Freemasonry Can Produce Positive Community Awareness

This article was written by John Loayza, Grand Chancellor of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, and appeared in the Spring, 2021, issue of the Illinois Freemason magazine.

One of the major challenges to Freemasonry is that lodges are not that well connected within their communities, especially in large urban areas. Lack of community awareness leads to misconceptions and/or total lack of knowledge about Freemasonry.

If our lodges are going to grow their membership, they need to develop consistent community and public relations programs. It is a sales/marketing/management process.

The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) excels with its local district programs. We can learn from what is being done in England and elsewhere.

Although all Grand Lodges have their own Masonic Charities to assist their local brethren, the UGLE also has district lodges that also do community charitable work. For example:

1. Financial donations to specific charitable groups in their district areas. What they do, and what we generally do not do, is that a picture and brief article are submitted to the local district news media, besides going on the district lodges websites. Thus the public sees what is being done within the community by Freemasons/Masonic Lodges.

2. When material items are donated, such as wheelchairs to hospitals and care centers, the back rests have the Masonic District on the rear while the front has a Square and Compass. This has been done by both the UGLE and the Grand Lodge of China very successfully.

3. There is a district that has been a partner with an air/sea rescue training organization which uses a Square and Compass on the material and the helicopters. This public awareness program has been functioning for several decades and has put Freemasonry/Masonic Lodges in a positive light.

4. There is a community “Masonic Halfway House.” This program is where the homeless can have a safe place to live decently and get training for future employment. The public program ties district lodges with the local community and various organizations supporting the project.

These are only four of many consistent examples of local public relations programs. They demonstrate Masonic Districts which are connected within their local communities. Thus, the public is always aware of what the Masons/Masonic Lodges are doing in their communities.

If we are going to grow positive attitudes about Freemasonry and Masonic Lodges, we will need to look at what we could do in cooperation with other charitable organizations such as abuse centers for women or children. Providing backpacks or simple computer tables for children. No matter what is decided to be donated, we need to place a Square and Compass on the material items.

If we can connect district programs with social workers and various local charitable organizations which tend to be underfunded, Freemasonry can make a positive public impact in any community, as
well as lodges growing their local membership base.

We realize that not all lodges can afford large specific material or financial donations to local community organizations, however, multiple districts or lodges could combine their respective resources. The combination of multiple Masonic groups working together could also be a negotiating point when purchasing material donations for the needy or the organizations helping those in need.

No matter what is being done, an essential success element is publicizing what is being accomplished within local communities by Freemasons/Masonic Lodges. Those projects can be once a year which might eventually lead to quarterly local public projects. Recipients could be the same or rotated every quarter or every year.

Therefore, the focus is to produce a win-win situation for both the local communities and the growing positive image of Freemasonry/Masonic Lodges within any local community.

Thus, we need to develop innovative thinking from our Masonic rituals, and practice what we preach about helping those in need or those who are destitute.

John Glenn Born 100 Years Ago

Just a little more than 100 years ago — on July, 20, 1921 — a true American hero was born in Cambridge, Ohio.

John Glenn, Jr. “lived a remarkable life that brought him fame, adoration and awe and set the gold standard for public service,” according to a feature article in the Columbus Dispatch that observed his 100th birthday.

He was also a Master Mason. Brother Glenn was initiated, passed and raised on August 19, 1978, in a special Mason-at-Sight ceremony, led by the Grand Master Jerry C. Rasor and other Grand Lodge of Ohio officers. He became of member of Concord Lodge, No 688, which later became Malta Lodge, No. 118.

Brother Glenn, who logged roughly 9,000 hours of flying time as a pilot, set a transcontinental speed record from Los Angeles to New York of 3 hours and 23 minutes, the first transcontinental flight to average supersonic speed.

On February 20, 1962, he became the first American to orbit the Earth in a 4 hour, 55 minute flight. Thereafter, Brother Glenn’s American hero status rocketed, including a ticker tape parade in New York in front of some 4 million persons.

He resigned from his post as an astronaut in 1964, and retired from the Marine Corps in 1965, capping a 23-year military career.

Brother Glenn was elected to the U.S. Senate from Ohio in 1974, the first of four consecutive terms.

Then at the age of 77, he returned to space in 1998 aboard the Space Shuttle Discovery for a nine-day mission, and became the oldest human ever to fly in space.

Brother Glenn died on December 8, 2016 at the age of 95.

Shrine’s 150th Anniversary and Its Hospitals’ 100th Year in 2022

Shriners International is making big plans to observe its 150th anniversary and the 100th anniversary of the Shriners Hospitals for Children next year.

According to William S. Bailey, Imperial Potentate and Chairman of the Board of Shriners Hospitals, “Our forefathers couldn’t have known then that they were building the largest specialty pediatric healthcare system in North America. Now the baton has been passed to us, and it is our privilege to set our philanthropy up for success through the next century.”