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CALIFORNIA FREEMASON

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The Best Things in Life Are Volunteered

In recent years, a mountain of research has amassed on the benefits of volunteering. People who volunteer live longer. They feel a greater sense of well-being. Their communities are economically stronger. But most volunteers, including thousands of California Masons, don't give back for their own benefit. They volunteer because, at some level, they understand the very essence of Masonry's teachings: We're all in this together. Here's a look at volunteerism through the lens of California Masonry – its history, its current role, and its impact.

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Russell E. Charvonia, Grand Master

THE HIGHEST FORM OF MASONIC CHARITY

DC.

alifornia Freemasonry and volunteerism have gone hand-in-hand since the very beginning. From providing aid during the 1850 cholera epidemic to serving in the Masonic Ambulance Corps to reading for students in elementary schools today, Masons always rise to the occasion.

Why are we so willing to offer a helping hand? While I would like to wax poetic, I think it boils down to a simple, yet profound notion: It is the right thing to do. When we see a need, we rush in to address it. When we sense that a cornerstone has rough edges, we band together to smooth it into a useful stone.

In my travels, I have noticed something special among brethren when we volunteer together. There is a deeper bond and a lighter spirit that comes from working beside each other, out in the community. While common Masonic teachings create a unique connection between us, knowing our brothers outside the lodge provides the opportunity to learn even more about each other and to deepen our relationships. The privilege of giving to others strengthens our spirits and gives us a sense of our own gratitude for life and its blessings. The truth about helping others is this: When we do so, we feel good about ourselves.

Masons accept the responsibility to repair our world; to leave it in a better condition than before we were born. By applying our strengths and resources where they are needed, we improve the lives of others – and by extension, our communities. This volunteerism doesn't need to be heroic or entail a great investment of time. Donating blood once a month can help save lives. Tutoring a struggling student for an hour a week may help to secure his solid future.



Volunteerism may well be the highest form of Masonic charity. Kneeling at the altar, we pledge to meet the highest expectation of caring for one another. We accomplish this as brothers when we encourage each other to work together to make the world a better place for our children, and when we are there to assist a brother in need.

It is my hope that California Masons will look deeply within their lodges, communities, and society as a whole, providing Masonic charity where there is a need. Volunteerism builds the world around us as a reflection of who we are – the greatest fraternity on earth. \diamond

KEEP OUR KIDS FIRE SAFE

FRANCISCO

Firefighters in

Safety Education

Alisa Ann Ruch Burn Foundation

-

.42

Each year, thousands of children lose their lives or are seriously burned by fire.

Through Firefighters in Safety Education, California Masons will bring active firefighters into California schools.

Let's keep our kids fire safe.

GIVE TODAY

CARETAKERS OF A HOMETOWN COAST

IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, BUILDING COMMUNITY STARTS WITH PROTECTING SHARED HABITATS

"From these bluffs on a sunny day you can watch the ocean rolling in and hear the roar of the surf 50 feet below. The seagulls are flying at your height, and you're looking down on the backs of pelicans. On a clear night, you can see an emerald flash during the sunset." To hear Jim Poket describe this particular stretch of the Pacific Coast – Pacifica's Esplanade Bluffs, just south of San Francisco – is to understand how enriching a lifelong relationship with the ocean can be.

For Poket and other members of Coastside Lodge No. 762, appreciating the unique beauty of their coastal home comes with a responsibility to care for and protect it. And, because Pacifica is popular with beachcombers, surfers, fishermen, and tourists, that stewardship includes a dedicated effort to keep beaches clean.

Once a month, Poket leads a group of Masons to the Esplanade Bluffs to clear the area of trash. By clearing the bluffs, volunteers catch garbage before it reaches the beach to be swept into the ocean, where it could harm marine life. These efforts were recently acknowledged by the California State Senate, which issued Poket an official commendation that he presented to the lodge; it now hangs in the dining hall. Poket, who has lived in Pacifica for most of his life, was initiated into Coastside Lodge in 2005. At the time, he was actively involved with a local volunteer group, the Bay Area Mentors. He was drawn to the Masons for the opportunity to deepen his public service. For years, Coastside Lodge had been involved in a number of other community programs, including blood drives, child ID efforts, and collecting blankets for the homeless. It was Poket who encouraged both Bay Area Mentors and Coastside Lodge to focus on beach cleanup.

"The beach I clean is the beach I grew up on," Poket explains. He notes that the region boasts a strong history of taking care of its coastal environment. "If it wasn't for volunteers, it would be a total mess. We had an oil spill in 1971, and the clean up was handled by volunteers. I was with the Boy Scouts back then, using straw and pitchforks to absorb the oil from the sand."

The current challenges for Coastside Lodge volunteers are not as daunting as a tanker spill, but they are ongoing.

Ron Ragland, Coastside's past master and current chaplain, participates regularly in cleanup efforts. "We find all kinds of stuff," he says. "Broken glass, stuff that can be recycled, fastfood trash, dirty diapers – 99 percent of what we pick up is cigarette butts." He adds with a laugh, "I haven't found any money yet."

Ragland, a second-generation Mason, enjoys the routine. "My wife comes with me, and sometimes our daughter joins us. We walk down to the beach, pick up everything that shouldn't be there, then give it to Jim's group, the Bay Area Mentors. They tally everything for the state, which keeps statistics. The government couldn't do this work without volunteers."

Ragland sees the lodge's efforts as strongly in line with the Masonic value of relief: "When you're relieving someone, you're taking a burden away. We're saving California money – funds our state can spend in other places. It doesn't cost us money; it just costs our time."

As well as being a matter of civics, Ragland sees picking up trash as a way to take care of his home. "I hate to drive by and see litter. If people realize there's no litter, maybe they'll think



COASTSIDE LODGE NO. 762 LEADS A BEACH CLEANUP EFFORT ALONG PACIFICA'S ESPLANADE BLUFFS.

twice about dropping an empty soda can. Maybe they'll realize everything should be recycled or thrown in the trash."

In March, Coastside Lodge expanded its efforts along a stretch of California Route 1, as part of the state's Adopt-A-Highway program. There will soon be a sign posted along this scenic roadway with the lodge's name on it, helping raise awareness of the Masons in their community.

For Poket, cleaning up Pacifica's beautiful beaches and roadways is work done *with* the community, not just *for* it. "Masons collaborate with other groups to get the job done, which is a plus for a small lodge like ours. We don't have the manpower to do it all ourselves, but we share the same goals as other groups." He also says it's a lot of fun, jesting, "Volunteering is the most selfish thing you can do, because you feel really good after doing it." More seriously, he elaborates, "Being a Mason is more than what transpires in the lodge. The laying of the cornerstone of the White House was done by Masons; in our own small way, we're making a contribution, too. It's not the scale that's important; it's the feeling that's in your heart. We can't always do great things, but we can do small things in great ways." ❖

The Value of Giving Back

We reached out to more than 80,000 fans on the Masons of California Facebook page to find out:

WHY DO YOU VOLUNTEER?

Because I think it is right to help someone who is not strong enough to do something alone.

Josef Chamula

Brotherhood takes practice.

Joseph T. Evans

Volunteering demonstrates my commitment to be an agent of social change, but more importantly, it's my civic obligation to instill a sense of duty in my community.

Peter Ishaya

To keep the smile on my face and the song in my heart.

Don Pablo Gamboa

I promised to give back when I retired. The best place I could think of was my blue lodge. I'm now in my 15th year of volunteering and still going strong!

Jerry Michaelson

Volunteering is my way of saying 'thank you' for all the blessings I received in life and it is my way of giving back to the community.

Francis Villareal

Because I love to serve and see people happy.

Mmaka Ikechukwu

One person can make the difference.

Erika Jacquez

Because it's the right thing to do. And worth every moment.

Douglas Cloyd



WEB EXTRA

Read even more responses from our recent polls – and join the conversation.



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FACES OF MASONRY

MEET JIM WESTFALL: MASONIC HOMES VOLUNTEER AND TROMBONIST

by Jay Kinney

Jim Westfall, past master of Alameda Lodge No. 167 in Fremont, has been a steady volunteer at the Masonic Home at Union City for the past 15 years. Westfall's duties typically include accompanying residents to local shopping centers, the library, or to special cultural events. He helps residents get on and off the vans, and makes sure everyone is accounted for. Carlene Voss, volunteer and community resource manager, estimates that Westfall has donated more than 1,800 hours to the Home since he began volunteering in 2000 – a testament to his dedication.

An avid musician, Westfall plays the trombone in a couple of bands, which he has brought to play at the Masonic Home on several occasions. His German-style group enlivened Union City's Oktoberfest one year. And, his buoyant U.S.S. Hornet Band, specializing in big-band jazz and dance music, is always a hit with Homes' residents.

"I wish that more of our members would get involved," says Westfall, a Hiram Award recipient and member of Northern California Research Lodge, as well as Mariposa Lodge No. 24. "It is definitely very worthwhile and enjoyable. I've made many friends with residents over the years and it has really enriched my life."



In his own words:

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO VOLUNTEER AT THE MASONIC HOMES?

Alameda Lodge is the lodge closest to the Masonic Home at Union City, and I live only five miles from there. A couple of the Homes' administrators were members of my lodge, so I was probably more aware of it than most Masons. Once I retired and my time was freed up, it seemed like a natural thing to do.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU VOLUNTEER?

We get a calendar every month from the Masonic Homes that shows planned resident outings. I let them know which ones I can assist with. This past month I was over there six or seven times. I usually drive the "Shuttle Bug" every Saturday afternoon and take residents shopping in Fremont.

WHAT WAS AN ESPECIALLY MEMORABLE OUTING?

I accompanied a group of skilled nursing residents going bowling – wheelchairs and all. The local bowling alley has a special lane equipped with a ramp that accommodates the wheelchairs. It didn't make for the highest scores, but everyone had a great time. I even brushed up on my own bowling skills! \diamond *Get Involved: Volunteering at the Masonic Homes*

The Masonic Homes of California offer year-round opportunities for Masons and their families and friends to share talents, build relationships, and bring joy to residents' lives.

MANY WAYS TO GIVE BACK

The Masonic Homes offer volunteer opportunities to suit a variety of interests. Sample volunteer opportunities include:

- » Socializing with residents
- » Teaching or assisting with arts and crafts
- » Offering educational programming to residents
- » Helping plan, decorate for, or serve at on-campus parties and events
- » Calling bingo or helping with other games
- » Initiating pet therapy visits
- » Assisting staff on outings
- » Helping residents connect digitally through Facebook, Skype, and other tech tools
- » Planting, pruning, or harvesting plants in the Homes' onsite gardens
- » Providing administrative and clerical support

WHY VOLUNTEER AT THE MASONIC HOMES?

- » Offer fraternal affection to senior members and widows
- » Share your talents and learn new skills
- » Make new friends
- » Volunteer with your lodge to strengthen relationships
- » Volunteer with your family to encourage children to give back to their community
- » See first-hand how the Masonic Homes embody fraternal values

HOW TO GET STARTED

- » Union City campus: Contact Carlene Voss, Masonic Homes volunteer and community resource program manager, at (510) 429-6469 or <u>cvoss@mhcuc.org</u>
- » Covina campus: Contact Judy Figueroa, administrator, Masonic Home at Covina, at (626) 251-223 or jfigueroa@mhccov.org

HISTORY

BROTHERS TO THE RESCUE

DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR, CALIFORNIA BROTHERS BANDED TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THEIR COUNTRY

by Adam Kendall

Although the United States was officially neutral during the early years of World War I, groups of young men eager to assist in the Allied effort were informally organized by American universities and sponsored by the American Red Cross. Patriotism at this time was infectious, and a number of Masons became interested in the idea of serving in the United States Army where brothers could stand together.

On May 12, 1917, at the Stewart Hotel in San Francisco, a Masonic committee determined that one way to achieve this goal was to form an Ambulance Corps that would allow brothers to enter the service together through the Red Cross. Financial resources were quickly mobilized with the assistance of the Masonic Club of San Francisco, which raised \$15,000 for the National Red Cross Service. This same committee was also charged with providing rare comforts to the men who would go to war, including magazines and books. "Foster" mothers and fathers in the Masonic family assisted by "adopting" an individual member of the corps as a "foster son," for whom they would provide welcome moral support in the form of mail and other gifts.



By late 1917, following the United States government's declaration of war, these volunteer groups were forbidden and the committee's plan was revised to supply the U.S. Army with a full complement of men and officers for one of its ambulance companies. On August 4, 1917, the "Masonic Ambulance Corps" took the official designation of the 364th Ambulance Co., 316th



WEB EXTRA

<u>Visit the online archives</u> of the Henry Wilson Coil Library and Museum of Freemasonry to view original artifacts from the Masonic Ambulance Corps.

Sanitary Train, 91st Division, United States Army, and left San Francisco for training at Camp Lewis in Washington. Charles Cole, a member of the Corps, recalled,

The Masonic Ambulance Corps assembled in front of the San Francisco City Hall and the mayor of the city presented to the company a large American flag, which we carried in the parade along Market Street, accompanied by the Shrine Band. The flag was extra large and although Hereford, carrying it, was quite tall, the end still dragged on the ground, and I, acting as color guard, found it necessary to carry it over my arm. With the Shrine band playing 'Onward Christian Soldiers,' this was a thrilling day for us as we entrained for Camp Lewis.

The company, one of four such units in the 316th Sanitary Train of the 91st Division, consisted of a captain, four lieutenants, 12 sergeants, 20 chauffeurs and 87 privates. Nearly every member was a California Master Mason, although there were a few men from other Masonic jurisdictions. Once at Camp Lewis, in addition to the usual training and duties, the men assisted with vaccinating incoming troops, as well as providing ambulance service throughout the encampment.

Following eight days of additional training at Camp Merritt in New Jersey, the Corps boarded the steamer "Olympic," and sailed first to Southampton, England, and then to Cherbourg, France. By the end of August, the company was serving on the front lines and participating in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive and the Battle of the Lys during the final phase of the war.

The diary of Private William Nielsen offers a glimpse into the experiences of the Masonic Ambulance Corp members as they traversed a war-torn countryside in the last days of the war.

Friday, October 25, 1918: Struck tents about 8 o'clock; at 9 on our way. This time seeing Belgium on foot as we did in France. Our march took us across no-man's land. Saw the graves of a million men. At Langemark we crossed what was the German front line. Many ruins. Nothing left of towns, tanks, etc... About dusk we arrived in Roulers ...Salvage blankets at field hospital. Pass dead man in hall on stretcher.

Monday, November 11, 1918: Up at 5. Load of rations for 364th to Audenarde across river. All say war fini at 11. Bum lunch. Firing increasing as it nears the last few minutes – and then silence! Parked machine in old Hun hospital. Bed at 7 p.m.

Tuesday, November 12, 1918: Cleaned up car. Took detail out to find dead. Found seven unlucky soldiers killed the last day by shell fire. That's what I call hard luck! Dug two up, one with mustache (ask Johnny). Left alone digging. One a "traveler"...

[Note: In the last sentence in Nielson's diary, above, the reference to one of the deceased soldier as a "traveler" implies that through some means, Nielson was able to identify this man as a Mason.]

With the November 11 armistice holding, the 364th Ambulance Company left France on April 7, 1919 aboard the steamer "Virginian" and arrived in New York on April 20. On May 2, the members of the company left for their respective demobilization centers, and those destined for the San Francisco Presidio arrived there on May 9. Four days later, they were discharged from the U.S. Army. ♦

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CALIFORNIA MASONIC SYMPOSIUM

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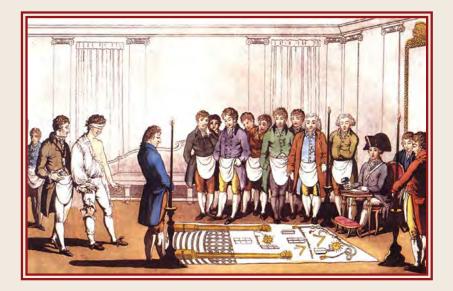
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THE NEXT GENERATION OF MASONIC VOLUNTEERS

THROUGHOUT CALIFORNIA, MASONIC YOUTH ARE GIVING BACK

by Arthur Patterson

As Miss California Job's Daughter, Rachel Halladay has traveled thousands of miles throughout the past year. But just five years ago, she couldn't walk. The arches of her feet had always been too high, and years of trying to overcompensate had made her situation worse. After three surgeries, she had to relearn to walk, step by step. "It was a very stressful and emotional time for me," remembers Halladay. But today, she values those times for the insight they provided. "Because of that experience, I know what it's like to rely on someone else," she says.

This perspective made it all the more meaningful for Halladay to meet children who had received hearing devices through the Hearing Impaired Kids Endowment Fund (HIKE) – Job's Daughters International's official philanthropic project. "One boy said he had never been able to hear traffic before," she remembers. "It was awesome to meet him!"

While Halladay celebrates the independence provided through hearing aids and her own surgeries, she realizes that community support is a crucial component of the healing process. She's grateful for the help she received, and is eager to give back to others through her role as a youth leader.

Repairing the world

While Halladay was inspired by personal experience, Levi Ridge Pivoda, master councilor of Northern California DeMolay, was moved by Grand Master Russell Charvonia's theme: "Repairing the World by Improving Ourselves." Pivoda believes the best way to kick-start self-improvement is by giving back within his community. "The reception of this theme has been great so far – we all get together to make a difference," says Pivoda, who joined DeMolay at age 14 after attending Job's Daughters dances with his three sisters. Many DeMolay members near his home in Placerville band together to volunteer at the Ronald McDonald House, raise money and organize canned food drives for various causes, and clean public parks. They also support Toys for Tots, which in turn helps children in need.

He explains that youth order members have the greatest sense of pride when local Masons, Scottish Rite members, and other Masonic organizations work side by side with them. Along these lines, NorCal DeMolay has pledged to support this year's Grand Master's Project – Firefighters in Safety Education – which brings active firefighters to elementary schools to educate children on burn prevention.

Pivoda's personal favorite volunteer activity is reading to children at his local public library. "It's uplifting to me because I know I'm helping somebody else," he says.

Causes close to the heart

In addition to supporting The HIKE Fund, California Job's Daughters also choose an annual charity to sponsor on a statewide level. This year, members selected Canine Companions for Independence – an organization that helps raise, train, and place service dogs for people with disabilities or

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Continued next page

IN CALIFORNIA

post-traumatic stress disorder. "There are a number of Job's Daughters in our bethels who have service dogs," explains Daley Roche, grand bethel honored queen. "This project lets the girls be directly involved in connecting people with the canine companions they need."

According to Roche, Job's Daughters throughout California have been enthusiastic about supporting Canine Companions. To help raise funds, they volunteer to organize and staff community dinners and yard sales – and have even hosted bake sale auctions, where lemon meringue pies have been known to fetch bids of more than 100 dollars each.

One reason for members' enthusiasm is that their participation isn't limited to fundraising or other financial initiatives: Canine Companions provides opportunities for girls to volunteer statewide. Recently, members gathered to clean Canine Companions campuses in Oceanside and Santa Rosa, where clients stay while they form bonds with potential service dogs. "Each family is paired with the dog that best suits them," Roche explains.

Roche moved from the small Central Valley city of Porterville to Riverside for college four years ago. To help mitigate the culture shock of moving to a major metropolitan area, she turned to volunteering, through her school and the local Job's Daughters bethel. And, as grand bethel honored queen, she travels throughout California to promote Canine Companions and to thank girls for their involvement.

"Volunteering is something that is part of me," Roche says. As a fourth-generation Job's Daughter, she foresees a future that will always involve helping others and learning.

Making an impact

"What we're doing on this project will make a big impact," says Halladay, who is actively involved with Canine Companions, alongside The HIKE Fund. "We're helping clients by placing them with dogs, but we're also enabling the organization to help families."

Halladay and her San Diego-area bethel have been involved in the Oceanside campus cleanup as well as car washes, dog walk-a-thons, bake sales, and other fundraising drives.

And, the girls' community efforts stretch even further: Halladay's bethel is also making personal hygiene kits for first responders to distribute to people displaced by disasters. Each includes a washcloth with a handwritten, uplifting message like, "Have a nice day."

"If we can make service projects fun, we can keep members," Halladay says. This is especially important for her, since part of her role as a divisional leader is to provide a cohesive, familylike member experience. And, engaging charitable projects are a great way to encourage new members to join as well. While Halladay's mother and older sisters were Job's Daughters, not everyone has heard of the organization. "We're really trying to get our name out there," she says.

Halladay, Pivoda, and Roche all find similarities between the Masonic ideals of their youth orders and the goals of the charities they support. Seeing the results of their efforts firsthand brings personal satisfaction, and embeds the drive to volunteer as a value they will carry with them for life. \diamond



WEB EXTRA

- Learn more about the charitable programs referenced in this article:
- » <u>Firefighters in Safety Education</u>
- » <u>Hearing Impaired Kids Endowment Fund</u>
- » <u>Canine Companions for Independence</u>



GRAND BETHEL HONORED QUEEN DALEY ROCHE AND MISS CALIFORNIA JOB'S DAUGHTER RACHEL HALLADAY HAVE ACTIVELY VOLUNTEERED THROUGH CANINE COMPANIONS - AN ORGANIZATION THAT TRAINS AND PROVIDES SERVICE DOGS FOR PEOPLE IN NEED.



12.5L



Laura Benys

Give one person five dollars to spend on himself, and give another person five dollars to spend on someone – anyone – else, and guess who'll feel happier in the end?

> Not the guy with the large latte and his own name scrawled on the side. No, the person who will report a much higher boost in happiness will be the guy who gave his money to

the

HOW VOLUNTEERING MAKES YOU

happier, healthier, and more connected

esed:

a homeless person. Or who put his money in a jar for the local youth group. Or who, in fact, did wind up buying a latte – but for the person in line behind him.

Take a dedicated volunteer, someone who serves breakfast at his soup kitchen every week, or tutors high schoolers at an after-school program. Ask him why he does it, and more often than not, you'll wear him down to some version of this statement: It makes me feel good.

Turns out, this isn't modesty - or myth. It's science.

One study, published in 2013 by Carnegie Mellon University, found that adults over age 50 who volunteered on a regular basis were less likely to develop high blood pressure. Another study, this one from the London School of Economics and Political Science, found that helping others increases one's sense of well-being. A review of research from the past 20 years, courtesy of the University of Exeter Medical School, found that volunteering is also associated with lower depression and a 22 percent reduction in the risk of dying.

Continued next page

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FEATURE

lasonic selief adopted a hands-on character

very early on.

What's driving these results? At a high level, "Giving strengthens our relationships and connections to others," explains psychologist Sara Konrath.

Konrath directs <u>Indiana University's</u> <u>interdisciplinary program on empathy</u> <u>and altruism research</u>. "Giving makes people feel a higher sense of self-efficacy; a sense that they are in charge of their lives," she says. "It also gives people a sense of purpose and helps them feel that their lives have meaning."

Volunteerism, apparently, has powerful therapeutic benefits. In scientific terms, we're just beginning to understand how powerful. The same might be said for its role in California Masonry.

THE EVOLUTION OF RELIEF

There are several ways to interpret the verb *volunteer*. For this article, we will set aside the broadest versions – for example, willingly applying for Masonry in the first place – and focus on the most active form: Devoting time and effort specifically for someone else's benefit. In other words, service work – or as Masons refer to it: relief.

Back in the Middle Ages, in the very beginning of operative masonry, a mason needed to protect himself and his lodge brothers. Operative masonry was dangerous work, wrapped in dizzyingly high scaffolding and thousands of tons of stone. So, Medieval freemasons made a pact to look out for each other and their families. Through this simple social compact, the tenet of relief was born.

When the Enlightenment blossomed over Europe and Freemasonry transformed into a speculative fraternity, the concept of relief transitioned, too. The Age of Reason was a time to reflect on the past. Intellectuals – including the Masons who developed much of the fraternity's recorded ritual – turned to the past, seeking truths they believed had been discovered long ago but since forgotten. They studied the Greek philosophers, pantheons like Aristotle and Plato, who asserted that to be happy was to be moral; and to be moral, at its crux, was to help others.

Fast-forward to present day. The notion of helping others is embedded in Masonic teachings. In the first degree alone, it is referenced three times. The initiate is introduced to the symbol of the 24-inch gauge, divided into thirds, as a model for how he should portion the hours of his day. Notably, the first third is "for the service of God and a distressed worthy brother." During the lecture, the master introduces the three principle tenets of brotherly love, relief, and truth, "to regard the whole human species as one family... to aid, support, and protect each other." Finally, the initiate goes through the Rite of Destitution, the culmination of his relief lessons. There, he learns – as it is described in a <u>1923 essay by the Masonic</u> <u>Service Association of North America</u> – "we must give not simply our money, but ourselves."

Even in the years before California was a state, its Masons embodied that ideal. In the days of Manifest Destiny, thousands flooded west with dreams of fortune. When they found poverty and disease instead, Masonic lodges provided food and medical aid. When cholera swept through Sacramento in 1850, Masons helped build and maintain a hospital at Sutter's Fort. After the 1906 earthquake and fire of San Francisco left 400,000 homeless, hundreds of brothers rushed in from all corners of the state to set up food banks, bandage the wounded, help families find each other, and staff round-the-clock shelters. Grand Master Motley Hewes Flint rode a train from Los Angeles right into the rubble, where he spent weeks unloading wagons of supplies, then months volunteering in shelters and food lines.

In California, Masonic relief adopted a hands-on character very early on. And from there, it was just a short leap to volunteerism.

PERSONAL IMPACT

"Biologically, human beings thrive the most when [they are] embedded deeply within communities of face-to-face relationships and social interactions," says Konrath, the psychologist. "There is nothing that can replace eye contact and touch."

"There's a big difference when you give of yourself," agrees James Ritter, secretary of <u>San Mateo Lodge No. 26</u>. "When you go to an awards ceremony for a scholarship, you get a sense of: "This is my lodge helping," he says. "But when you are doing outreach where you're giving of yourself, you get a real sense of, "This is *me* helping."

Each lodge in California sustains its own level of interest in community service and volunteering. Lodges are organized with a great deal of autonomy, allowing each to build activities around members' passions. While most lodges give back to their communities in some way, some lodges may spend more efforts on perfecting the ritual or bolstering Masonic education or social programming instead.

But at Ritter's lodge, volunteering is a priority. San Mateo Lodge has been participating for 17 years in a national program called **Rebuilding Together**. Every year, an army of lodge volunteers muster at a house in the community that needs repairs in order to keep its occupants safe, warm, and in their home. It is a long day filled with sweat, dirt, safety glasses, and sore muscles. But more members turn out for this event than any other during the year.

Every day, thousands of other California Masons volunteer in a myriad of ways. They organize blood drives and community fundraisers. They show up at public schools to read to students and renovate playgrounds. They help put on <u>Firefighters In Safety</u> <u>Education</u> presentations to keep kids and communities safer.

And, they get personally involved in that oldest form of Masonic philanthropy: member relief. In efforts that are growing increasingly structured, lodges and now entire swaths of the state are coordinating their own outreach efforts. San Diego's Division IX has had a network in place since 2011 - read more about this effort in "A Call To Arms." In the words of Jim Kurupas, one of the Masons who got the Division IX initiative started, these brothers are "boots on the ground" for the fraternity's formal outreach program, Masonic Outreach Services (MOS). Lodge volunteers attend quarterly trainings with MOS staff. They distribute resources and teach lodges how to recognize warning signs, and how to approach fraternal family members who may need help. When they get a tip about a brother or widow in need, they are ready, at a moment's notice, to show up on that person's doorstep. And over the past four years, they have changed lives. Older brothers who had been secretly living in their cars now have a warm bed at night. Widows who were no longer safe at home alone have assistance. Families are connecting with the social services they need.

Kurupas says that the volunteers' lives have been changed, too. The brothers who comprise Division IX's outreach initiative feel extraordinary pride and passion in their work. Kurupas thinks it's evidence of a larger trend.

"Masonry, like anything else, has evolved," Kurupas says. "Our idea of philanthropy is

Continued next page

FEATURE

becoming more active. The hard wiring now is that making a difference means going by and seeing if the car is on blocks or the grass is three feet high. It means knocking on the door."

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Geoff Holbrook is the treasurer of Imperial Lodge No. 390, and a volunteer on one of the fraternity's Public Schools Advisory Councils (PSACs), which were formed in part to rally lodges to the 2011–2014 Raising A Reader initiative. He believes deeply in the PSACs' mission to support public education. As a civil attorney for one of the poorest counties in the state, he is acutely aware of the limitations of government assistance, and the need for Masons to get involved.

"True impact comes from individuals taking time out of their schedules to work together to help others," Holbrook says. This has been the self-appointed role of Masons and lodges in California for a very long time, particularly in regards to public education. Public Schools Month began in 1920, when lodges witnessed the struggle of the local governments and schools, and decided to do something about it. <u>Masons</u> continue to support public schools today.

Ilir Zherka is the executive director of the **National Conference on Citizenship**, a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America. According to Zherka, "organizations like the Freemasons are critical to the economic well-being of an area."

"If the billions of hours given by volunteers each year disappeared," Zherka says, "our country would be hard-pressed to tackle systemic challenges like poverty, hunger, homelessness, and educational disparities."

One example close to home is the Midnight Mission, the oldest continuously operating human service organization in the Los Angeles region. The organization acts as a bridge out of homelessness back into the community, providing refuge and 24-7 services to about 1 million men, women, and children each year. Last year, volunteers contributed 20,000 hours to make this possible.

"Our volunteers are essential. We're 100 years old, and in that 100 years, we have never closed our doors for even one hour," says Larry Adamson, president and CEO. "It's because our community believes in what we do and supports us."

Although the Midnight Mission is not an official Masonic charity, it has always had strong fraternal ties. Its founder was a prominent Mason. Of its 17 board members today, 11 are Masons. Adamson is a California past grand master. The downtown facility is a favorite place for lodges, youth orders, and fraternal family to give back. Since 2013, Masonic groups have logged more than 5,600 volunteer hours there – in the kitchen, on the food line, and providing direct services to those who have lost everything.

"This is Masons putting their teachings into practice," says Adamson. "It's Masons trying to build a better community for those at the lowest rung of society's ladder."

THE PATH FORWARD

As a nation, the U.S. experienced a troubling decline in volunteerism right around the turn of the 20th century. This decline reached its lowest point between 1970 and 1990. Then, beginning in the 90s, the trend began to reverse. A few years ago, the rate of volunteering among adults in America was at its highest in 30 years. <u>Today, in the United States</u>, <u>about one out of</u> <u>every four adults performs volunteer work</u>.

John Heisner, California's senior grand warden, talks about volunteerism as a force; a form of energy that's coursing through the fraternity. "A lot of today's members want to make a tangible difference. They want to be able to volunteer and change the world," he says. "We want to capture that energy."

Helping others doesn't just lead to happiness, it is happiness.

And yet, Masonry is not limited to being a service organization. From the beginning, this has been a clear distinction. Service clubs like Rotary or Kiwanis or the Lions focus on improving the world through specific deeds. Masons believe they must improve the world by first improving themselves, and that performing acts of altruism is a part of this process.

Back in 300 B.C., Aristotle posited that happiness is simply the expression of virtue. In other words, he believed that helping others doesn't just lead to happiness; it is happiness. Two millennia later, the research seems to agree. When we help another person, we feel better ourselves. It's a powerful statement about humanity. It's also an affirmation of Masonry's ultimate teaching: that all of us are in this together. There are countless ways to embody this teaching. For many in Masonry, volunteering is the path they choose. It's a way to give back. And whether they intend it or not, it's a way to get a whole lot back, too.

THE VOLUNTEER EFFECT

A week before interviewing for this article, Grand Master Russ Charvonia volunteered with fellow Masons at the Loma Linda VA hospital, building wheelchair-accessible planter boxes. It was a great day of bonding, he recalled, and by all accounts, successful: "We were hot and sweaty and laughing, and nobody lost a finger."

But it wasn't until the next day that he really felt the effects. That day, the brother who'd organized the event **posted a picture**

on Facebook. It was of a veteran who had wheeled himself beside a newly constructed planter box, which has cutouts underneath it to allow a wheelchair to come right up to the side. The veteran is wearing a bright red Marines ball cap, and he is resting his forearms on the wooden ledge of the planter box, his face inches from the plants and soil. It is a sunny day, and the smell of basil and thyme practically wafts out of the photo. The veteran is looking off into the distance, resting in the garden. "That made it all worthwhile," says Charvonia. "This was somebody who otherwise couldn't get close enough to smell a flower or herb or to pick its leaves. What kind of joy did we just bring him?"

Jim Kurupas sees Charvonia's response echoed in the volunteers he helps train for Division IX outreach.

"People need the human connection – to touch, feel, and *experience* the effect of making a difference," he says. "We want to see the end result."

"When someone is living a better life because of you, when their quality of life is improved, you can't walk away and not feel good," Kurupas says. "And that's OK – you should take pride in the fact that you made a difference in a person's life. When you do something that feels good, you'll want to do it again. That's good for everyone – not just for the fraternity. Not just for those receiving the benefit. But for those providing it, too. It's a symbiotic relationship."

After all, Kurupas says, when it really comes down to it, "We all need each other." \diamond

WEB EXTRA

Explore more about volunteering:

- » Access research studies about volunteering
- » Listen to or read an NPR story about how spending money on others can increase happiness
- » Watch an inspiring TED talk about the benefits of pro-social spending

21



Our Annual Fund Makes a Profound Difference

"In 2013 I couldn't give money, but I could give my time. In 2014, I had the ability to give money, and so I gave it. Being a Mason is about giving what you can. If you have the ability to give, you have the obligation to give."

- Bro. Paul Dana, Phoenix Lodge No. 144

Paul's gift helped to make all of this – and much more – possible:

765 Masonic family members received fraternal support and services

273 Students received scholarships from the California Masonic Foundation and the Masonic Homes

4,523 At-risk youth received baseball mitts through Masons4Mitts

Give Today

IN CALIFORNIA

CATWALK FOR COMMUNITY

ACACIA CREEK RESIDENTS CELEBRATE FUN, FASHION, AND GIVING BACK

by Michelle Simone

Radiating poise, the models stride down the runway. A few pause to curtsey; others wave. Some walk lightly arm-in-arm with their tuxedo-clad escorts and one has a steady grasp on her walker. All beam with pride.

"Welcome to the fourth annual fashion show at Acacia Creek," says Mary Jane Brusher, special projects manager and community liaison. Applause from 150 guests fills the dining room, in Union City, California.

"It makes you feel good"

This year's Spring Fling Fashion Show took place on March 21, but preparations for the festivities began more than six months in advance. Back in October, Brusher was already well on her way with event preparations, choosing this year's sponsored charities, convincing retailers to donate clothing, and asking local businesses to donate raffle prizes, as well as coordinating menus, decorations – and, most importantly, models.

In January, the volunteer modeling staff gathered at Acacia Creek's Turkey Roost bar for an introduction to this year's show. They learned what they would wear (clothing donated by a local Chico's); who would escort them down the runway (board members from local community organizations and Acacia Creek residents); and what the show would support (LIFE ElderCare and the New Haven Schools Foundation).

"I'm looking forward to a brand-new experience," said Karen Moody, who had just recently moved to Acacia Creek.

Acacia Creek resident Shirley Roehl had been here before. "I'm what they call a 'pioneer," she laughed. "This is my fourth time



AT THE SPRING FLING FASHION SHOW, PATRICIA OSAGE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF LIFE ELDERCARE (CENTER), IS ESCORTED BY LIFE ELDERCARE BOARD MEMBER RAKESH SHARMA AND ACACIA CREEK RESIDENT CHUCK BUCHANAN.

modeling in the fashion show. It's always a great deal of fun and it makes you feel good."

Judy Buchanan, another Acacia Creek resident, helped stuff goodie bags last year, and was encouraged by her positive experience to give modeling a try. "I really enjoyed spending time with other residents who I hadn't yet gotten to know," she said.

Acacia Creek Retirement Counselor Martha Crawford was among this year's new models. Crawford, who once attended the London Academy of Modeling, planned to use her experience to choreograph the show. "I'm honored to be included as a model for the first time," she said. "And, I'm so excited to see what we'll be wearing! Chico's clothing just lights up your eyes."

In addition to preparing to model, Acacia Creek resident Shirley Moore was busy researching music. She planned to play the

Continued next page

IN CALIFORNIA



ACACIA CREEK RESIDENT KAREN MOODY MODELS CLOTHING FOR CHARITY AT THE SPRING FLING FASHION SHOW.

piano as guests arrived. "I was new when they had the show last year," she explained. "I can't wait to help out."

Supporting causes close to home

Patricia Osage, executive director of LIFE ElderCare, was at the Turkey Roost, too – both to learn what to expect as a model, and to personally thank residents for supporting LIFE ElderCare's charitable programs.

"I was a model at age 9," she joked. "I'm hoping things haven't changed too much!"

Her tone grew more serious as she outlined how LIFE ElderCare would use the funds raised by the fashion show to support Meals on Wheels in Union City. "With our aging population, it's really an area of growing need," she explained. "We deliver more than 350 meals each day to elders who desperately need help. Our volunteers make sure people have good nutrition; that they don't become malnourished, like so many isolated, frail seniors do. But just as important, we serve as a point of contact. For some of the elderly people who use Meals on Wheels, our volunteers are literally the only ones who check in on them and make sure they're safe."

The second charity earmarked for proceeds was the New Haven Schools Foundation. Established in 1981, it helps close gaps in state funding, ensuring local teachers and students can continue to benefit from top-quality educational programming, including a broad range of extra-curricular activities – from sports to forensics.

Acacia Creek Executive Vice President Chuck Major explains, "The Acacia Creek Fashion Show is a meaningful way for our residents and staff to give back to the community in which we live; to make a difference locally."

Successful aging

This year's Spring Fling Fashion Show was a success. Thanks to the hard work of Brusher and the models, Acacia Creek raised \$2,000 for each charity – money that will stretch far into the Union City community and beyond.

But the fashion show serves another important purpose, too: It inspires residents to pursue an active lifestyle that emphasizes vitality and growth at every age.

Although this was Roehl's fourth time modeling in the fashion show, it was her first year using a walker. "At first I didn't know if I wanted to walk at all," she confesses. "But then I decided that I should do it for the other ladies. I wanted them to think that if I can do it, so can they. Just because you need a walker doesn't mean you have to watch from the sidelines."

Next to her, other residents nod in agreement.

"I don't want to spend my retirement sitting around," Moody says. "That's why I'm here at Acacia Creek." \diamond



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TO PROTECT AND SERVE

IN NORTHERN CALIFORNIA, COMMUNITY SERVICE BREATHES LIFE

by Heather Boerner

Plymouth, California, is a quiet community of fewer than 1,000 people located in the foothills of the Sierras. When Dusty Deryck looks around the 400-house town east of Sacramento, he sees the possibilities: better fire education for the students at Plymouth Elementary School, and more books, too. And whatever else the city asks of <u>Drytown</u> <u>Lodge No. 174</u>.

"I'll be visiting the city council meeting next week to ask what they need done that our lodge can do," says Deryck, senior warden at Drytown Lodge and a past master of Hiram Lodge No. 25. "We don't just want to promote lodge visibility – we want to be a benefit to our town. I'm not sure what we will do yet; we don't want to dictate what we'll offer. We just want to contribute something of lasting value for our community."

The brothers' ability to pitch in - to do whatever it takes - is a remarkable accomplishment. A few years ago, the 150 year-old-lodge was in danger of closing, due to spotty attendance and near-empty tills. Membership had dwindled to around 30 brothers, and there weren't always enough officers to open stated meetings.

But, <u>that's all changed</u>. A campaign by Deryck, Master Harold "Hal" Barker (also past master of Placerville Lodge No. 26), and Secretary Bill Brewer, among others, has grown the membership to more than 60 members and has reinvigorated the lodge. Today, Brewer explains, brothers visit Drytown Lodge to get a sense of what it really means to be a Mason.

"People come and they say, 'This is what Masonry is all about,'" says Brewer. "Masonry makes good men better, and the more you get involved in your community, the more you reach out, the better it can be. We make an effort to stay active."

The Drytown brothers continue to enthusiastically pursue their vision of volunteerism and service. They recently got the ball rolling to bring this year's Grand Master's Project, <u>Firefighters in Safety Education</u>, to the town's sole grade school, where local volunteer firefighters will teach kids to stay fire-safe.

"If we can save one kid from serious burns, it will be worth it," says Barton. "As an old Shriner, I've seen too many kids with burns."

And, community efforts don't stop there. The lodge is building partnerships with the local Rotary Club, and hopes to initiate joint projects. At the annual Rotary Club Street Fair and Flea Market, held every May, Drytown brothers plan to grill hamburgers and sell tacos – just to be out in the community and be part of it.

"We hope this will be the first of many events where our two organizations will cooperatively join with each other in order to reach out to the community," says Brewer.

The lodge recently dedicated a bench to the town with the lodge's name on it, which will be placed in a local park to raise community awareness. The parade the lodge held for its sesquicentennial in March generated so much enthusiasm, the lodge may make it an annual event. Brothers may also try to continue Raising A Reader locally – and there's talk of holding a book drive.

Before the lodge decides on its next act of community service, officers plan to meet with city, fire department, and school officials. "We want to know what they need," says Barker. "We aren't going to decide for them."

This enthusiasm to give back stretches further than the little town of Plymouth. Brothers are looking to spread their good work to Ione, Jackson, and beyond, says Deryck.



MEMBERS OF DRYTOWN LODGE NO. 174 CELEBRATE THEIR SESQUICENTENNIAL WITH THE PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY.

For Barker, it's thrilling to see that, as the lodge grows, its impact on the community expands, too. Like many of his brothers at Drytown Lodge who also worked in law enforcement or other forms of public service, he has pledged to protect and serve all his life – as a firefighter, assistant sheriff, police chief, and sheriff. The lodge's community stewardship is therefore particularly meaningful. Today, Barker is no longer "protecting and serving" with a badge and a gun – he's carrying out his responsibilities under the values set forth by Freemasonry.

As the lodge moves forward into its 151st year, Barker explains, "The only way we can really be successful as a lodge is if we are part of the community. Together, we can make Plymouth a better place." ◆

THE CANCER CAR

A CANADIAN BROTHER SHARES HIS FIRST-PERSON ACCOUNT OF A TRANSFORMATIVE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

by Robert Segulam Singh

On June 6, 2007, I was sitting in the break room of the Cancer Car office waiting for my next 'trip-slip' – our nickname for pickup assignments. My dispatcher, Alan McLeod, approached me with a pickup in the downtown Vancouver area. As I began to leave he said, "You'll have to take the booster seat with you."

I hesitated for a moment, as I'd never needed to use the booster seat before. It was rare for us to bring young children to cancer treatments, since an adult must accompany children younger than age 16 to the hospital, and in most instances those adults provide transportation. As I carried the seat outside and began to install it, I thought about how I would approach this situation. I knew I would eventually drop off the child and mother at Vancouver Children's Hospital. I'd brought teenagers there before, but in my estimation, the patients were old enough to understand their circumstances. I knew this day's journey would be different.

I have encountered many types of individuals while driving for the Cancer Car Project. The previous Wednesday, on my last trip of the afternoon, I picked up a woman at the Cancer Clinic. She sat in my car, let out a sigh, and began to slowly cry. She told me that it was her last day of treatment. As I drove her home and listened to her talk about her illness, I began to well up myself. She told me that she was going to stop raising her voice at her daughter, and I told her to give her daughter a hug when she got home. As I stopped the car to drop her off, she held my hand for a moment and thanked me for my assistance. I smiled and thanked her in return for the opportunity of driving.

I cannot begin to express the satisfaction I get from being a volunteer driver. Wednesday mornings are a highlight for me. Driving the Cancer Car keeps me grounded, and it allows me to address "real world" issues – to give back in a meaningful way. I do not have to be a medical practitioner; I just need to have a clean driving permit and be a patient, safe, and responsible driver. During my five-hour volunteer shift, I have a clear goal: to make sure the patients and their family members are safely driven in a timely manner to and from their hospital treatments. Some days are tough. Fellow drivers may fall ill; cars may break down; we may need to navigate bad weather. But, I work with some of the nicest folks around and we always come together as a cohesive group. I feel blessed to be a part of such a team.

As I drove down Thurlow Street towards my young pickup, I continued to feel anxious. I parked in the rear alley, phoned the apartment to announce my arrival, and waited. About five minutes later, a woman came outside. A few steps behind her was a small child dressed in a pink raincoat and pants. The little girl was about 5 years old, but if it were not for her brisk walking pace, I would have thought she was about 2. She was a tiny, relatively bald figure. If she had been pushed in a carriage, she could have been mistaken for a newborn. She had no eyebrows to go with her small tuft of re-growing hair.

I tried not to look too closely, as I was afraid I might make her feel uncomfortable. "No rush folks; please, take your time," I said, opening the door.

Sometimes as a driver, you have to listen and wait for opportunities to communicate. In some instances, especially when clients don't speak English, there is no speaking at all. On those rides, I focus on the road and accomplishing my goal of bringing the patient to his or her destination safely. I get through my



once-weekly shift one "accomplished goal" at a time.

It was a quiet drive over the Burrard Street Bridge, but as I made my way to Oak Street, the young girl began to sing, joke, and talk

to her mother. I quickly realized that she was behaving exactly as little girls do, and that it had been my own pre-conceived notions about her that were making me anxious. I began to feel more comfortable, and as I continued to drive, I thought about the mother beside the small girl. I realized how profoundly our volunteer service must be helping her. I could not even begin to imagine what she must be going through each week, as she made this journey to the hospital with her daughter beside her. Because of us, she could try to make the experience positive for her daughter; she could take the time to pay attention to something other than the road.

We soon arrived at Children's Hospital safely; everything was fine. I watched the mother and daughter walk up the sidewalk together, hand-in-hand. Then, I phoned my father. I wanted to explain to him how deeply humbled I felt. I pride myself on being grateful for all that surrounds me and consider myself to be a grounded individual. But on that day, the little girl made me realize, even more, how fortunate I am to have all my immediate family members alive and well, as well as my own personal health. And, how lucky I am to have the opportunity to be part of something larger than myself. I felt very blessed to have been given that trip-slip.

Bro. Jay Kinney interviews the Grand Lodge of British Columbia

and Yukon to learn more about how the Cancer Car Program works.

Later that day, I picked up several adults with a range of serious diagnoses. As I relayed to them my early morning "gift," they smiled and nodded. Despite, or because of, their circumstances, they understood what I had experienced. They understood that in the course of that morning's drive, I had become a better person. \diamond

Editor's note: Robert Segulam Singh is a member of Duke of Connaught Lodge No. 64 in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has been a driver for the Cancer Car Program since 2003. His father was a voting member of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon in 1988 and at that Annual Communication, he voted in favor of establishing the Cancer Car Program.



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FACES OF MASONRY

MEET MIKE SELIX, SMALL-BUSINESS OWNER AND COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

by John A. Vlahides

Mike Selix, senior warden of Orange Grove Lodge No. 293, knows the power of intention. When organizing charity events, he never questions whether they will go as planned; in his mind, he need only accept the challenge and let things fall into place. "I say yes first, then find resources later," says Selix. "I always have confidence that through the Masons, we can make things work out – and they always do."

Each Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, he coordinates holiday meals for 500 veterans and their families at the Villages of Cabrillo, a long-term rehabilitation facility, community center, and housing project in Long Beach. Selix's involvement began six years ago – about the time he joined Masonry – when he volunteered to help serve Thanksgiving dinner and there was a shortage of food. He resolved never to let that happen again.

The following year, he began managing the project and initiated community partnerships. Now, Costco donates turkeys, Alta Dena supplies the dairy products, and two Southern California bakeries provide pies and fresh bread. Local Masons and youth groups donate labor. "Everyone who shows up eats and we don't turn anyone away," Selix says. "The vets know the Masons are coming to feed them, and they look forward to seeing us."

For Selix – who is also a member of International City Lodge No. 389, Anaheim Lodge No. 207, the Orange County Public Schools Advisory Council, and the Masonic Hospital Visitors Program, as well as serving as an advisor for DeMolay and Rainbow for Girls – enthusiasm doesn't end with the holidays. Though he's quick to credit others, he has helped organize whale-watching trips, museum visits, softball tournaments,



and barbecues. And, he's currently working with other local lodges to expand veterans programs around Southern California – anywhere there's need. His reasoning is simple: "We don't serve for recognition. We do it because it's the right thing to do."

Continued next page

Get Involved: Volunteer for a Stronger Community

Volunteering in your community is one of the best ways to demonstrate Masonic relief, and can be personally fulfilling as well. A variety of local and international organizations offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities to meet every interest. Want to volunteer in your community? Here are some resources to help.

HOW YOUR LODGE CAN GIVE BACK:

- » Support sweethearts: Learn more When lodge members pass away, sweethearts may need some extra support to stay connected. Volunteer to support our vulnerable fraternal family members.
- » Partner with public schools: <u>Learn more</u> Supporting public education is one of the hallmarks of Freemasonry. Volunteer to get involved with schools in your community.
- » Support a local FISE program: freemason.org/fise Grand Master Charvonia's project will bring active firefighters to local schools to provide crucial fire-safety training to vulnerable children. Start a pilot project in a school near you.
- » Try Rebuilding Together: rebuildingtogether.org Help provide much needed home repairs for families in need through this innovative, nationwide

program. Read more about how one lodge gave back in this issue's feature article.

» Partner with Masonic youth orders: <u>masons4youth.org</u>

Reach out to local youth order members to offer support and mentorship. Organize a joint community service project, volunteer at fundraisers, and help shape the future.

RESOURCES FOR GIVING BACK AS AN INDIVIDUAL:

Taproot Foundation: taprootfoundation.org

Taproot connects business professionals with organizations working to improve society. Donate pro bono services to make a difference to great nonprofits.

Volunteer Match: volunteermatch.org

Find for volunteer opportunities in your local community. Volunteer Match makes it easy to find causes that matter to you – from education and disaster relief to homelessness and support for animals.

Idealist: idealist.org

Idealist's innovative search function makes it easy to find a project for the commitment level you seek, including ongoing volunteer projects, onetime needs and events, and even employment opportunities at nonprofit organizations.

In his own words:

WHY DO YOU VOLUNTEER?

I ask myself, "How can we make a difference?" Tomorrow is not promised to anybody. What can we do today to inspire someone else; to let them know we care?

WHY SERVE VETERANS?

I've always had great respect for our veterans – we have our freedoms because of them. But sometimes they come back and feel forgotten. I just wanted to make sure they knew their sacrifices matter.

WHAT'S ESPECIALLY REWARDING?

With each of us doing a little, collectively we're able to accomplish a lot. It's not just one person, it's many, many members from different lodges that make these events successful. When I take on these projects, I think to myself, "We can't fail our veterans," and they always come together. \diamondsuit

A LIFETIME OF COMMITMENT

OUR INDIVIDUAL FAITHS GUIDE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF FRATERNAL OBLIGATION

by John L. Cooper III, Past Grand Master

From time-to-time in this column, I have quoted from one or another of the charges, which are found in the "Monitor," a booklet that contains, among other things, parts of our ritual that are not considered esoteric in nature. Each of the three degrees of Masonry has a charge – a statement that is intended to summarize the key teachings of the degree. When delivered as a part of the ritual, it leaves the candidate with a lasting impression of what he has heard and seen.

The charge to an Entered Apprentice Mason has these important thoughts:

As a Mason, you are to regard the volume of the sacred law as the great light in your profession; to consider it as the unerring standard of truth and justice; and to regulate your actions by the divine precepts it contains. In it you will learn the important duties to which you owe to God, your neighbor, and yourself... [You will learn the duty you owe to] your neighbor, by acting with him upon the square; by rendering him every kind office which justice or mercy may require; by relieving his distresses and soothing his afflictions; and by doing to him as, in similar cases, you would that he should do unto you.

It is important first to consider the source of our perceived duties to others. This is found in the basis of the faith of each individual Mason. Freemasonry is not a religion, nor does it impose any religious requirements on a Mason. But it does ask him to look to the sacred law, which is important for those duties to others that he will carry out in his life as a Mason. One example will suffice to represent many others.

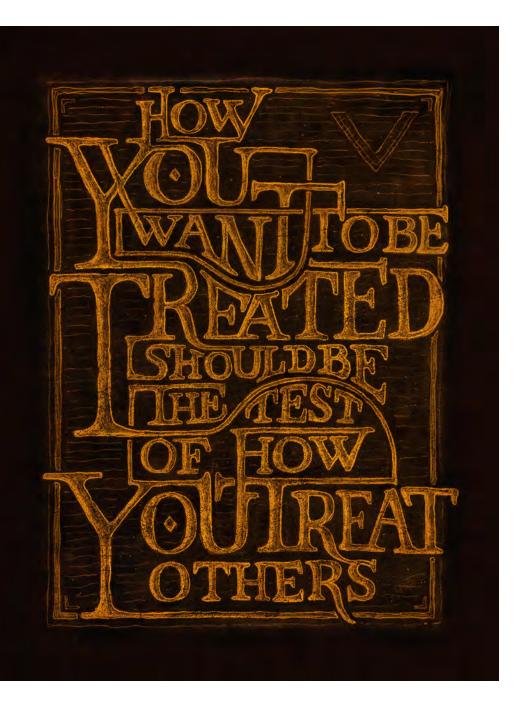
In Matthew 7:14, Jesus is quoted as saying, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." A similar commandment is found in Islam: "No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself" (An-Nawiwi's Forty Hadith 13). And, in Judaism, we find: "What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary" (Talmud, Shabbat 3id). Other religions share similar edicts with their followers, establishing the guidelines of an ideal, moral existence.

Masons begin with an understanding of our commitment to others, which flows from the roots of our own particular faiths and then transforms our understanding into a universal context. As an Entered Apprentice, we are told:

- » You will learn the duty you owe to your neighbor by acting with him upon the square.
- » You will learn the duty you owe to your neighbor by rendering him every kind office which justice or mercy may require.
- » You will learn the duty you owe to your neighbor by relieving his distresses and soothing his afflictions.

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MASONIC EDUCATION



» And, you will do this by paying attention to the fundamental requirement of the Golden Rule: How you want to be treated should be the test of how you treat others. The square in Freemasonry is an emblem of morality, and we are asked to apply it to how we act with others. It is important to note that in this context the square is not being applied to *us as individuals*. It is instead applied to *our actions as Masons*. We are asked to consider, "How does my treatment of others 'square up' with what is to follow?" The square is not so much a tool of moral judgment as it is a means by which we must check the validity of our own actions as they pertain to others.

A Mason uses the square to check to see if he is really rendering his neighbor "every kind office" that he can supply. He uses it to determine if he is really interested in relieving the distresses of his neighbor. He uses it to consider if he is really doing anything substantial to soothe his neighbor's afflictions.

Actions have consequences, and none more than in Freemasonry. The validity of what I do as a Mason is not tested so much by my intentions, as by the results. If I intend to act justly and mercifully, but then don't, I am not meeting the test of the Mason's square. If I plan to help out a neighbor, but never get around to it, it doesn't meet the test of the Mason's square. Our intentions must result in action, and that is what we are telling the Entered Apprentice: We will measure your understanding of Freemasonry by the results of what you do

as a Mason – not what you say that you will do as a Mason.

Doing for others and giving to others is a fundamental Masonic principle. But doing for others and giving to others in a way that results in something positive is a much more important Masonic principle. \diamond

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IN CALIFORNIA

FROM ONE BROTHER TO ANOTHER

HOW THE LODGE OUTREACH INITIATIVE TRAINS MASONS TO HELP IN TIMES OF NEED

by Matt Markovich

Supporting local communities is a reflection of the Masonic tenets of relief and brotherly love – and a key component of Freemasonry today. But it is relief within the lodge, caring for brothers in need, that is the backbone of these treasured values. Each year, California Masons donate hundreds of thousands of dollars to fund fraternal care and support members throughout California. Yet when it comes to helping brothers within their own lodges, many members may not know where to begin.

It was this very issue that inspired the lodge outreach initiative. Developed in cooperation with Masonic Outreach Services (MOS), the program trains lodge

Get Involved With Lodge Outreach

> Interested in helping your lodge be a part of the lodge outreach initiative? Contact your inspector or MOS Director <u>Sabrina Montes</u>.

volunteers to identify brothers in need, offer personal assistance in times of crisis, and connect them to the appropriate resources. The initiative was originally piloted in Division IX, and it is scheduled to roll out statewide by 2016.

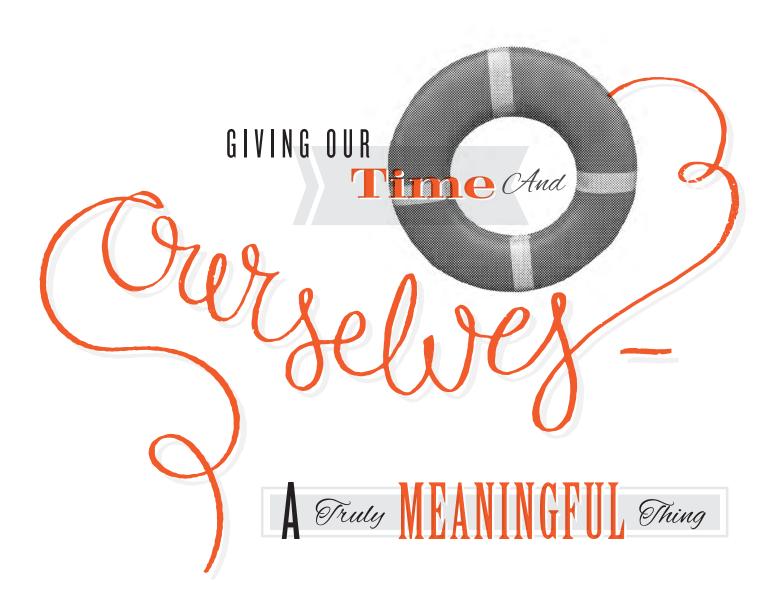
Training is offered quarterly to lodges in each division, and members who attend training sessions pass along what they've learned to fellow volunteers at their home lodges using a "trainthe-trainer" model. This effort to bridge outreach resources and "boots on the ground" local lodges is effective and innovative. According to MOS Director Sabrina Montes, no other jurisdiction in the United States has a similar program.

Recognizing brothers in need

Training for lodge outreach volunteers is critical, as signs of crisis are often not readily apparent – and are often purposely masked. As lodge outreach trainees learn, Masons tend not to seek help from their lodge for a broad range of reasons. Some may feel too "proud" to accept assistance from their brothers; they may feel a sense of shame or vulnerability about the situation they're in. Some may have fallen away from active participation in Masonry and are reluctant to return to their lodge, or they may not realize that they're qualified for assistance. Others may be unaware that help is available at all.

Anthony McLean, the current assistant secretary and a past master of Fallbrook Lodge No. 317, notes, "Lodge outreach addresses a common problem: Masons are great at offering assistance, but we're bad at asking for support when we need it. Rarely does a Mason say, 'I need help.'"

McLean knows this from first-hand experience. He relates, "I was in a motorcycle accident, and was living alone with a broken pelvis and foot. I was the recipient of assistance from my brothers and their families, and there's no way I could do enough to repay those who helped me. Volunteering with lodge outreach is a no-brainer. I owe more than I could ever give back. I think what's so impactful about this is that through lodge outreach, we are giving of our time and ourselves – it's a truly personal and meaningful experience."



Hearing the call

In addition to requiring a keen eye and measure of empathy, rendering assistance demands some degree of diplomacy. Once a volunteer recognizes a person in need, he must offer help in such a way that the recipient feels comfortable accepting it. To this end, the personal touch offered by lodge outreach volunteers can make all the difference by pairing Masonic outreach

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WEB EXTRA

- Read more about the lodge outreach initiative in California Freemason:
- » <u>April/May 2013</u> "Call to Arms: Division IX Masons Organize Around Outreach"
- » June/July 2014 "Building the Outreach Network: The Lodge Outreach Initiative is Spreading Across the State"

IN CALIFORNIA



with a familiar face – someone who has shared a history of service with the member in need. Such connections are difficult to overstate. In addition to helping pave the way for needed outreach, they often

Timeline for Rollout Across California's 10 Divisions

- » Division IX and Division II are spearheading the initiative; both have been piloting the program since 2013.
- » 2015: Divisions I; VII; VIII and X
- » 2016 : Divisions III; IV; V and VI

encourage struggling members to re-engage with their lodge. And, by making others in the lodge aware of who has attended lodge outreach training, volunteers are recognized as the "go-to" person when there is a brother or widow in need.

While MOS staff helps navigate larger issues, it is lodge outreach volunteers who are able to lend a hand with simple, yet crucial, day-to-day activities, like performing wellness checks and helping less-mobile members with moving or just running errands. Says McLean, "The stories that we share of successes have helped me keep my eyes open and to encourage others within the lodge to listen for a veiled call for help."

As exemplified by Masons like McLean, one doesn't need to be elderly or have fallen out of touch to receive the help of fellow Masons, and the gratitude such programs engender pays dividends. As brother McLean attests, "The lengths that our Masonic Homes goes to in order to help people is simply amazing. Through all of our MOS programs, the fraternity is here for the members." By establishing and reinforcing a culture of caring and volunteerism, the lodge outreach initiative extends the ability of Masons to help one another while strengthening their bonds to the values of Freemasonry. \bigstar

THE GIVERS

AT THE MASONIC HOMES IN COVINA AND UNION CITY, RESIDENTS USE THEIR TALENTS AND PASSION TO HELP OTHERS

by Laura Benys

A friendly visit on a lonely afternoon. A warm greeting at the community general store. The discreet efficiency of a devoted worker. Color-soaked murals to take your breath away.

These are all signs of resident volunteers at the Masonic Homes. These residents have found their own ways to give back, both on and off the Masonic Homes campuses in Union CIty and Covina, California. They give their time, their talents, and the very best of themselves.

Finding inspiration

Every week, Diane Priddy can be found walking the halls of the Union City Home with a powerful magnifying glass in one hand and a stack of church programs in the other. She delivers the programs to those who cannot attend church – those who aren't feeling well that week, or who are bedridden in skilled nursing or memory care. She carries the magnifying glass because she is nearly blind. Priddy lost an eye to illness when she was in her 20s, just after she moved to the United States from her homeland of Japan.

"I did not want to be limited because of my vision, so I really pushed myself," Priddy says. She learned how to speak English, and got her GED. She went to work at an independent living center for those with disabilities. "I learned from the residents there that everything is possible if I really try," Priddy says. "They changed my life."

And so, although the vision in her remaining eye has declined, she continues to seek ways to help. Besides delivering programs, she volunteers once a week at "The Canteen," a small kitchen on campus. And every week or so, she visits residents in the memory care neighborhood.

"I get more out of those visits than I give," she says. "They give *me* strength, really. Just a little smile makes it worth doing."

Community connections

"It's very satisfying just to see somebody smile," agrees Ruth Caster. "I guess that's why I enjoy doing things for other people."

Caster has lived at the Covina campus for a decade. When she and her husband, Clifford, arrived 10 years ago, they immediately got involved in the general store. Food sales had been Clifford's line of work, and Ruth enjoyed getting to see her neighbors coming and going about their days. It was a way to make friends and be part of the community.

Clifford passed away five years ago, but Caster still runs the general store one day a week. She also sorts mail, leads tours, and hosts prospective residents during their three-day trial visits. The church across the street relies on her to send out a weekly stream of birthday and anniversary cards on behalf of the congregation.

Caster is a longtime member of the Order of the Eastern Star, and throughout her life has been actively involved in DeMolay, Boy Scouts, her senior center, and church. Volunteering is second nature.

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MASONIC ASSISTANCE





RESIDENT RUTH CASTER ENJOYS VOLUNTEERING AT THE MASONIC HOME AT COVINA'S CAMPUS GENERAL STORE, WHERE SHE HAS MADE MANY FRIENDS.

COVINA RESIDENT BILLIE KARZ SORTS MAIL AND LEADS TOURS ON THE MASONIC HOMES CAMPUS - AND ALSO VOLUNTEERS AT THE CALIFORNIA SCIENCE CENTER.

"Volunteering is part of my life that I enjoy," she says. "It's made me friends, been interesting, and kept me busy."

A way of life

Rosalea "Billie" Karz, also a Covina resident, shares Caster's outlook. "Volunteering stimulates you," she says. Fifteen years ago, when her longstanding volunteer group at the California Science Center was dissolved, she created her own volunteer role.

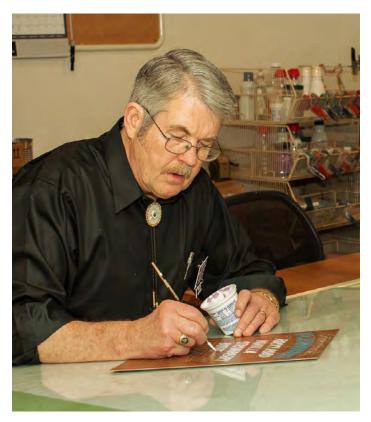
"I went into the office and I told them that I wanted to do something," Karz recalls. The young man behind the desk was stumped. So Karz pointed to a stack of files: She could take care of those, she declared. Now, she drives from Covina to downtown Los Angeles every Wednesday at 6:30 a.m., lets herself into the office, and spends the morning organizing files. The staff affectionately refers to her as Miss Billie.

"I love it," she says. "I love the people. My reward is in the way they treat me."

At the Masonic Home, Karz sorts resident mail, leads tours, and considers herself on-call for other odd jobs. She recently offered to help with filing for a child advocacy program that is held on campus.

Volunteerism is something she learned very early on, she says, by watching her mother and grandmother. "Giving back was just a way of life," she says. "If you had time to play, you had time to give. "

"I think the good Lord gives us each the ability to do something," Karz says. "The least we can do is share it."



AN ACCOMPLISHED ARTIST, UNION CITY RESIDENT JOHN ROBERT DAHLE DEVOTES FOUR HOURS EACH DAY TO SHARING HIS TALENTS WITH THE MASONIC HOME AND SIMINOFF DAYLIGHT LODGE NO. 850.



AT THE UNION CITY HOME, DIANE PRIDDY VOLUNTEERS HER TIME TO CONNECT WITH FELLOW RESIDENTS WHO ARE ILL, BED-RIDDEN, OR IN NEED OF COMPANIONSHIP.

Giving your gift

John Robert Dahle spends about four hours a day doing just that. In a basement art studio at the Union City Masonic Home, he churns out posters, banners, fliers, and other advertising materials for events at the Home and Acacia Creek.

"To live here, some of us assign three-quarters of our assets to the Home. I feel like my God-given talent is a part of those assets," Dahle says. "And the best part is that I love my work and feel honored to use my talents for the enjoyment of all who live and work here."

Dahle made a career out of painting storefront windows and creating artwork for businesses. Now, his handiwork is slowly covering the temple walls of Siminoff Daylight Lodge No. 850, the Home's on-campus lodge. Dahle completed an airbrushed mural of the three degrees on the north wall last year. He is putting the finishing touches on the south wall, a mural depicting the second degree. Next, he will transform the west wall into the first degree, and the east into King Solomon's throne.

His father, John Edgar Dahle, lives at the Union City Home, too, and has lent his hand to the murals. He is also an artist, and his son's earliest inspiration.

"Once when I was little, I asked my dad if he'd buy me a bicycle," the younger Dahle recalls. "He said: 'I can't afford the bicycle, but I can give you a couple brushes and you can go around the neighborhood and paint windows for Christmas.' I made enough money to buy that bicycle," he says. "I was 13 years old, and I've been doing it ever since." ♦

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