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REDEFINING relief

TO THE MASONIC HOMES, "RELIEF"
MEANS EMPOWERMENT, INDEPENDENCE,
AND SELF-FULFILLMENT





MASONRY IN CALIFORNIA
CELEBRATES A LIFELONG
JOURNEY. SO DOES ITS
VISION OF RELIEF.

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CONTENTS

VOLUME 59 /// NUMBER 3 /// FEBRUARY/MARCH 2011



14 FEATURE

Redefining Relief

The times are changing, and so is the way we deliver relief. The Masonic Homes of California was created to shelter widows and orphans, but 150 years later, it looks far beyond basic needs. Today the Homes helps individuals age 4 to 104 achieve independence, empowerment, and a quality of life that they define. This new philosophy will do more than just transform the Homes: it will advance the field of care giving.



- 2 EXECUTIVE MESSAGE
- 12 AROUND THE WORLD
- 20 IN CALIFORNIA


3 MASONIC EDUCATION
To explain the philosophical origins of Masonic relief, John Cooper points to the symbol of the chain: its meaning, why it cannot be broken, and the link between brotherly love and relief.

6 LODGE SPOTLIGHT
The spirit of relief drives Home Lodge and Rim of the World Lodge to get out of the hall and into the community. Their hands-on outreach has sparked goodwill and helped hundreds.

22 IN CALIFORNIA
When it comes to cancer survival, every patient wants the odds on their side. The 2011 Grand Master Project, By Your Side, will fund oncology certification for California nurses so more cancer patients receive specialized care.

24 MASONIC ASSISTANCE
Amy lost her husband, chief provider, and father of their daughter to early-onset Alzheimer's. But with the support of Masonic Family Outreach, she's leading her family to better times.

John F. Lowe, Senior Grand Warden



Relief in the 21st Century

We begin 2011 fresh from completing a member-driven recalibration of our strategic plan – a plan to take us into this new decade. Our entire membership had the opportunity to let their thoughts be heard, and many of you spoke of a fraternity that can make a difference in your community.

This issue is about relief, a term we Masons use to describe many forms of assistance – not merely financial giving, but also the giving of ourselves for the betterment of others.

Relief is an interesting phenomenon. In the giving, one is repaid in manifold ways. When financial aid is given, we touch the hearts of others. When we give of ourselves, our hearts are touched, and so we continue to give and touch the hearts of still others.

California lodges have been providing relief since the very beginning of our Grand Lodge. We all are aware of the Masonic relief given to the survivors of the San Francisco earthquake of 1906. Throughout our history we have consistently provided relief to victims of disasters.

Less heralded – but no less important – is the relief given by lodges in their own communities year after year. Important work via relief is being done by Masons every day of every year up and down California.

As Masons each of us has the obligation to relieve the distress of others, to help meet needs otherwise wanting. For many, the first thoughts turn to our Masonic Homes. We can be justly proud of the quality of life that we provide our senior residential members,

while Masonic Senior Outreach and Masonic Family Outreach services provide relief to members not living in our Homes. We must not forget to pay forward the endowment dollars, so those behind us will still be cared for in the same way.

This, however, is looking inward towards our members. Our view must include looking outward to our communities, our neighbors, the youth that surely are our future.

California lodges have been holding activities with public schools since Past Grand Master Charles Adams recognized the need in the 1920s. I submit to you that perhaps it is time to renew and refresh our commitment to public education; to return to prominence in this area so important to our youth. Perhaps your local school needs adults to volunteer time for reading, or for mentoring students. Perhaps your area children can benefit from a book bag program. Do area elementary students need funds for musical instruments? The funding shortfalls so prevalent today can be the opportunity for your lodge to once again be the cornerstone of your community.

I hope your lodge is aligning plans to include relief as recurring outreach to your community. We have many examples worthy of emulation; take them as your own and build upon the strengths. Together we can make a profound difference in California. ✧

THE INDISSOLUBLE CHAIN

By John L. Cooper III, Junior Grand Warden

“To relieve the distressed is a duty incumbent on all men, but particularly on Masons, who are linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection.”

is purposeful. Without understanding the dimension of brotherly love, a Mason would have little concept of the chain that links him to other Masons. The chain of Freemasonry is not the chain of the prisoner nor of the slave; it is the voluntary assuming of a link in the chain of brotherhood, which one has promised to support of his “own free will and accord.” The chain that binds him to his brethren will only



In the lecture of the first degree of Masonry, we encounter for the first time the symbol of the chain. The chain is one of the more neglected symbols of Masonry, but that should not be so. It is, in fact, one of the more powerful symbols through which Masonry teaches an important lesson. It actually has many meanings in Masonry, but in this context, it is associated with “a duty incumbent on all men, but particularly on Masons...” In order to truly understand our obligation “to relieve the distressed,” we need to understand the meaning of the Masonic chain.

Linked in love

The first aspect of this symbol, and perhaps the most easily understood, is that a chain is composed of separate links. In the lecture, relief – the second of the three principal tenets of Freemasonry – follows that of brotherly love, which is the first. The placement

be broken by death, but it is still voluntary.

It is this brotherly love to which the “indissoluble chain of sincere affection” refers. The obligation to relieve the distressed grows out of the Mason’s understanding of this brotherly love, which encompasses not only other Masons, but also their families and – by extension – any who are in need.

Beyond this earthly life

There is, however, a deeper symbolism of the chain within Freemasonry. According to some Masonic writers, it is associated with the

Continued on page 5



WEB EXTRA

For more about Masonic symbols, click here to read the Dec/Jan 2011 issue of California Freemason.

“silver cord” of life itself, and with the cabletow, the other symbol of brotherhood. In the Masonic memorial service, we make reference to the fact that death has “loosed” the silver cord. We also make reference to the fact that a link in the chain binding a Mason to his brethren has been broken. The “lost link” is related to relief; having passed beyond this earthly life, the “chain of sincere affection” has been broken, and this has, in turn, altered forever the possibility of the brother continuing to extend relief to others.

Or has it? The very nature of a chain is that broken links can be,

our respective places of abode,” as the ritual says, that we will shortly return to the world where Freemasonry will be practiced by our individual efforts. The chain is not broken, even though we drop hands with a brother, because the chain that binds us together can never be broken, until death brings about the final separation. But we are reminded upon leaving the lodge that we have a duty

and are, replaced. Every new Mason who assumes his obligation as an Entered Apprentice Mason becomes a new link in the chain. Even if a link is broken, the chain of brotherhood is not. In fact we explain this to the candidate when we inform him that “the greatest of these is charity... [for] charity extends beyond the grave, through the boundless realms of eternity.” Indeed it does. The ability to extend relief does not, therefore, cease with our individual ability to extend it, but rather continues because the chain itself is renewed through the addition of new links.

When we return to the world

In some times and in some places, Masons have assembled around the altar at the closing of the lodge and joined hands in a symbolic representation of this “chain of sincere affection.” It is a powerful symbol that when we leave the lodge, and “return to

to perform. We are to perform the duty that is incumbent upon all men – but particularly upon Masons.

From this understanding have arisen the great Masonic charities with which the world is familiar. We have built homes for the aged and infirm amongst us; we have offered medical services to children in need; we have given scholarships so that young people may learn; and we have done much, much more. We demonstrate that relief is not an idle principle for Masons. It is one of the three essential characteristics of a Mason.

May the symbol of the chain remain a powerful and important one in our understanding of Freemasonry! ♦

WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?

GETTING TO KNOW – AND FINDING WAYS TO HELP – THE PEOPLE NEXT DOOR

by Cason Lane and Laura Normand

Once upon a time, Freemasons met in secrecy and kept fraternal business inside lodge walls.

Not anymore. Today the Masons of California Facebook page has more than 7,000 fans. The Shrine Hospitals and Scottish Rite Childrens Medical Centers are known worldwide. The 2009 novel “The Lost Symbol” made Freemasonry a pop culture phenomenon.

On the whole, Masonry today is very visible. And these California lodges are finding ways to get out of the hall and into the neighborhood. Besides spreading goodwill and increasing awareness of Masonry, they’re coming up with new ways to apply relief.

Home Lodge No. 721

CUSTOM CARE DELIVERIES

Master Steven Eberhardt’s wife, Lisa, was seeking an enrichment program for the other wives during the stated meeting at Home Lodge No. 721 in Van Nuys. She decided to organize a

community outreach group that assembled goodies for those in need – from local shelters to overseas troops.

The group is known as the “Hunny-Do’s,” named after Winnie the Pooh’s “hunny pot” full of something sweet, and in the past year the group has grown to include the lodge’s Fellow Crafts, Entered Apprentices, and widows. During the stated meetings, the Hunny-Do’s prepare the care packages, and after the meetings, the brethren join in to help distribute them.

Eberhardt said this applied relief has meaningful results both inside and outside the lodge.

“All too often, and to our detriment, when we internalize our efforts, we do not use to the best of our ability the tenets that we embrace: brotherly love, relief, and truth,” he says. “When we externalize these efforts through applied relief, we build up not only ourselves but our lodge family and the communities in which we live.”

SENDING A SMILE TO OVERSEAS MILITARY

One of the first Hunny-Do projects was sending supplies to U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. After identifying three military units with ties to the local community, the group wrote 175 letters to the troops and assembled requested items such as magazines, books, granola bars, DVDs, and toiletries. And with each box sent, Eberhardt included a note inviting the soldiers to stop by the lodge for dinner when they got home.

He recently received an e-mail from one of the recipients, a sergeant. “He sent me a picture of the platoon and thanked us for the DVDs and all the sundries ... and said you just don’t realize how much of a blessing these things are until they’re all taken away,” Eberhardt says.

SAYING THANKS TO FIRST RESPONDERS

During another stated meeting, the Hunny-Do’s focused their efforts closer to home – on the local police, firefighters, and emergency room workers who keep the community safe and healthy. The group prepared eight two-foot-wide trays of snacks and home-baked goods, along with notes thanking first responders

Continued on page 8

WEB EXTRA

Want more ideas for getting to know your neighbors?
Read this how-to article from *The Leader*.



I thank you sooooo much for your care packages. The audio book and DVD were a hit amongst the troops. I cannot say in words how grateful I am to have the support and blessings that you have expressed to us. We have received the letters from all your members. Thank you for putting the thought and time into writing to us.



HOME LODGE SENT LETTERS AND CARE PACKAGES TO THIS MARINE CORPS UNIT IN AFGHANISTAN. IN A THANK-YOU TO THE LODGE, THEIR SERGEANT WROTE “I CANNOT SAY IN WORDS HOW GRATEFUL I AM FOR THE SUPPORT AND BLESSINGS THAT YOU EXPRESSED TO US. IT’S FUNNY HOW A LITTLE LETTER CAN BE SUCH A HUGE MORALE BOOSTER.”

for their service and inviting them to join the lodge for dinner. After the stated meeting, Masons hand-delivered the goods.

“They look at you real strange at 11 o’clock at night because we’re delivering all this stuff after lodge,” Eberhardt says. “We said we brought these by just to say thanks and we’re from Home Lodge. Their faces broke out in smiles.”

After those deliveries, emergency room personnel dropped by to visit the lodge; the fire department sent staff to inspect the safety of the lodge building; and the chief of the Los Angeles Police Department sent a note saying how much he appreciated the lodge’s gesture when it’s so rare for anyone to ever say thank-you.

The best part? Home Lodge gained seven new members – five policemen and two fire-fighters – as a result of its relief effort.

SPARKING THE SPIRIT OF OUTREACH

Among the group’s many other projects, the Hunny-Do’s and the brethren serve dinners at the Midnight Mission, a Los Angeles homeless shelter. The group has also donated furniture and computers to a local residential facility for disabled people; stitched hundreds of blankets for the Shriners Hospitals for Children and orphanages around the world; and stuffed backpacks for kids at a local shelter for battered families.

Eberhardt says the giving spirit of the Hunny-Do’s is spreading throughout the lodge, as more and more people want to get involved – and that includes the widows in the lodge family. To reconnect with these “sweethearts,” the Hunny-Do’s have started hosting teas and



luncheons that are bringing widows back to the lodge, some of whom are joining in the outreach efforts.

Add it up, and the outreach at Home Lodge isn’t just reaching out but also reaching in. Eberhardt says the relief efforts are helping the lodge discover new potential.

“It’s interesting, this family dynamic that is burgeoning inside the lodge,” he says. “This untapped energy is feeding off itself. It’s incredible.”

**Rim of the World Lodge
No. 711**

SMALL TOWN, BIG HEART

In Twin Peaks, Rim of the World Lodge No. 711 has seen its fair share of struggles. Located in the San Bernardino Mountains, accessible by just three winding mountain roads, the surrounding community is isolated, economically challenged, and cut off from many services.

But as the lodge sees it, that’s what makes them special.

“We’re a throwback to a different time,” says Aaron Creighton, senior deacon. “The adversity of living in this area has helped to create a very different culture.”

Creighton says that it’s second-nature to look after each other and the community at large. Rim of the World Lodge has always been part of that culture of outreach – and recently, it’s resolved to be a leader.

Continued next page

WEB EXTRA

Click here for more tips from Rim of the World Lodge on how to partner with your community.



LEADING BY SHOWING UP

In 2010, then-master Ben Boswell tasked Creighton with increasing the lodge’s community outreach.

As a his first order of business, Creighton challenged members to not only show up at the community events on their calendars, but to find out about the ones that weren’t.

“As we become informed about what’s going on in the community, we can participate in it, and overcome the lack of knowledge about who the Masons are,” reasons Creighton.

So lodge representatives now attend the meetings of the two local chambers of commerce. Brothers trade news of events from family and friends. Creighton encourages members to attend and offer help at all of these events, including those led by other local groups.

“Our lodge understands that we have to partner with the other organizations, and support their events with volunteers. It’s best for the health of the community,” Creighton says.

Creighton’s goal was to have the lodge represented at every single community event, and, with a few exceptions, it’s worked.

HOLIDAY HOST

The lodge hosts community events of its own every year, too, from a barbecue fundraiser to a Thanksgiving Community Feast.

Each has their own tradition, and draws a crowd of attendees and volunteers. At the Thanksgiving Community Feast, the whole community sits down to eat with their neighbors. The feast is made possible by the donations and volunteerism of residents,

local businesses, public figures, and civic organizations. In 2010, more than 200 members of the lodge and community volunteered. They served dinner for 200, and delivered another 200 meals and more than 600 articles of winter clothing to shut-ins and homeless shelters.

The Fourth of July picnic draws an even bigger crowd, about 3000 every year. It was started eight years ago by a local couple, and this year, they’re handing over the reins. Rim of the World Lodge is stepping in with a local non profit to manage the event. “It’s a big undertaking, but it’s important,” Creighton says. “We’re creating a spirit of pride in the community.”

“Even though the culture here on the mountain is very different from just 15 miles away, a few things are universal,” Creighton maintains. “One is that Masons need to take a vastly bigger role in their communities and network among their community members.”

IT’S WHO YOU KNOW

Like the town, the lodge is small and doesn’t have a lot of money. So how can they pull off such big events? Creighton says it’s all about networking. “We have our struggles, like everyone else,” he say, “but we also have a lot of people with cross memberships [in Rotary, VFW, etc.]. We leverage those relationships, talk to those groups to get them involved in big community projects. We’ve been able to unite and create some large-scale events.”

It’s paying dividends: in the number of neighbors served, a stronger sense of partnership among the town’s groups, and a new identity within the lodge.

“Members that I haven’t seen in years are coming out to volunteer at these lodge events,” Creighton says. “Some of the skeptics, who thought that Masons should stick to themselves, are starting to come around and say this is a good approach.”

After almost every community event, the lodge is approached by five or six prospects who are interested in joining. Although not all become members, those who do are very much in line with the lodge’s culture of outreach.

“These are very quality guys,” Creighton says. “These are guys who get it already.” ✨

What does relief mean to your lodge?

TWO LODGES SHARE THEIR STORIES

CHANGING THE WORLD ONE PAIR OF SHOES AT A TIME

Noel Santos of Sublime Benicia Lodge No. 5 was watching a documentary about Efren Peñaflorida Jr., a volunteer in the Philippines who founded an organization to help at-risk Filipino youth.

“It showed on the documentary that the children didn’t have any shoes,” Santos recalls. “I said, My God, there are a lot of shoes that are just being thrown away here in the U.S. Why couldn’t we just gather them up and put them in a box and ship it to the Philippines and maybe they could put it to good use?”

In the summer of 2010, Sublime Benicia Lodge did just that. Naming the project “This Old Shoes” (after “This Old House”), Santos called on lodge members to donate their gently used shoes, from running shoes to dress shoes. After filling a box with some 50 pairs, the lodge mailed it to Peñaflorida’s organization, the Dynamic Teen Company, which distributed the shoes to needy children and adults in poverty-stricken areas of Cavite City, Philippines.

Today, Sublime Benicia Lodge continues to collect shoes for communities in the Philippines, and nearby lodges are also contributing to the project. Santos says one pair of shoes can go a long way, enabling a child to attend school or an adult to get a job, while promoting health, safety, and hope for a better tomorrow.



Share photos, videos, and news of your lodge’s relief programs with 7,000-plus friends of the fraternity.

HELPING BROTHERS FIND NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES

The goal of the Masonic Career Action Network (MCAN) is to lose members. That’s because this group, organized by several members of Three Great Lights Lodge No. 651 in Menlo Park and other lodges in the San Francisco Bay Area, provides support to local brothers who are unemployed or underemployed.

It started in March 2010 when, after a stated meeting at Three Great Lights Lodge, three brothers were commiserating about their recent layoffs. Brother Dave Cohen suggested that, given their situation, they had an opportunity to help themselves and others by sharing job leads, contacts, ideas, and expertise.

“We have this vast and treasured ocean of resources, support, and expertise among our Masonic brotherhood,” Cohen says.

The MCAN group meets weekly at the Three Great Lights Lodge hall in Menlo Park, where they discuss members’ objectives, accomplishments, requests for assistance, and topics such as elevator speeches, resume-writing, and interview skills. The organization also includes task groups such as a research team who gathers information about industries and job trends, as well as a marketing team who spreads the word about MCAN to other lodges in the Bay Area.

Cohen says MCAN is not a job-listing agency. It’s just a group of brothers helping brothers. “This is what Masonry is all about,” he says.

Do you know someone who’s hiring? If you have a job lead or would like information on how to set up a MCAN group, contact the Masonic Career Action Network at BayareaMCAN@gmail.com or calodges.org/no651/MCAN.htm.

WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

FOR MORE THAN 85 YEARS, THE MASONIC SERVICE ASSOCIATION HAS CHanneled relief to AREAS IN CRISIS

by Cason Lane

In 1919, at the end of World War I, grand lodges throughout the U.S. wanted to organize a relief effort to support the troops. The federal government thought that was a good idea, but it didn't want to work with 49 separate organizations.

With that, a new Masonic organization was born. Representatives of grand lodges across the country came together to form the Masonic Service Association, which would coordinate national Masonic efforts such as military programs, publications about Freemasonry, and disaster relief.

Through the disaster relief program, Masonic grand jurisdictions around the world can ask the association to appeal for assistance from U.S. and Canadian grand lodges. The association, in turn, collects the funds and forwards them directly to the requestor. The first such appeal was to help victims of the Tokyo earthquake in 1923, and the association since has distributed more than \$8 million in relief for some 85 disasters.

A direct pipeline for support

The organization, today known as the Masonic Service Association of North America (MSANA), is successful because of its track record and reputation in the Masonic community.

At a time when many disaster relief pledges never reach their destination due to bureaucracy and fraud in various organizations, MSANA helps Masons make a difference through a simple interchange of money – with no overhead costs and no political middlemen.

“We put the appeal out, the money comes in, and we send it to the grand lodge involved,” says Richard Fletcher, executive secretary of MSANA, based in Silver Spring, Md.

Through this simple system, Masons continue to make an important difference in disaster relief. Fletcher offers some success stories from recent years.

Haiti earthquake

In Haiti, it's been more than six months since the devastating 2010 earthquake, but, according to news reports, the country is yet to receive millions of dollars in aid pledged from around the world. MSANA, however, issued a Masonic appeal on behalf of the Grand Orient d'Haiti and has already sent about \$200,000 to the jurisdiction, which used the money to buy medical supplies, blankets, and other much-needed resources.

Fletcher says that routing the relief to Haiti was more challenging than usual because, after the earthquake, the grand lodge had relocated from the demolished Port au Prince to Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. MSANA worked with a New York bank to wire the money to a reliable contact.

“We try to be very careful and establish a Masonic connection we can rely on,” Fletcher says.

Hurricane Andrew

In 1992, after Hurricane Andrew ripped through southern Florida, MSANA sent almost \$300,000 in relief that helped the Grand Lodge of Florida address the needs of its Masonic families as well as the local public. The day after the storm, for example, a small lodge in Homestead, Fla., served 2,000 hot meals to local residents and National Guard, and seven families even lived inside the lodge room for weeks until they found a safe haven. The relief also funded

a trailer for a local Rainbow Girls mother advisor and her daughters, who had been living in the backseat of a car.

Great Flood of 1993

Amid several months of flooding in 1993 in the Midwest, MSANA issued an appeal on behalf of the grand lodges in Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota. One lodge, Saline No. 226 in Missouri, used the funds to open a relief center in the basement that stored furniture and belongings of local flood victims, and the lodge provided food, drinks, and supplies to the community.

9/11

After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, MSANA issued an appeal that generated nearly \$1 million for the Grand Lodge of New York. In addition to helping many first responders, the money funded education for victims' children and paid the medical bills of a local Mason who faced psychiatric problems as a result of the attacks.

Hurricane Katrina

Finally, after Hurricane Katrina in 2005, MSANA issued appeals not only for ravaged Louisiana but also for other jurisdictions along the Gulf Coast. Alabama, for example, didn't sustain as much damage as other states, but its schools were overrun with students whose families had relocated from Louisiana and Mississippi. In response, Masons in Alabama used some of their relief funds to buy books for local school districts and help them expand capacity.

Masons in Mississippi, meanwhile, depended on MSANA relief to help put their lives back together while other funding was in insurance gridlock.

“The Grand Lodge of Mississippi told me after Katrina that the only money they actually got into the state from an outside source is what came from the Masonic fraternity,” Fletcher says. “We came through for them when no one else would.” ♦



WEB EXTRA

Visit msana.com for the history of MSANA, useful information, and current news.

TO THE HOMES, “RELIEF” MEANS EMPOWERMENT,
INDEPENDENCE, AND SELF-FULFILLMENT
BY LAURA NORMAND

+ redefining RELIEF+

The Masonic Homes of California is not known for its willingness to compromise.

In the name of relief, it has built some of the state’s finest senior residential communities, outreach programs, and youth centers. All the

while it has held fast to a commitment to provide the support that members need most, considering cost only as a distant second.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the Homes’ philosophy of care is uncommonly

ambitious: “We will help you achieve the quality of life that you choose.”

It’s a philosophy that doesn’t settle for health alone, or even a general definition of wellness. It assumes the ability of each individual to decide what is best for him or

her. It declares, quietly, that life is not over at any age.

Masonry in California celebrates a lifelong journey. So does its vision of relief.

Continued next page



A NEW PHILOSOPHY OF CARE

We’ve come a long way since 1898, when the Masonic Homes of California was established to shelter widows and orphans. That was a time when disease, economic depression, and a dearth of public services left individuals battling for shelter and basic needs. The philosophy of care, perhaps best summarized as “We will take care of you,” fit the times.

But today, well-meaning though it may be, this philosophy isn’t necessarily the best one.

In the 21st century, “we will take care of you” might be illustrated by bringing a resident’s meals to her room instead of encouraging her to take them in the dining hall, handling an outreach client’s finances so he doesn’t have to, or helping a resident into a wheelchair when she tires of walking. Recent research shows that this cheerful readiness to take away any burden or discomfort is no longer in the best interest of most individuals, including those long past retirement.

So the Homes is rethinking how to do right by members. Its new philosophy of care encompasses far more than just comfort or basic needs; instead, it settles for nothing less than physical, intellectual, social, and spiritual health.



GETTING OFF THE BENCH

“We spend our entire lives working towards society’s expectations. We continue to learn and grow, regardless of our age,” says Dixie Reeve, executive director and administrator of the Masonic Home at Union City. “But when we come to retirement, we’re told, No, go relax. Everything that we worked for, that felt meaningful, is suddenly gone. Why do you think depression has one of the highest incidences among the elderly? We still have to be active and stimulated. We still have to find purpose in life.”

Reeve calls this need to stay active and purposeful “getting off the bench.” It’s one of the three components of successful aging. She describes the other components as “use it or lose it,” or continuing to challenge physical and mental abilities; and taking an active role in health risk prevention.

In its senior residential programs in Union City and Covina, the Homes is rolling out these initiatives with the help of Masterpiece Living, a national program for successful aging. The program, which is being implemented at the Home at Union City and Acacia Creek (the Covina campus is soon to follow), outlines modules for helping staff and residents embrace the shift in philosophy, and offers tools for the Homes to measure successes and compare itself to likeminded organizations across the country.

Reeve says it’s “the next step forward in wellness.” It’s a big step at that, calling for new staff training, and new expectations for residents. It’ll mean new programming, and completely new metrics. After all, how do you measure social fulfillment? Or spiritual wellness?

Someday, residents may carry a USB drive with them to plug in at checkpoints – machines in the fitness center, or an electronic attendance log at bridge club – to map the full picture of their activities. They’ll partner with staff to discuss their risk factors, their interests, their goals.

Why all the fuss? Mel Matsumoto, executive vice president of the Masonic Homes, recalls visiting a retirement community where the Masterpiece Living program was already in full swing. The community was tackling a familiar problem: residents’ walkers were crowding the dining hall and creating potential fire hazards. The expected solution was to rearrange the dining room. But instead, the community worked with residents to build up their mobility – and reduce the number of walkers.

What may take longest is this shift in perspective. But better start now: the field of aging services is changing.

“The baby boomers are the generation of 17 varieties of coffee at Starbucks,” says Matsumoto. “They’re not going to be happy with a one-size-fits-all view of care services. We think it’s only appropriate for our residents to be partners in their care. The incoming residents are going to demand it.”

A NEW WAY OF REACHING OUT

In 2009, in response to the economic downturn, the Masonic Homes created a new branch of outreach for members under age 60: Masonic Family Outreach. In the past year, the program has connected clients to local social services like food banks and the Employment Development Department, helped them obtain public benefits, hosted resource fairs, even provided assistance moving or obtaining transportation to medical appointments.

Here, it’s also about empowerment. “We’re not here to fix people’s lives,” says Sabrina Montes, director of Masonic Outreach. “Yes, we improve them. But we do it by helping our clients think about their situations, and their choices.”



WEB EXTRA

Read more about the Masterpiece Living aging initiative at mymasterpieceliving.com.

Family Outreach is modeled after the Homes’ highly successful Senior Outreach Program. It, too, runs on the clients’ ability to decide what’s best.

“We’ve moved away from the mentality that care managers know best, and we’re going to tell you what to do,” Montes says. “Now we partner with clients by putting the options in front of them. They make the choices.”

The demand for choice is accelerating a trend towards home- and community-based aging services, meaning that the programs through Masonic Outreach are growing more and more relevant.

“People used to kid about ‘when I’m in a nursing home’ as if it were inevitable,” says Joanne Handy, president and CEO of Aging Services in California. “Not any more. Look at the growth of home health care, hospice, private health care services.”

In a recent AARP study, 80 to 85 percent of those asked said that if they needed help, they would prefer to receive it in their homes. “Seniors today are very different from those who will become seniors in the next 20 years,” Montes points out. “The baby boomers have different expectations of what senior life should look like. They want the built-in choices of staying at home.”

Continued next page



According to Handy, the trend for home-based services is also fueled by the recent economic downturn. Many people prefer to stay in their homes, rather than selling for a loss and moving into a residential program.

Even with the current boom in home- and community-based services, Handy cautions that the demand is so great that it may soon outstrip the supply. Then, families will be faced with a new challenge: caring for aging parents who have decided to stay at home.

Masonic Outreach is helping Masons and their families shoulder such responsibilities.

widow join a neighborhood book club or negotiating lower rates with a local gym.

In other words, the program will continue to help clients in the ways they need most. It's something that Montes feels privileged to be part of.

"When I came into this program, I was amazed to find that there's no cap on how much you spend on a client," Montes says. "We would never deny something that somebody needs. That says it all."

HELPING YOUTH FIND A VOICE

Montes' amazement is common among those who come to the Homes with knowledge of the field of care giving. Where other organizations cut budgets, the Masonic Homes has unflinchingly backed the highest quality of care.

The Homes is propelling the field forward in the area of youth services, too. The new Masonic Center for Youth and Families (MCYAF) recently opened in San Francisco, designed to serve youth age 4 to 17 with learning, behavioral, and psychological problems. Through it, the Masons of California will help children and adolescents throughout the state achieve their potential.

At MCYAF, youth and their families meet with a team of leading experts. Where testing and diagnosis might take all of two hours at many major

medical centers, at MCYAF, it spans two weeks.

The center is categorized as a combination of psychodynamic, psychoanalytic, and family systems. In short, it supports the concept of the "whole child." The assessment process includes interviews with the youth's coaches, teachers, and spiritual leaders. This all-encompassing approach not only helps the staff develop the very



best treatment plans for youth and families; it also helps the youth understand themselves better.

Dr. Terrence Owens, the center's clinical director, has 32 years experience in the field, and he's seen the other side. "I would treat kids in the adolescent inpatient unit, kids who were admitted because of a suicide attempt," he says. "When I asked them how they understood what was going on, they would say 'I have a bipolar disorder.' That's the extent of how they could think about themselves."

Owens joined MCYAF because he believes that its model is the best way to reach a more nuanced – and accurate – understanding of a troubled youth. The real problem might be a learning disorder, or a past trauma, or depression. By bringing together all of the clinicians involved in a child's assessment and treatment – from testers to social workers to psychoanalysts – MCYAF can piece together the whole picture.

It seems obvious: two heads are better one. But, constricted by financial limitations and silo-ed services, this degree of collaboration doesn't exist anywhere else in the United States.

In fact, it's rare anywhere in the world. When they were still developing the model, MCYAF executive director Steffani Kizziar and her team met with world-renowned leaders in child psychoanalysis to get feedback on their proposed model. Among them was Mary Target, the professional director of the Anna Freud Centre.

"Mary Target looked across the table at me and said 'If you do this, you will be known throughout the world,'" Kizziar recalls.

MCYAF will perform outcome studies upon every youth's completion of treatment, and they've partnered with the Yale Child Study Center to provide an objective measuring stick. All the research will help determine if the center is living up to its promise.

MCYAF's staff believes it will. The center's team of leading experts have interrupted bustling professional careers and left the private practices they spent years developing, all to be a part of a model they have always believed in, but never thought possible.

"We see it for its revolutionary purpose and service," Owens says.

"They, more than anybody, know what this could do for the children and the families," Kizziar adds. "When you help a kid, you not only change their life, you break generational cycles."

It's a big undertaking. But that's just the part of the Masonic philosophy of care. ♦

The philosophy in action

FOR EVIDENCE OF THE NEW PHILOSOPHY OF CARE, LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THE MASONIC HOME OF COVINA AND ACACIA CREEK.

At Covina, the smaller resident population and intimate campus foster ongoing communication between residents and staff, and greater resident investment in the Home's daily operations. Besides a resident council, the campus has a number of resident committees – from disaster relief to grounds maintenance to health. Through the volunteer program, residents run tours, work the front gate, and help around campus. Some of the residents call bingo and head up other activities that were previously led by staff.

"It's all part of the sense of contributing to the community. It's important to maintain that feeling," says Judy Figueroa, Covina's administrator of senior care.

The Home is creating programs under the new philosophy of care, too. In April they implemented open dining, so residents can drop by the dining hall any time 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., instead of following a strict schedule of mealtimes. Throughout 2010, the Home held a wellness challenge, and brought in monthly speakers to educate residents on nutritional choices and maintaining a healthy weight. As a campus, they shed more than 200 pounds.

Acacia Creek, which welcomed its first residents in 2010, was primed from the start for the new philosophy. Its residents chose the premiere retirement community in large part because of its promise of independent, active living.

The community at large really demonstrates the ideals of successful aging. One resident has ramped up her exercise regiment with a morning power walk through the hilly campus. Another is steadily recovering from surgery through self-directed water aerobics. It's all part of a shared commitment among residents, who encourage each other to stay active and independent – physically, emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually.

HELP PLAN FOR FUTURE NEEDS

Member and family needs for fraternal support and aging care will be different in the future, and we want to identify the needs and preferences now. Watch for an online survey in late March, take a few minutes to complete, and help us plan relevant relief services for the future.

In 2010 the program served 212 seniors and more than 120 families. In keeping with the Homes' new philosophy of care, the programs are evolving beyond crisis intervention, and looking at future ways to enhance wellness within the community – whether helping a

LIFE AFTER MEMORY LOSS

THE FIELD OF DEMENTIA CARE IS CHANGING, AND THE HOMES ARE PART OF THE FORWARD PUSH

By Laura Normand

It took a few months of training on an unlikely computer program, but Gloria A. rediscovered a part of her she thought was lost forever. Once a lounge singer, this Masonic Homes resident stopped performing some years ago. Eventually, she gave up singing altogether.

But when a team from Cal State East Bay challenged Gloria, then 84, to master new computer technology, something clicked. It took work, but she succeeded. She began to rethink other ways she'd lost confidence. Could they, too, be overcome?

As we reach retirement age and beyond, we're often told to sit back and relax; let others do the heavy lifting. But as the saying goes, if you don't use it, you lose it. Once-sharp skills – and overall brain functioning – can decline.

Not if Nidhi Mahendra can help it. Mahendra, an assistant professor at Cal State East Bay, has just completed a four-year study at the Masonic Home at Union City that will change the field of memory support and dementia care. Her work supports a new mantra in memory: use it and improve it.

Making new memories

Mahendra received a grant in 2005 from the Alzheimer's Association to study how

everyday technology might help individuals with memory loss regain lost skills, or acquire new ones. She used devices like computers, video cameras, and PDAs to see if a person with memory loss could master a new game, learn how to use a memory device, or even learn safety strategies to improve skills like balance or mobility.

Mahendra sought out retirement communities in the East Bay, and found the Masonic Home at Union City. Mahendra and a small team engaged more than 100 resident volunteers, from all areas of the Home – independent living, assisted living, Traditions (the Alzheimer's unit), and even skilled nursing. All went through extensive neuropsychological testing. About 40 went on to individualized “cognitive intervention,” or training plans. For up to six months, they met with clinicians twice a week for an hour at a time.

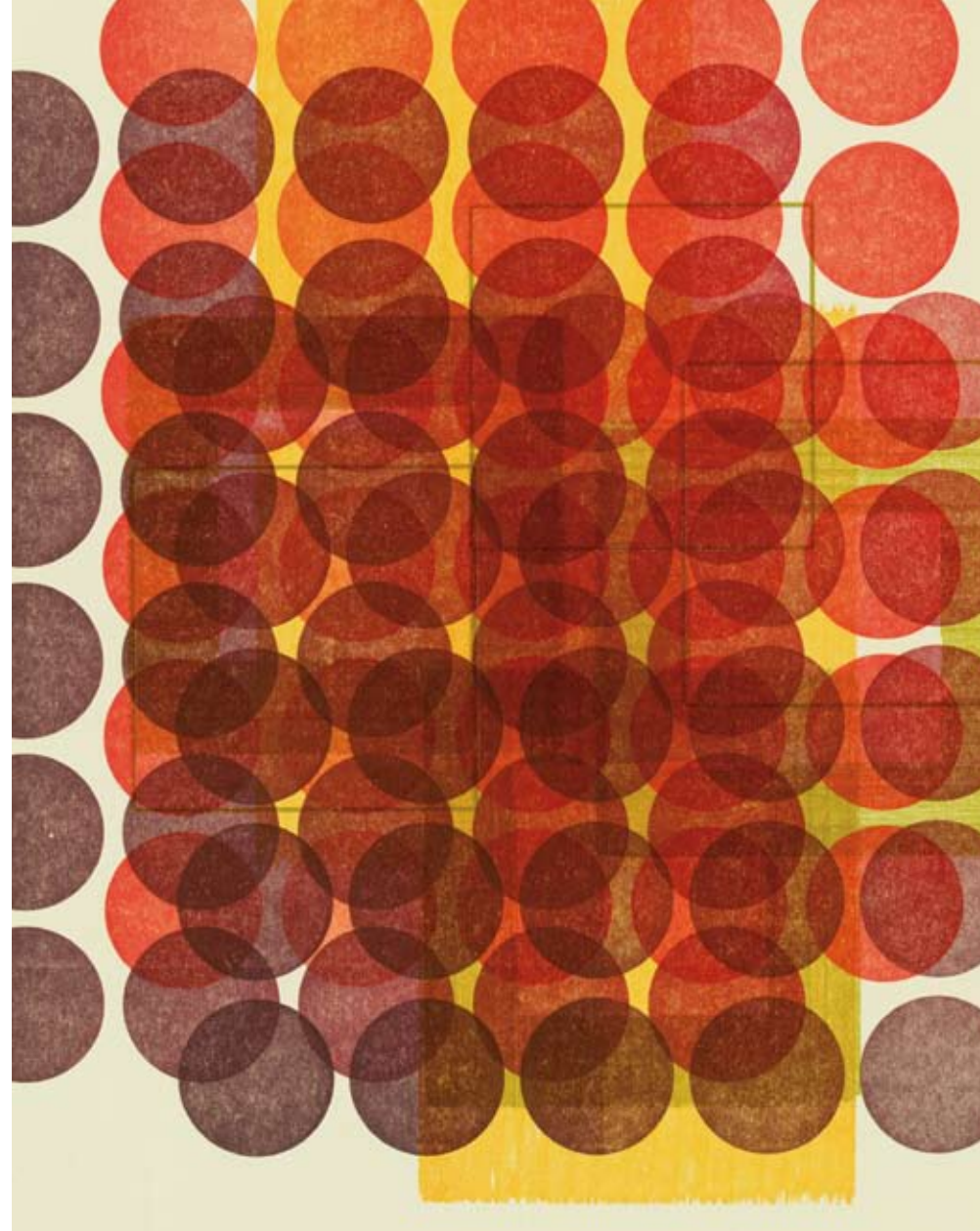
One resident wanted to learn how to e-mail family in Southern California. Mahendra's team, with the help of the Home's IT department, made it possible. Another resident was having difficulty mastering a new microwave. They helped him learn how to use it.

The study proved that individuals with memory loss can learn new skills.

Beginning again, after diagnosis

Five years ago, this type of memory treatment didn't exist. Fifteen years ago, it was inconceivable.

Historically, dementia research focused on improving screening methods for determining if an individual had dementia – and that was that. Until now, “clinicians and family members alike have kind of assumed that the person with dementia can't do anything,” Mahendra explains.



Mahendra is part of the new era, where diagnosis isn't the end; it's the beginning.

Five years ago the Alzheimer's Association entered into a partnership with Intel Corp. to look at how technology might improve some kinds of dementia care. It signaled a changing perception of individuals with dementia. Dementia may affect some memory processes, but those losses can be counteracted by tapping into other abilities.

“The person is not just the dementia,” Mahendra says firmly. “It's just one part of them.”

This shift in mentality touches every aspect of care for those with memory loss. The goal is no longer simply the physical well-being of these individuals; it's thriving with memory loss, and doing everything possible to maintain quality of life. Recent research shows that by providing individuals with dementia with

a sense of security and normalcy – building in daily routines like helping with laundry or meal preparation, and having a central hearth, or “hub,” to congregate – they can still learn. As the field of memory support and dementia care embraces this research, it will create a context for Mahendra's techniques to be most successful.

A break from the past

Advancing the field of dementia care won't be an easy, or quick, transition. It involves a change in everything from how facilities are architecturally designed to how intervention programs are developed and executed.

But it's necessary, and urgent. Recent statistics show that one in eight persons age 65 and older have Alzheimer's disease.

Mahendra holds the Masonic Homes up as an example of the mindset that caregivers must embrace.

“Administrators at other places still treated us with some amount of suspicion and cynicism,” she relays. “But the Masonic Home is so forward-thinking about these interventions, and the potential benefits for the residents.”

“It's a real testament to the success of the organization that they continue to be inspirational,” she adds.

The Masonic Homes will hopefully inspire other organizations to rethink their programs, and help advance the entire field of care. In the meantime, they've inspired one of their own. Not long after she completed her training with Mahendra's team, Gloria sang “The Lady Is a Tramp” at a Home event. She sent Mahendra a recording of the occasion. ♦

BEATING THE ODDS

TO FIGHT CANCER, BY YOUR SIDE IS PUTTING THE BEST NURSES ON THE FRONT LINE

by Heather Boerner



If you've been diagnosed with cancer, you want the odds on your side.

The numbers alone are grim: more than 1 million Californians are currently battling the disease, which can affect every part of the body from the lungs to the blood to bones. This year alone, 120,000 more will be diagnosed with some form of cancer.

But there's more to the equation than numbers. Because between those patients and the disease stand a battalion of doctors, technicians, and, perhaps most constantly, registered nurses (RNs).

Special forces

In hospitals and clinics around the state, more than 25,000 specialized RNs stand prepared to fight cancer symptoms where they start, armed

with the most up-to-date information and highest level training in the field of nursing.

They are oncology certified nurses.

"It really is the gold standard in terms of knowledge," says Anne D. Tanner, MN, RN, executive director of operations for Hoag Hospital in Newport Beach. "What I like to say is, if you've got a Toyota and it breaks down, you don't take it to a BMW or a Volvo dealership. You take it to someone who specializes in Toyotas. It's the same when you have cancer. You're not an OB patient or a psychiatric patient or a diabetes patient. You have cancer and you need care from someone who specializes in cancer care."

Although the ratio sounds staggering – 120,000 new cases of cancer in California this year versus just 25,000 oncology certified nurses – take heart. The Grand Master's Project for 2010-11, By Your Side, aims to reverse them. By Your Side is raising money to put 12 to 15 RNs through the oncology certification this year – and every year. Grand Master Bill Bray and his wife, Linda, both cancer survivors, have established an ongoing Bill and Linda Bray Award in Nurse Oncology to continue the project beyond 2011.

Preparing to do battle

To receive the certification through the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, RNs must work on an oncology floor for a year and a half, participate in numerous trainings, and absorb massive amounts of cutting-edge information about the approximately 200 varieties of cancer that can strike the human body. And they must pass an exhaustive test proving they know the information before they can receive the certification.

"When you're an oncology certified nurse, you have a mastery of the disease," says Tanner.

This is essential. RNs work hectic hours on usually full floors. They constantly check vitals and assess patient well-being and the presence of any side effects. But an oncology certified nurse is likely to catch or prevent problems that a nurse not certified in oncology treatment might miss. For example, nurses must know to increase hydration and issue certain medications for



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ONCOLOGY NURSING SOCIETY

the first round of chemotherapy for a patient with a high presence of cancer in his body. If not, the patient could suffer kidney damage or even failure.

"They know to take measures proactively to keep the kidneys open and flowing so that person's body can rid itself of all cancer," Tanner explains.

Tipping the scales for survival

Not everyone has access to cancer-specialist centers like Texas's M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and Sloan-Kettering Medical Center in New York City. Most people get care where they live – but many communities have sparse medical services, and hospitals are being forced to cut back and close their cancer floors. Oncology certified nurses are particularly crucial in these communities. Their presence provides the care and expertise that patients need, even amidst hospital and medical service cutbacks.

"Think about rural communities that barely have a doctor around," Tanner points out. "If someone with cancer comes into your clinic, you don't just want some random person who

doesn't know how to care for oncology patients to treat him."

A dozen more oncology certified nurses can make a real dent in the prognosis and survival of cancer patients predicted to be diagnosed this year. Think of it like this, says Tanner: The average registered nurse on an inpatient cancer floor in her hospital sees about 10 patients a week. If that same nurse works cancer patients on an outpatient basis, too, she can work with as many as 10 a day, up to 70 a week. Over a year, if those nurses are oncology certified, that's thousands of patients a year who could have a better prognosis because of their nurses' understanding of the disease and its treatment.

"It adds up," says Tanner. "I can't think of a better way to touch a broad spectrum of patients all across our state, and perhaps our country, than giving scholarships to nurses so they can take better care of their patients." ♦

WEB EXTRA

Visit *By Your Side* online to honor a loved one with cancer and support others in their fight.



STRONGER THAN YOU THINK

WITH THE HELP OF MASONIC OUTREACH SERVICES, A YOUNG WOMAN LEADS HER FAMILY OUT OF TROUBLED TIMES

by Laura Normand

On a routine morning last winter, Marilyn Wakefield picked up a ringing phone in the offices of Masonic Outreach Services. The young woman on the other end said she had nowhere else to turn.

“She contacted us out of a sense of desperation. She didn’t know where to go or what to do,” says Wakefield, interim associate director.

The caller, Amy*, was the wife of a California Mason. In the months preceding her call to Masonic Family Outreach, she had watched her world fall apart. Her husband was fired from his job because of uncharacteristic mistakes at work. Shortly after, he was diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer’s. The disease was progressing quickly: he could no longer help with family decisions, could no longer even drive their teenage daughter to her after-school choir. He was beginning to wander.

Years earlier, Amy had been in a severe accident, and could no longer work or drive. Until he lost his job, her husband had been the family’s sole provider.

With no source of income, mother, father, and daughter were struggling to pay for even basic needs. Their heat and water had been cut off. The trash was no longer being picked up. Their roof badly needed repair from snow and

water damage. Alone in a rural part of the state, cut off from many public services, the Masonic lodge, and even neighbors, all they could do was apply for federal disability benefits and wait for the money to come in.

But after a few months, they couldn’t wait any longer.

“She knew her husband was a Master Mason in good standing because of dues payments over the years,” Wakefield says. “When she contacted us she said, ‘I don’t know where to go. I don’t know what else we can do.’ I walked her through how to apply for our program.”

No longer alone

The program, Masonic Family Outreach (MFO), was launched in 2009 through the Masonic Homes of California to help Masonic families address unexpected challenges. It provides short-term case management and financial assistance to families of Masons younger than 60.

Wakefield, who has been a social worker for more than 25 years, has helped many families like Amy’s in their toughest hour.

“It’s not an easy thing to talk about financial issues, especially when you’re not doing well,” Wakefield says. “I feel honored when families allow me to ask the questions and give me the info we need to make the decisions. I feel very honored to be trusted with that kind of info.”

Like most families who contact MFO, Amy didn’t know what public services might be available, or how to access them. She didn’t realize how many months it would take for their application for federal benefits to even be processed – and when it was denied, she didn’t know how to navigate the appeals process.

Most of all, she never thought she would have to find out alone.

“It’s been a very painful experience for her,” says Wakefield. “She is a young woman; She didn’t expect her spouse, in his mid-50s, to be diagnosed with Alzheimer’s. He isn’t able to function as a partner anymore. He is no longer capable of helping her make these decisions.”

In his stead, MFO has stepped in. Wakefield and others have helped Amy find the courage to face the obstacles ahead, and make

Continued on page 26





tough decisions for her family’s best interest. They’ve provided the financial assistance the family needs to stay together, and safe.

Better times ahead

In the beginning, Wakefield spoke with Amy almost everyday, sometimes twice a day, and she’s made the long trip numerous times to meet with the family in person. Together, they’ve planned a family budget. MFO has provided monthly financial assistance to turn on their utilities, repair the snow-damaged roof of their modest home, and buy basics like food and clothes.

The family is isolated, located hours away from relatives and 45 minutes from a major

town. It’s created major obstacles for accessing public services. Even so, MFO has provided referrals to an Alzheimer’s support group, put the family in touch with a medical clinic that doesn’t require health insurance, and assisted them with the appeal for disability benefits.

“We’ve been working with the family in a decision-making process for not just short-term plans, but also in the long-run,” says Wakefield. “It involves a lot of advocacy, and a lot of problem-solving.”

With the help of MFO, Amy is battling – successfully – to keep the family together, and to provide the best future for their teenage daughter. That’s part of the big picture that MFO is helping her to see.

“Our goal is to move them to a larger town,” Wakefield says. “There, they’ll have access to programs for the father, and more opportunities for the daughter to develop.”

It’s very rewarding to know that we have empowered people. We’ve given them choice. We’ve helped them see what the choices are.

MARYLIN WAKEFIELD

The power of choice

What would’ve happened without MFO?

“I think they would’ve had to move in with a family member,” Wakefield says. “They potentially would’ve lost their house.” She considers this, then adds, “Or they would’ve had to be separated. He would’ve gone to stay with his mom, who’s elderly and lives eight hours away.”

But Wakefield’s policy is to focus on strengths and positives – not the troubling scenarios that might have been. She sees a lot of strength in Amy and her family. Increasingly, Amy can see it, too.

Amy’s phone call to MFO was the first step. It signaled a new role for her, one as the head of the household and the primary caretaker. Here, MFO’s influence is perhaps most meaningful. With a little support, she feels strong enough to take on that role, and to lead her family out of these tough times.

“It’s very rewarding to know that we have empowered people. We’ve given them choice. We’ve helped them see what the choices are,” Wakefield says. “Whatever direction they choose to go, even if it’s not the one I would have chosen for them, we have hopefully broadened their scope of options.”

“When people are involved in the process and make those choices, there’s strength that comes with that,” Wakefield says. ✧

**Editor’s note: to protect her privacy, the client’s name has been changed.*

*The Right Home, for
Parents and Child*

Every year the support programs of the Masonic Homes serve hundreds of Masons and their families. Recently, the Masonic Home at Covina and Masonic Outreach Services even worked together to help a family with a unique circumstance.

An older Masonic couple, in their 80s, no longer felt comfortable living on their own. However, they still took care of their middle-aged son, mentally disabled from an accident decades earlier.

The couple knew that the Masonic Home at Covina would be the right place for them, but what about their son?

The staff at the Covina Home contacted Masonic Outreach Services for guidance. Case managers there located placement agencies in the couple’s home community, and provided them with resources and referrals to aid their decision-making process. It led them to the perfect new home for their son, where he could be cared for within their financial means. When he was comfortably settled in, it gave them the peace of mind to make their own move: into the Home at Covina.

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.

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.

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 or call 877/488-6293.

ACACIA CREEK

To learn more about Acacia Creek, our new senior living community in Union City, visit 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.

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.

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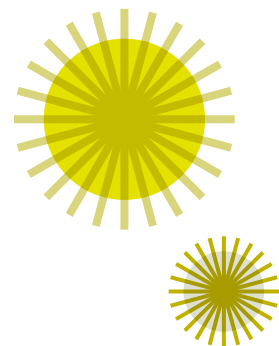
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Download registration forms from freemason.org by selecting Leadership Development from the Member Center drop-down menu. Contact Program Coordinator Kim Hegg at 415/292-9111 with any questions.