom they might say, ‘You know what? This kid is not one of my high fliers. But he’d be the first in his family to go to college. He’s working a job, taking care of his siblings. I’d bet on this kid,’” says Weiss. “That’s the kid who needs someone out there to say, ‘I believe in you.’ I want us to be that someone. It’s very consistent with Masonic values.”

The scholarship will ask students to start at community college. If, after two years, they show promise and passion, CMF will pay a portion of their education at a four-year university. For \$7,000, says Ismail, CMF has the potential to bankroll the

education of one college student – who, otherwise, might never have made it to college.

Weiss recalls one such student, who received a \$1,500 scholarship last year. At the scholarship ceremony, half of his 20 family members were crying in joy.

“That’s going to change this kid’s life,” Weiss says. “That’s what we’re aiming for. Changing more lives more often. The litmus test for everything we do in this plan is: Will this make a profound difference in the lives of kids?” ♦



# TURNING POINT

## THE NEED FOR PRIVATE SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

by *Cason Lane*

The recent economic crisis has taken its toll on public education, especially in California. Due to cuts in funding, public schools have fewer teachers and counselors, larger class sizes, and shorter school years.

Even more, projections show that one-third of the state's teaching workforce will retire in the next 10 years. That contributes to a dwindling pipeline of teachers amid increasing student enrollment.

It all amounts to a "major disinvestment in public education" in recent years, according to Jack O'Connell, former superintendent of public instruction in the California Department of Education. He says that solving California's public education challenges doesn't rest with government alone.

"Private support is crucial," O'Connell says. "Improving our educational delivery system requires the support of the entire community."

Of course, California Masons have long provided some of that support – through scholarships, teacher recognition, and other programs to help improve the quality of public education. Now Masons are stepping forward again, making public education a key philanthropic priority in the five-year strategic plan.

## ***California's greatest challenges***

O'Connell says private support can help California's public education system overcome three major challenges:

### FUNDING

Ninety percent of California's children are enrolled in public schools, O'Connell explains, but unlike other states' schools that derive a high percentage of funding from local communities, California schools receive more than 80 percent of their funding from the state. He adds that staff salaries and benefits account for roughly 90 percent of the budget, which leaves very little room for additional spending.

### THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

In California, there is a wide disparity between successful students and struggling students who are minorities, English learners, of low-income families, or members of special education groups.

"One in four children in California comes to school to learn English," O'Connell says. "We need to find a way to close the learning gap for kids with disadvantages and to move all groups forward with similar success."

### DROPOUT RATE

O'Connell says that one in five California students drops out of school without graduating.

"This problem impacts all of us," he says. "Those who drop out often contribute less and cost more by using more public services and having a higher rate of incarceration."

Notably, the impact of education in California reaches beyond the state's borders. As the world's eighth-largest economy, California plays an important role in America's gross domestic product by graduating skilled students who can make a meaningful contribution.

"As a state, we need to attract businesses to locate here," adds O'Connell. "Businesses need well-educated workforces with critical thinkers, creative innovators, and problem solvers. It all begins with a strong public education system."



### ***Progress with private support***

Despite the challenges, O'Connell notes that California's public schools are not failing. They've even made measurable improvements, as student test scores are up for eight years in a row, and the achievement gap is narrowing.

In addition, to better prepare high school graduates for college and careers, California public schools have significantly increased the number of career classes and technology classes that meet college entrance requirements – from 288 in 2003 to more than 8,000 today, O'Connell says.

"Many of these improvements are partially attributable to private support," O'Connell says.

Indeed, in California and across the nation, foundations, corporations, and other private funding sources are stepping up their efforts to help schools bridge gaps in budget and student achievement. In a recent study of nearly 2,800 corporations conducted by the University of California Survey Research Center, 33 percent cited education as their highest philanthropic priority, according to *The Fiscal Times*. This philanthropy comes in the form of scholarships, school leadership development, charter schools, technology, efficiency programs to free up money for classrooms, and many other initiatives.

"This type of private sector involvement enriches public education," O'Connell says. "Our goal is to provide rigorous learning, relevant skills, and strong community relationships."

One of those relationships is the Masons of California. O'Connell invites Masons and other community members to visit public schools, share ideas about public education, give feedback about necessary skills, and otherwise share their vision for improvement.

"We greatly appreciate the Freemasons' past support and look forward to working together in the future," O'Connell says. "There is a great opportunity to help the California public school system at a local level." ♦

## *By the Numbers*

FACTS AND FIGURES ON CALIFORNIA'S PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

**6.2 million:** K-12 students enrolled in more than 9,900 public schools during the 2008-9 school year.

**21.5 percent:** California's dropout rate for the 2008-9 school year. When broken down by race, the dropout rate jumps to nearly 27 percent and 37 percent for Hispanics and African-Americans, respectively.

**About 70 percent:** High school seniors who graduated in 2009, an increase of 1.6 percent from the previous school year.

**21-to-1:** Average student-to-teacher ratio for K-12 classes.

**306,000:** Teachers employed by the state for the 2008-9 school year.

**1.47 million:** English-learning students enrolled in the 2008-9 school year.

**\$7,342:** Average per-pupil funding for the 2010-11 school year.

Sources: *The California Department of Education* ([cde.ca.gov/ds](http://cde.ca.gov/ds)) and the *Education Data Partnership* ([ed-data.org](http://ed-data.org))



*Make a profound difference for public education*

# FACES OF MASONRY

## MEET MICHAEL GEORGE MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL MASON SINCE 1986

*by Laura Normand*



When Michael George became principal of William Howard Taft Middle School in San Diego – where he'd been a student some 50 years earlier – he was greeted with sobering news: the school board was thinking of closing the school.

That was four years ago. Today, the school board is one of Taft's biggest supporters. The school is just 24 points away from an Academic Performance Index of 800, which would make it one of California's top-performing schools.

A member of San Diego Lodge No. 35, he cherishes the values of the fraternity, and how they intersect with his work as an educator.

### ***In his own words:***

#### AS A STUDENT

I was a kid in the middle, told by my high school counselor that I wouldn't go to college. There are so many kids like me who will go to college, but need support. I was lucky to have a lot of good teachers.

#### THE PATH TO PRINCIPAL

I got my masters degree in special education, partly because my sister had serious learning disabilities, and I remember the education she didn't receive. After 10 years teaching I was burnt out and left to build a successful construction business. After nine years, I realized I missed education and came back.

#### FAVORITE MASONIC MEMORY

I completed my degrees in three months, thanks to Brother Joe Freidman, the most demanding coach at lodge. He'd call me and another two candidates at 6 a.m. to practice. After our second degree, he was in a serious accident and moved to a nursing home. The three of us would visit him at the home, where he coached us through the third degree. ✧

# LET US COUNT THE WAYS

## FACEBOOK FANS REPORT ON LODGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS PROGRAMS

We asked our 7,000+ Facebook fans to tell us how their lodges make a difference for California schools.

From bikes to bluegrass, you counted the ways your lodges show students and teachers that Masons care.

Here's a sample.

### ***Joe Gregorius***

Volcano Lodge No. 56 holds a yearly Bikes for Books Program. The most improved readers in each grade, from all four schools in our district, win a new bike. We get the happiest readers around.

### ***Darvin Weston***

It is a joy to actively support schools and students with Student of the Year trophies, scholarships, and recognition of winning public school essayists. Students also participate in the annual commemoration of the signing of our U.S. Constitution.

### ***Karl Sandhoff***

Each year we recognize the two most improved students from each local high school and an outstanding teacher. Those students tend not to be the best performers, but those who brought themselves from adversity and the edge of failure to be successful students.

### ***LaFrance Bragg***

Last April, Heartland No. 576 honored students from 10 high schools and 35 middle schools.

### ***Dennis J. Brandt***

Temescal Palms No. 314 has had a 30-year relationship with the Corona-Norco Unified School District to honor students and staff! I've been the chair of the event for the past 30 years.

### ***Raymond Louison***

Huntington Beach No. 380 held a public schools night last April and we had 156 people attend from local middle schools. What a great night! Great event where HB Masons recognized and rewarded at-risk children for significantly improving their grades and conduct in school.

### ***Terry Fenske***

Victorville Lodge No. 634 hosted a Public Schools Day on April 24, 2010. We celebrated music in the schools. The theme was Bluegrass Music. ♦



Want to share how your lodge supports public schools? Visit the Masons of California on Facebook.



# THE CITADEL OF OUR SAFETY

## PUBLIC EDUCATION'S POWER TO UNITE

by John L. Cooper III, Junior Grand Warden

The power of Masonic ritual lies, in part, in the indelible imprint that it makes on our minds and hearts. Some ritual is so memorable that we seem never to forget it, because the imagery speaks to us in ways that touch us in our deepest being. And not all such ritual is, strictly speaking, “Masonic.” Some comes to us from sources that have been inspired by Freemasonry. Those of us who began our journey as members of the Order of DeMolay understand this well. Although the DeMolay ritual is very young by Masonic standards, it speaks to us across the years in a very special way.

When the officers of a DeMolay chapter are installed, the installing officer explains to them, and to all those present, something about the teachings of the Order of DeMolay. In a very real sense, the installation service (as DeMolay terms it) contains a summary of what Freemasons want these young men to know about the teachings of the order, and one image, in particular, has meant a great deal to me as a public school teacher.

### ***Source of freedom and security***

At an appropriate moment in the installation, the installing officer walks to the DeMolay altar in the center of the room, and says the following:

*From the station in the East, emblematic of the morning years of life, we place the school books on the Altar as a symbol of the intellectual liberty, without which there could be neither civil nor religious freedom. They are particularly emblematic of the great public school system of our country, the foundation of that universal enlightenment which is the crowning glory of our institutions. Devoted championship of our public schools is a cardinal teaching of the Order of DeMolay. We are unalterably opposed to the same building housing a school, a church and a seat of civil government. Civil, religious and intellectual liberty are the three sources of our country's greatness, but they must stand alone, upon separate foundations and under separate roofs. These books, representative of those being carried to and from the public schools by millions of boys and girls each day, are just as vital symbols of our liberties as the Holy Bible, which is the rule and guide of our faith, or the flag which protects the church, the school and the seat of civil power. We, therefore, place these books upon the Altar and I solemnly enjoin the members of this Chapter ever to stand unswervingly for the protection and perpetuity of the free public schools, the citadel of our safety and the source of the only real freedom possible in a government of the people, by the people and for the people.*

The phrase “the citadel of our safety” is a very powerful image in this collection of powerful images. We live in a world in which safety has become ever more important. Whether it is the sacrifices of those who stand guard over our freedoms on distant shores, or the “thin blue line” closer to home, we understand the need for safety in order to live our lives of peace and prosperity. These protections – and these protectors – are easy to understand. But what about the public schools as the “citadel” of our safety? What image does that create for us? And how do the public schools do that?

# *From the station in the East, emblematic of the morning years of life, we place the school books on the Altar as a symbol of the intellectual liberty, without which there could be neither civil nor religious freedom.*

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## ***The strength of a self-governing society***

First, what the image does not mean. As important as the educated mind is to Freemasonry (the Fellow Craft degree is all about this subject), that is not exactly a citadel. Secondly, it is not about schools. Freemasonry has no quarrel with private schools, and does not object to those who send their children to private schools if they wish to do so. And it is not an unthinking and uncritical support for anything and everything that goes on in our public schools. Freemasons can, and do, differ on how they think the public schools should be funded, how they should teach, and how they should respond to the challenges presented to them by a diverse society. The “citadel of our safety” has nothing to do with these issues. It is, instead, something else – something much more profound.

Freemasonry has long recognized that no society can long survive unless its citizens are capable of governing themselves. And it recognizes that no society can long survive unless its citizens share a common culture that binds them together in a common enterprise, regardless of political, social, and religious differences. For Freemasons, the public schools are the center of this commitment to the fostering of a common culture, which unites us into one family of Americans. The public schools are at the center of our community, and even when families choose to send their children to schools other than the public schools, those local public schools still symbolically stand for this unity, which must be accepted by all. The public schools are

the yardstick by which non-public schools are measured. No community in America is without its public school, and it stands for the safety of our unity as Americans in a way that no other institution can.

Our public schools are not the creature of any religious system, nor are they, strictly speaking, “government,” even if they are publicly funded and guided by elected representatives of the people. They are separate, as the DeMolay ritual says so well. Our schools symbolically stand on separate foundations, and under separate roofs. And Freemasonry stands for the “protection and perpetuity” of our public schools because as Freemasons we understand why this must be so in a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” ✧

*Editor’s note: Prior to becoming grand secretary in 1990, Dr. Cooper was a public school teacher for middle school and high school, an administrator, and superintendent of Escondido Union High School District in San Diego County.*





# Hallway Hero

Principal Jim Dierke brings hope

*back to public education*

By HEATHER BOERNER

The slim shoulders of 11- and 12-year-old kids bear a heavy weight at Visitacion Valley Middle School. When they first arrive through the light violet doors of the San Francisco school, half of these children can't read or do math at grade level. According to statistics, if they're still behind when they leave the school, they are less likely to complete high school, go to college, or be able to compete for high-paying jobs that would get them out of their neighborhoods.

But that's not all they face. About 50 incoming students each year come from homes where at least one parent is incarcerated. Many live in public housing, where they are not allowed to have dogs. If they live in the school's neighborhood (not all do, since San Francisco students choose schools through open enrollment), they've likely experienced trauma from the 41 murders that have taken place there in the last three years.

So you can understand that Master Mason and Principal James Dierke

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*Continued next page*



*“In my profession, you meet people on the level and act upon the square. You treat all people equally. Those are Masonic ideas.”*

JAMES DIERKE

takes his responsibilities to his students seriously. It's his job, he says firmly, not only to get these kids up to grade level in three years but also to give them the kind of well-rounded education he received as a San Francisco public school student 40 years ago, and to provide 21<sup>st</sup> century support that their parents probably never imagined.

### **Mason, Mentor, and Principal of the Year**

It seems to be working. Since Dierke took over the school 12 years ago, standardized testing scores have shot up from a low of 354 in 2004 to 660 today. In a single year, they rose by 40 points – an unheard-of increase. The suspension rate has dropped by 95 percent and daily attendance is up to 98 percent. Of the 100 students who graduated from Visitacion Valley last year, 12 were accepted to San Francisco's prestigious and academically rigorous Lowell High School. Another two got scholarships to the private St. Ignatius Preparatory High School. And two more got scholarships to the private Sacred Heart Cathedral Preparatory School.

What's more, Dierke's students get experiences that many urban children never have. Trips to Sacramento and around San

Francisco – events other kids might take for granted – show his kids life beyond their neighborhoods and housing complexes.

These extraordinary accomplishments register on a national scale. In 2008 Metlife and the National Association of Secondary School Principals named Dierke National Middle Level Principal of the Year – a prestigious award that's presented to just one educator each year. In a statement to the press, the organization's executive director said that Dierke gave Visitacion Valley Middle School and the surrounding community “a sense of hope that hadn't existed there for many years. He has put his heart and soul into making sure his students feel safe and secure in their school building and has developed a school climate that nurtures academic excellence.”

Dierke downplays the recognition. All he sees is a man acting out the values he learned from the men and the Masons who came before him.

“In my profession, you meet people on the level and act upon the square. You treat all people equally. Those are Masonic ideas,” says Dierke, past master of Phoenix Lodge No. 144 and member of Mission Lodge No. 169. “But now the question becomes, how do you help people in the very competitive and complex society we live in?”

### **Education on the level**

The answer is multiple. One piece is the work Dierke and other California Masons do to bring Masonic values to life for students. But another piece – and a key one, says Dierke – is the new plan by the California Masonic Foundation (CMF) to improve schools. Masons like Dierke around the state, along with officials from the state Department of Education and the







SINCE DIERKE TOOK OVER, DAILY ATTENDANCE HAS INCREASED BY 98 PERCENT, TEST SCORES ARE UP, AND GRADUATES EARN SPOTS IN SAN FRANCISCO'S TOP HIGH SCHOOLS. FOR MANY STUDENTS, VISITACION VALLEY REPRESENTS A SAFE HAVEN.

California State University system, are collaborating with CMF leadership to bring the Masonic spirit of service into schools.

“This initiative is part of our heritage as Masons,” says Dierke. “You have to have a literate population to have a democracy and make it work. The Masons very much supported that. This is just getting back to that foundation.”

Indeed, going back as far as George Washington, who left money in his will for a “free school” for orphans, Masons have had a hand in public education in this country. In the 1800s, Masons were founding Masonic colleges, mostly in the south, for farmers and other men who were unlikely to receive an education otherwise.

“It used to be that education was limited to the wealthy and the clergy,” explains Doug Ismail, CMF executive vice president.

“We see public education as a given, but back then, it was a fairly novel concept. Why would a farmer need an education?”

By the time California was founded, Masons were shaping the state’s education system. Brother John Swett, the state’s first superintendent of education, is credited with ensuring that parents were not charged for their children’s schooling. He also increased teachers’ salaries, made sure more communities built and improved their schoolhouses, and lengthened the school year.

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*Continued next page*



So by the 1950s, when a young Jim Dierke sat in class and listened to local Masons explain why public education was so important, Masonry and public education were firmly intertwined. After all, Horace Mann, father of the current public school system, once said that the object of free public education was “to give every child a free, straight, solid pathway by which he can walk directly up from the ignorance of an infant to a knowledge of the primary duties of a man.”

### **Out of the lodges, into the schools**

But somewhere along the way, the public school system lost its direction and much of its funding. Public education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century bears a weak resemblance to 19<sup>th</sup>- or 20<sup>th</sup>-century public education, says Dierke, who’s also a member of the American Federation of School Administrators. The biggest reason public schools are less public, he says, is that the state has less money to share with its students. For instance, this year, Dierke’s budget for office supplies is \$5,000. It used to be \$100,000.

As a result, the charismatic Dierke has become his school’s biggest booster and salesman. Over the years, his school has acquired 26 outside partners – that is, organizations that enrich student lives without the state’s funding. The Professional Golf Association built a putting green and a 15-hole golf course for the kids. The Golden State Warriors basketball team built a state-of-the-art basketball court. There are gardening partners who help students with



IN 2008 DIERKE WAS NAMED NATIONAL MIDDLE LEVEL PRINCIPAL OF THE YEAR. THERE WERE MANY REASONS FOR THE HONOR - FROM CREATING A CULTURE OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE TO FORGING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS.

their school garden. There are student teachers from nearby San Francisco State University and classroom volunteers from City College of San Francisco.

As Dierke walks down the hall of his school, he stops in front of a construction paper-covered bulletin board trumpeting next month’s honor roll students. The 8½-by-11-inch certificates reward students for high achievement. At the end of the year, students receive ribbons festooned with pictures of falcons, the school’s mascot. The money for them, along with the books for his “newcomers” – children who are new to the U.S. and take





English as a second language – comes from the Masons.

“It’s only \$1,200,” he says. “But it’s \$1,200 I don’t have. It really goes a long way. These are the things that make a difference in the lives of these kids.”

So when Dierke found out that the California Masonic Foundation was planning a three-point plan to improve public education, he was proud. It’s time, he says, for Masons to leave the lodges and return to the schools. (For more on CMF’s plan for public schools, turn to page 3)

“We Masons need to come off the hill and down to the valley and into education,” he says.

**“These are the kids who are going to make it”**

In his travels, Dierke has met several Masons who are fellow educators, who are also helping CMF leadership identify public school needs. But the new campaign will involve every Mason, not just those in the business. It calls for member participation by volunteering at local schools, opening lodges

for book fairs, or donating funds to make events or awards like Dierke’s merit certificates possible.

For his part, Dierke thinks the fraternity’s plans to target both elementary-age reading and middle school math are right on point. After all, his wife taught third grade for years, and he’s been integral to improving mathematics education at Visitacion Valley. He’s thrilled the Masons are taking a role in helping the state implement its new core standards that call for algebra in eighth grade. When Dierke arrived at Visitacion Valley Middle School, only five students were taking algebra. Today, every one of his eighth graders takes the class.

*“What’s going on here is that we’re taking the same values and principles we had here 25, 35, 40 years ago and reshuffling the deck and bringing them back.”*

|||||  
JAMES DIERKE

“Every one of them can help every other one out with their homework. They take it seriously,” he says. “They say, ‘We have to pass this so we can take four years of high school math.’ Otherwise, they have

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A MURAL AT VISITACION VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL, CREATED BY STUDENTS IN THE ROOTS PROGRAM, FEATURES BOTH DIERKE AND COMET, THE SCHOOL’S THERAPY DOG. THE ROOTS PROGRAM ASSISTS STUDENTS WHOSE PARENTS ARE INCARCERATED.





WHEN DIERKE ARRIVED AT VISITACION VALLEY MIDDLE SCHOOL, ONLY FIVE STUDENTS WERE TAKING ALGEBRA, AN IMPORTANT GATEWAY TO HIGHER EDUCATION. TODAY, EVERY ONE OF HIS EIGHTH GRADERS TAKES THE CLASS

to take it again in ninth grade, and that means they can take only three years of high school math. That limits where they can go to college. Algebra is a gateway to higher education.”

Looking around the hall, Dierke adds, “What’s going on here is that we’re taking the same values and principles we had here 25, 35, 40 years ago and reshuffling the deck and bringing them back. These are the kids who are going to make it.”

### A message from Sunnydale

Last year, Dierke’s graduating eighth graders met a special Visitacion Valley alumni. Twenty-something-year-old Danta Dixon had sat in those same classrooms a decade earlier. He was originally from Sunnydale, the home of the largest public housing complex in San Francisco, where it’s uncommon for kids to leave the neighborhood unless they’re headed to jail. Dixon, by contrast, was on his way to New York City. He’d graduated from the University of California at Berkeley the month before, and was preparing to enter Columbia University’s law school. The young man stood before the students and told his story.

“I was born in Sunnydale, but I don’t live there anymore. I went through this school. My friends are all thugs locked up somewhere. This is the place that made the change,” Dierke recalls Dixon saying. Then, remembering the reaction of his students, Dierke adds, “You could hear a pin drop.”

It is Dierke’s fervent hope that he’ll be hearing more stories like Dixon’s in the future. And it’s his deep desire that his brothers in Masonry help make that happen.

“If I have a message to give out to my brothers in Masonry, it is that you shouldn’t give up on public education,” he says. “If you close your eyes and think of the five people who have really helped you in your life, one will be an educator, if not more than one. We need your support.” ♦

*“If you close your eyes and think of the five people who have really helped you in your life, one will be an educator, if not more than one. We need your support.”*

JAMES DIERKE



# A TRIP TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

## S.W. HACKETT LODGE GOES INSIDE SAN DIEGO SCHOOLS

by *Laura Normand*

As 2010 rolled to a close, Brother Jim Achenbach found himself back in the principal's office. It was a familiar scene – and it would stay that way, thanks to his lodge.

That day Achenbach and Principal Ryan Kissel were reviewing the annual partnership agreement between Sequoia Elementary School and S.W. Hackett Lodge No. 574, both located in San Diego. For the fifth year in a row, the lodge signed on to help.

### ***Precedent for partnerships***

San Diego Unified School District strives for meetings like the one in Principal Kissel's office. The district's Partnerships in Education Program, established in 1982, arranges partnerships between the district's 225 schools and local organizations.

As public schools suffer increasing resource cuts from the public sector, such private partnerships are becoming more and more important. In San Diego, about 1,500 businesses and community organizations are established as school partners. The partnerships focus on service, not funds (although sometimes, those come in handy, too). Organizations work directly with their partner schools to determine how they can help – hence Achenbach's frequent trips to the principal's office.

S.W. Hackett Lodge got involved in 1997, shortly after Achenbach joined the lodge. At the time, Achenbach was employed as a speech and language pathologist for San Diego Unified School District. He recognized a need at the elementary school where he worked, and learned about the Partnerships in

Education Program from a fellow educator. He pitched the idea to his lodge.

His suggestion was largely motivated by a desire to be more involved in Masonry. At the time, as a new Master Mason – and expecting his first child – Achenbach was hesitant to commit to the officer line.



(Today, he's the current lodge treasurer and a past master.) Public schools liaison was a role he could embrace. "It was my way of being active and useful," he says. He's still the liaison today.

"I'm in a unique position, having a foot in both camps," says Achenbach. "I can walk into the principal's office that day, and that evening, walk into lodge."

*Continued next page*

## LODGE SPOTLIGHT

### ***On the wish list: flutes to flagpoles***

It was the start of a lodge program that's helped hundreds of students. In fact, in 2006 the San Diego Unified School District Board formally recognized S.W. Hackett

and parts, and coordinated community drives for musical instruments.

When that school outgrew the partnership, the door was opened for Sequoia Elementary, a struggling school with a personal tie: the lodge secretary's granddaughter was a student there.



Lodge for outstanding service to the schools and community.

In 13 years the lodge has been a partner to three district schools. The first was an elementary school, the second a charter school for the arts.

"The art school couldn't afford reeds for the flutes or rosin for the bows. The music teacher would give me a wish list and I'd take that to the lodge musician," Achenbach recalls. The lodge donated instruments

S.W. Hackett Lodge has established some meaningful traditions with Sequoia Elementary. During the holidays, the school identifies six needy families in the community; the lodge buys gifts and holiday meal supplies, then delivers presents and meal fixings right to the families' homes. Every June, the lodge hosts a Teacher of the Year dinner. And members and families show up en force to the school's annual spelling bee, where the lodge presents checks to the winners.

That's just the beginning. Achenbach says that members' favorite activities are often hands-on, like renovating classrooms, or the time they erected a flagpole in the school yard for the

morning assembly. “We literally had to put our backs into that one,” he laughs.

One thing’s certain: The lodge helps in the ways Sequoia Elementary needs most. Achenbach’s visits to the principal are a direct conduit between the school and the lodge.



### **Living Masonry**

S.W. Hackett Lodge members have gravitated to the school activities: At least 50 of the lodge’s 134 members have participated in some way, plus ladies and kids.

The partnership has another notable side effect: membership applications. Achenbach explains that friends and prospects often lend a hand at school projects. “They’ve told me that the thing that really impressed them about our lodge and made them want to become a Mason was going out and painting that classroom,” he says.

That sense of identity is part of the partnership’s bigger picture.

## *San Diego’s Many Masonic Partners*

S.W. Hackett Lodge isn’t the only lodge teaming up with San Diego Unified School District. In fact, a number of San Diego lodges are involved in the Partnerships in Education program, including Point Loma Lodge No. 620, John D. Spreckles Lodge No. 657 and Silver Gate-Three Stars Lodge No. 296

At Point Loma Lodge, for example, members head to the local high school every spring to help with an important rite of passage for graduating seniors. They spend a full day hearing students present their high school portfolios – a summary of their achievements over the past four years.

“Being part of a local high school benefits the students, and it gets our name out to a younger group,” says Michael Paine.

“[The partnership] has really served as a rallying point for lodge members, wives, and even children. It gives brethren a way to say to other people, this is one of the things that we do,” Achenbach says.

“It’s all well and good to say George Washington was a Mason and tell the history,” he adds, “but this provides a real tangible way for us to demonstrate to friends and neighbors that we’re an active, vibrant lodge.” ❖

# THE FRENCH CONNECTION

## AN 18TH-CENTURY PARISIAN LODGE ESTABLISHED PUBLIC EDUCATION ACROSS THE WORLD

by *Laura Normand*

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Benjamin Franklin championed a public school system in Pennsylvania. The French philosopher Voltaire helped inspire a system of elementary and secondary schools throughout the Russian Empire. In Ireland, an educational theorist named Richard Lovell Edgeworth drafted a radical bill (later rejected) for the education of the poor.

When they weren't reforming public education at home, they met in Paris.

### ***Education and the Enlightenment***

They met at the Lodge of the Nine Sisters. There, an international society of Masons delivered lectures, presented artwork, performed scientific experiments, and sponsored special projects. The lodge, founded in Paris in 1776, was Masonry's first "learned

society"; it was explicitly designed to service the cause of the Enlightenment in Paris, and operated on the notion that virtuous men could cooperate to advance the arts and sciences. As a prerequisite to membership, candidates must have published works in the arts or sciences.

Unlike other lodges at the time, the number of members was not limited. From 1776 to 1792, the Nine Sisters had an estimated 400 members – eminent men in science, education, and fine arts from all of the countries in Europe and America. Along with Franklin, Voltaire, and Edgeworth, members included scientists such as the lodge's founder, astronomer Jerome Lalande; writers such as the marquis de La Salle; and composers such as Niccolò Piccinni.

Many of these men were the driving forces behind an Enlightenment-inspired cause in their mother countries: public education.

### FRANCE

According to Nicholas Hans of the University of London, the 1795 law establishing France's *écoles centrales* – a national secondary school system – was drafted, introduced, and



FRANCE



# GERMANY

# SWITZERLAND

administered by members of the Nine Sisters. Although the system only lasted from 1795-1802, it aimed to create a “republican” education for the population at large. At the same time, the French Revolutionary government founded the *Ecole Normale Supérieure*: a school for teachers, preparing them to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment. The school was staffed and administered by a number of Nine Sisters members.

## GERMANY

In Germany around the same time, the schools of *Philanthropinum* were founded to teach a humanitarian worldview education to rich and poor boys together, regardless of religious or class distinctions. This movement was fueled by the efforts of specific members of the Lodge of Nine Sisters, as well as Masonic lodges in Germany. The school’s (non-Masonic) founder described *Philanthropinum* as a “quite Masonic design for making poor humanity more fit for the purpose of its being, by a reasonable instruction of youth, for spreading virtue, religion, and knowledge, and removing prejudices,” and lodges in Hamburg, Leipzig, and Gottingen made generous financial contributions. Similar institutions were later established in Switzerland.

## ITALY AND POLAND

According to Hans, members of the Nine Sisters established the first scientific, public secondary school in Florence in the late 1700s. In Poland, Nine Sisters members Adam Czartoryski and Dupont de Menours were connected with late 18<sup>th</sup>-century educational reforms modeled after France’s *écoles centrales*.

## RUSSIA

In Russia, two members of the Nine Sisters were known to tutor Catherine the Great’s advisors, and may have helped shaped Catherine’s educational reform. Catherine’s reforms seem to have been inspired by her correspondence with Voltaire – a noted member of the Nine Sisters, although his membership was cut short by his death in 1778. Catherine’s goal was to establish a national education system of free

# ITALY

Continued next page



POLAND

elementary schools, regardless of economic standing. The system fell short, but successfully established elementary and secondary schools throughout the Empire. She also founded the Imperial Public Library, the Free Economic Society, and the Hermitage Museum – giving citizens unprecedented access to information and educational resources.

UNITED STATES

And of course, in the United States, Nine Sisters member Benjamin Franklin was creating a system of public schools in Pennsylvania. Fellow Freemasons joined the cause: Grand Master DeWitt Clinton, governor of New York from 1817 to 1822, espoused the cause of public schools so fervently that he became known as the Father of Public Schools in New York. In Texas, the state’s first public schools met in Masonic lodges. And in the Golden State, Mason John Swett was integral in creating California’s system of public education. ♦

RUSSIA

*An American in Paris*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN’S FRENCH LEGACY

In 1776 Benjamin Franklin was appointed as an American envoy to France, and became intimately involved with the Parisian Lodge of the Nine Sisters. He greatly expanded the lodge’s sphere of influence – starting with the induction of his friend Voltaire, in the last months of the philosopher’s life.

Franklin was elected master in 1779, and increased the lodge’s Enlightenment activities: banquets and assemblies revolved around literature and the fine arts; scientific demonstrations shaped the development of chemistry.

Franklin led the Nine Sisters to open the Apollonian Society in Paris, an inexpensive state school emphasizing humanities and sciences, and to sponsor two *musées* in the early 1780s. The lodge-sponsored *Musée de Paris* closely resembled the Academy and Charity School of Philadelphia, chartered in 1749 based on Franklin’s educational vision. Like Franklin’s Academy in Philadelphia, the *Musée de Paris* was designed to promote the arts, sciences, and commerce.

UNITED STATES

# RETIRED, BUT STILL TEACHING

## RESIDENTS OF THE MASONIC HOME AT UNION CITY GO BACK TO SCHOOL—THIS TIME, AS TUTORS

by Cason Lane

Virginia Knapp retired from teaching more than 20 years ago, but she continues to educate young students.

That's because she's one of several volunteers in the Masonic Home at Union City's tutoring program for nearby Guy Emanuele Jr. Elementary School. Once or twice a month, Knapp and other resident tutors help students in first through third grade with their homework during hour-long tutoring sessions at the school.

"It's rewarding every day you go," says Knapp, 81, a former teacher of elementary and special-education students in Northern California. "The kids will be doing their work and you might think they're not paying attention. But then they'll give you a hug and ask if you're coming the next time. They do care and they do want help."

### **Homework help and "Aha!" moments**

Launched in 2007, the tutoring program is the brainchild of Aaron Cole, a certified therapeutic recreation specialist at the Home. Even before he relocated from Wisconsin to take the job seven years ago, Cole was interested in developing a program that could bridge generational divides.

"There are so many stories that can be shared and exchanged by connecting an older population with a younger generation," he says.

When the program was first introduced, it caught the attention of residents like Knapp who are former educators, as well as residents who simply wanted an opportunity to work with



THANKS TO REGULAR VISITS FROM HOME RESIDENTS, HOMEWORK JUST GOT A LITTLE EASIER FOR STUDENTS AT A UNION CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

young people. Today, the program has five tutors who make regular visits to the school.

Knapp has found the tutoring experience very satisfying, especially when she sees a young student have an "Aha!" moment.

"I was helping a little girl with a word problem involving clocks," Knapp says. "She tried working it out on a piece of paper, but I showed her how to figure it out on my watch instead. All of a sudden she says, 'I

*Continued next page*



## MASONIC ASSISTANCE

get it!' It makes you feel good when their eyes light up."

In addition to tutoring, Knapp has visited the school to lecture on Native American cultures. She began studying Native American tribes while she was a young teacher in the mid-1960s and spent several summer vacations visiting reservations and meeting with tribal elders, including the Navajo and Hopi in Arizona.

Emma Lou Akin, 86, is also a retired educator and volunteer tutor at Union City. For Akin, who taught high school English for many years in Colorado, tutoring is an opportunity to give students a much-needed dose of one-on-one time.

"All day they're with 29 other kids in class and their teachers can't be there the whole time to help them," Akin says.



EMMA LOU AKIN, A FORMER TEACHER, KNOWS HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO GIVE STUDENTS ONE-ON-ONE HELP.



IT'S AARON COLE'S GOAL TO GET MORE RESIDENTS INVOLVED IN THE COMMUNITY. HE CREATED THE TUTORING PROGRAM TO DO JUST THAT.

"We're usually with one child during the tutoring, and I think they like having the individual attention."

### ***Bridging the generational divide***

Even the tutors who aren't former teachers find they have a lot to offer. Resident Marie Norton, for example, draws from her life experience and the years she spent helping her own children with their homework.

"They're wonderful and smart," she says. "I'm 94 years old and I think they like having an old lady sit with them like a grandma."

The students like to ask Norton about what life was like when she was a little girl. She enjoys regaling them with stories about her travels to exotic places like Japan and Chile.

"I get pleasure from being with those young kids," she says. "And it gets me out of the Home."

Cole agrees that the program can be just as beneficial for the tutors as it is for the students.

"When I came out here to the Home, my goal was to get residents more involved in the community," he says. "This was a good way to get involved. It's definitely something they look







STUDENTS LOOK FORWARD TO MORE THAN JUST HOMEWORK HELP. FROM MARIE NORTON, THEY ALSO HEAR REAL-LIFE TALES OF FARAWAY LANDS.

forward to and it makes them feel good inside.”

Knapp hopes that more of her fellow residents will decide to join the program and see how satisfying it can be.

“I wish we had more people to do it,” she says. “It’s very good for us. Sometimes we’re sitting around feeling like the world has passed us by, but when you can help a child, it’s very rewarding.” ❖

## *Class Acts*

THE MASONIC HOME AT COVINA HAS SEVERAL FORMER EDUCATORS ON ITS RESIDENT ROSTER, TOO. HERE, TWO OF THEM REFLECT ON THEIR CLASSROOM CAREERS.

**TEACHING IN TEXAS.** When Don Cheyne had to declare a major as an undergrad at West Texas A&M University, education seemed like a good fit.

“I had several aunts and uncles who were teachers,” says Cheyne, 79, of Chowchilla Lodge No. 485. “They were happy and I enjoyed history, so that’s why.”

After graduation, Cheyne began his high-school teaching career in Wilson, Texas, which was such a small town that Cheyne was responsible not only for teaching but also for driving a school bus each morning and afternoon.

After his first year of teaching, Cheyne took a detour for a few years to manage an insurance agency. Though he was successful, the call of the classroom was too strong to ignore. He returned to teaching and taught government, economics, and social studies for the next 12 years.

“I enjoyed teaching a lot more than what I was doing,” he says. “I had a very rich experience.”

**MUSIC APPRECIATION.** After majoring in both vocal and instrumental music at the University of Wisconsin, Lois Nelson began her teaching career in 1950 in New Glarus, Wis. – which some call the “Little Switzerland” of America. For the next 17 years, she taught music and choir to students of all ages in Wisconsin and later as a substitute teacher in California.

“I loved it all the time,” says Nelson, 83. “I had everything from first-graders to high school students. I’m 5-foot and I’d have these 6-foot-tall football players in choir and I’d have to tell them what to do.”

Though Nelson enjoyed teaching, she left the profession in the late-1960s to pursue another passion: the law. Nelson worked as a legal secretary and paralegal until she retired in 1993.

“I love teaching, but I also love the law,” she says.

# Connecting with *Masonic Assistance*



## **MASONIC SENIOR OUTREACH**

Masonic Senior Outreach, a program of the Masonic Homes of California, provides the senior members of our fraternal family access to the services and resources they need to stay healthy and safe in their homes or in retirement facilities in their home communities.

These services include:

- \* Information and referrals to community-based senior providers throughout California
- \* Ongoing care management at no cost
- \* Financial support

Masonic Senior Outreach also provides interim financial and care support to those who are on the waiting list for the Masonic Homes of California. Contact us at 888/466-3642 or [masonicassistance@mhcuc.org](mailto:masonicassistance@mhcuc.org).

## **MASONIC FAMILY OUTREACH**

Masonic Family Outreach support services are available to California Masons and their families who need help dealing with today's complex issues, such as the impact of divorce, the stresses of a special needs child, job loss, and other significant life challenges.

Our case management services are broad, flexible, and able to serve families in their own communities throughout the state. If you are in need of support or know of a family in distress, contact us at 888/466-3642 or [masonicassistance@mhcuc.org](mailto:masonicassistance@mhcuc.org).

## **MASONIC CENTER FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES**

The Masonic Center for Youth and Families provides integrated psychological services to youth ages 4 to 17 struggling with behavioral, academic, emotional, or social difficulties. To learn more about MCYAF, visit [mcyaf.org](http://mcyaf.org) or call 877/488-6293.

## **ACACIA CREEK**

To learn more about Acacia Creek, our new senior living community in Union City, visit [acaciacreek.org](http://acaciacreek.org) or call 877/902-7555.

## **STAY INFORMED**

You may request a presentation be made at a lodge meeting about the Masonic Homes and Outreach programs by contacting Masonic Assistance at 888/466-3642 or [masonicassistance@mhcuc.org](mailto:masonicassistance@mhcuc.org).

## **VISIT THE HOMES**

Arrange a private or group tour to get a firsthand look at residential services on our two campuses. Be sure to call ahead (even if on the same day) so we can announce your arrival at the front security gate and make proper tour arrangements. Contact the Home at Union City at 510/471-3434 and the Home at Covina at 626/251-2232.




## **BRINGING THE BEST NURSING CARE TO CANCER PATIENTS AND FAMILIES**

The Grand Master's Project for 2010-2011 is dedicated to those individuals and their families who are battling cancer.

Building on our partnership with the Association of California Nurse Leaders, By Your Side will provide support where it's most needed: educational resources for more California nurses to become certified nurse oncologists, a critical need in the state.

TO CONTRIBUTE, VISIT BY YOUR SIDE ONLINE OR CONTACT THE OFFICE OF PHILANTHROPY AT 415/292-9117 OR [DAVILA@FREEMASON.ORG](mailto:DAVILA@FREEMASON.ORG)

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Tim will be the first person in his family to attend college.

Anna will be able to stay in the home she and her husband built.

They have one thing in common: **you.**

Your gift to the Annual Fund supports California Masonic philanthropies such as Masonic Outreach and public schools programs, among others. Last year, those programs helped hundreds of deserving students and more than 400 Masons, their wives, families, and widows.

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## 11th California Masonic Symposium

JUNE 25, 2011

Pasadena Scottish Rite Masonic Center

# MORGAN AFFAIR

In 1826 Captain William Morgan disappeared. He nearly took American Freemasonry with him.

Learn the truth about the Morgan Affair, the anti-Masonic movement it fueled, and how the fraternity changed in the aftermath.

### HENRY WILSON COIL LECTURER:

Mark A. Tabbert, director of collections,  
George Washington Masonic National Memorial

Registration is free. Download the form from [freemason.org](http://freemason.org) by selecting Masonic Education from the Member Center drop-down menu. Please register by June 20.

Contact Program Coordinator Kim Hegg  
at 415/292-9111 with any questions.