

# Planning Your Events

Here is a list of family programs or events you could plan and implement in your lodge. Select those that make the most sense to you. In almost every case, you will need at least one person who will champion the event as the team leader for a group of members who will be responsible for implementing the event.

## 50 Special Programs for the Family

The following family programs can be conducted by the lodge at the lodge or in conjunction with a local school or agency.

1. **Anti-Smoking:** Ask local contact from the American Cancer Society or the American Lung Association to help you plan and implement this important program.
2. **Anti-Drugs:** Work with the local schools or the local police in planning an engaging but powerful program for elementary age children, or junior and senior high students.
3. **Prom Time:** Work with the school and with other parents to plan and implement a program for personal safety and zero alcohol during parties and other prom-related events.
4. **Safe Summers:** Ask the Red Cross, local pool manager, local physician or local coach to point out the special dangers that can occur during the summer and how to avoid injury even as you keep your summer cool.
5. **Career Choices:** Work with the local businesses to host a Career Day during a spring or fall break for college-age men and women. Consider the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations as partners.
6. **Driver Safety:** Especially important during the winter if snow and ice are a problem. Local school personnel and the American Automobile Association can and will be very helpful.
7. **Craft Fun:** Introduce members' children to the many opportunities for crafts and other leisure time pursuits. Local craft persons or hobbyist should be willing to help.
8. **Fishing Rodeo:** If you have a local lake or river, plan a day-long family event with prizes for the first, largest, and most "unusual" catch of the day. Have other games and food available. Invite people.
9. **Boating Safety:** Boating can be great fun, but it can also be a hazard. Work with the local Power Squadron to find out what the lodge can do. Invite fathers and their children to the event.
10. **Firearms Safety:** Guns are a part of our national heritage. Safe handling is every parent's responsibility. Ask the local police or the National Rifle Association for help and guidance.
11. **Making Family Relationships Work:** Ask a local minister, social services professional or a family relations counselor to meet with lodge members and their family to explore the fundamentals of better family relationships.

# 10 Special Programs for the Member's Spouse

Here is a series of programs that many spouses might be interested in attending.

12. **Book Club:** Invite a group of 8 to 10 spouses to form and participate in a book club. Choose your books for variety and member needs. Have a member of the group facilitate a discussion about the books you have read.
13. **Crisis Management:** Increasing stress and pressures on the family, together with both spouses working, foster crises that may go unnoticed until it is too late. Ask a local clergyman or social services professional to recommend a facilitator and hold four or five meetings with open dialogue to learn more about crisis management.
14. **Local/Community History:** Members who have lived in the community for a long time may want to develop and host a series of community historical meetings. Contact your local library or Historical Society for help.
15. **Personal Financial Management:** Many individuals need help in managing their personal finances. This may be even more important if certain federal laws are enacted. Contact a local financial planner and ask him to help plan a meeting.
16. **Flower Arrangements:** Many women and men could learn a great deal about not only growing flowers but about how to arrange them for lasting beauty. Contact your local garden club or library to learn what's possible.
17. **Using the Personal Computer:** Even though computers have become common, there are still many who are not familiar with the equipment, software or the potential of the PC. Arrange for a series of small group instructions on using the computer. Use the lodge's computer or meet at a member's home or office.
18. **Programming the VCR:** No two ways about it, this could be a fun evening. If you can't program your VCR, ask one of the youngsters to develop a program and ask members to bring in their VCR and instruction manual.
19. **Kids and Summer Fun:** The local YMCA/YWCA, Recreational Council or Department of Recreation and Parks personnel can familiarize the entire family with what's planned for the summer. Develop and distribute a schedule of fun events.
20. **Careers for Women Returning to the Work Force:** There may be a large number of members' wives who will be returning to the work force in the next several years. Those who have been away for years will face special challenges and prior planning will be helpful. Ask a local employment counselor to help you plan a series of seminars that are open to members' spouses and others in the community.
21. **Improving Marital Relationships:** It's not easy to get this started, but if you make it a positive experience rather than a remedial one, you should be able to get a group of lodge members and their spouses to join together to learn more about how to get the most out of a relationship.

# 29 Special Family Events

Listed below is a rather extensive listing of events that you can plan and implement that benefit the entire family. Each program will have its own set of objectives, actions and follow-up communications. In some cases, the real beneficiary is the community in which the lodge is located with the added incentive that families working together and with other families learn more about one another and meet new friends.

22. **Community Fix-up Project:** Identify a small but important community project that needs manpower and involve a number of the families in the effort. Assign tasks and use other project-management skills to get the job done. Remember, the purpose is to get families involved.
23. **Founder's Day:** If the lodge has a meaningful birthday or founder's day, plan a family oriented celebration. Arrange for special activities. If the community has an anniversary planned, get the families of members involved.
24. **Father-Child Cookout:** Sponsor a father-child cookout or cooking contest, Consider beef, chicken, pork or steak grilling demonstrations or contests. Ask one half to cook and the other half to judge. Everyone should enjoy. Give prizes.
25. **Mother-Child Bake-off:** Ask members' spouses and their children to bake cakes or deserts around a theme. Display after a dinner meeting. Give prizes and awards. Have fun.
26. **Father-Child Football/Baseball Game:** You may be able to arouse interest in a father-child baseball game or flag football game. Or you may just want to have fathers invite their children to a professional or amateur sporting event and save wear and tear on the old bones.
27. **Family Picnic:** Among the best and most active projects. If well planned, it can be the center of the year's family involvement effort. Plan well in advance. Choose the right location. Make the invitations appealing. Organize and have fun.
28. **Youth Appreciation Day:** You may want to partner with a school or church to announce the winners of a series of contests your lodge sponsors among the youth of the community. Recognizing young people for their good work or achievements is one of the best things a lodge can do in the community.
29. **Mother's Day Breakfast:** Plan or host a special Mother's Day breakfast in association with a local hotel or club. Arrange for the day to be special with flowers and great food. Never, never ask any of your invited guests to help prepare or clean up after the meal.
30. **Father-Child Dinner:** A favorite if the lodge can make sure that the fathers pay attention to the children and not to the fellowship they enjoy in the lodge. Ask the fathers to serve the children on one occasion and reverse the service on the a second. Have special events planned that are of interest to both.
31. **Family Field Trip:** Almost every lodge can plan and host a family-day field trip to a place of interest to members. Make it a fun site, an historical site, an amusement park or some other location where everyone can learn and enjoy.

32. **Father-Child Hiking Trip:** Consider also making it a father/grandfather-daughter hiking trip. Keep the distances reasonable and have a luncheon or cookout planned. The time spent together and with friends will mean a lot.
33. **Lodge Day at the State Fair or Ball Park:** If you have a state fair or ball Park in your area, you should be able to work with local management to plan a day where you and your guests can have a special area, be announced over the loud speaker or otherwise have a great day.
34. **Inter-lodge Softball or Baseball:** A great chance for youthful members to show their stuff and to have the families enjoy the competition. Invite the members of a nearby lodge to participate. Plan for refreshments and fun.
35. **Chili Cook-off:** Whether this is a family event or a community event, it can be great fun. There are national contests and statewide cook-offs that you can participate in as well. A great chance to have fun with your family cooking, tasting and meeting new friends. Check with local health and insurance codes if you have any questions. You may want to collect the winning recipes and include them as part of a lodge cookbook with proceeds from sales going to a local charity.
36. **Grandparents Night:** A great time for the young members of the family and for members to recognize the grandfathers (and grandmothers) of the lodge – whether they are Masons or not. Consider coordinating with national Grandparents Day.
37. **Strawberry Night:** A traditional Masonic event. It's even better if you live in a region where the local berries are especially good. All kinds of events can take place during the evening and many lodges do this annually.
38. **Canning Jamboree:** This might be more difficult in Philadelphia than it will be in Salisbury, Maryland but if you have great summer fruits and vegetables and have a hankering to preserve the old fashioned way, this could be fund and a great chance to meet new friends. Make sure you have a good supply of mason jars on hand.
39. **Adopt-A-School:** Summer is a great time to make the whole family partners to pitch in cleaning up a local school. Contact your local Department of Education. See also Section IV in this Guide.
40. **Adopt-A-Park:** Identify a project that needs attention and ask the families to pitch in. This goal is to get the families of members to work together while at the same time making a difference in the community.
41. **Plant A Garden:** Use the lodge grounds or another plot to plant flowers or vegetables. Make it a competition if you wish. The whole family plays a role in a project like this and most make new friends both within and outside the lodge.
42. **Sports Day:** Nothing works better during the summer than a planned sports day for the community and for the lodge. The members and their spouses join with others to host a series of fun and competitive sports events. Use a local park or arrange for the use of a school playground. The Department of Recreation and Parks can help. Consider becoming a partner with the local YMCA or Boys Club.
43. **Lodge Open House:** Consider this is as an important, first-class event at least once each year. Have special programs related to Masonry and to the lodge for the spouses and children. Make sure the programs you plan are programs your audience wants and not simply ones that pass the time.

44. **Shrine Day:** Partner with the nearest Shrine Temple to have a combined day filled with games, films, food, amusements, crafts and fun for the entire family. Arrange for several Shrine Clubs to put on exhibits or demonstrations. Invite the entire community.
45. **Books and Arts Day:** Every household has books that they no longer use or need. Work with the local library to plan a book fair. Get the family members to contribute and work the fair. Invite the community. Arrange for all profits to go to support a youth activity in the school or in the community.
46. **Ladies Night:** Plan one important evening just for the ladies. Have the event catered and do not include any important business or speeches. Concentrate on making the ladies feel at home. Plan lots of activities that allow the ladies to meet others in the lodge. Take care that you do not let the men go into one corner and leave the ladies to chat alone. That would be the same thing all over again.
47. **Holiday Party:** Plan a special holiday party for the kids in the lodge and for their friends. Use either Halloween or Christmas as the perfect occasion. Organize the event so that they are entertained during the evening. Have refreshments and plenty of help to supervise the games and special activities you have planned. Consider hiring a magician or a puppeteer. You can make it a gift exchange at Christmas but make sure you have something for those kids who forget to bring their gift.
48. **Weekend Getaway:** A special holiday getaway for members and spouses has worked well in some lodges. The members sign up for a weekend in a hotel in the city. Go by chartered bus if you can. While they are there plan to see a movie or a show, visit a museum and have a wonderful meal. Make sure that there are lots of opportunities for fellowship and that everyone gets to know the other people. Plan events on the bus that will encourage people to mingle.
49. **Family Night:** Plan and host a major family get-together with a nearby lodge. Make every effort to get a good turn out. Meet at a local park or, if during the winter, at a local hotel or conference center. Form a team from both lodges to plan the day's events. The objective will be for increased awareness and fellowship and to meet and make new friends. The event could be a special event to raise funds for a local charity or cause.
50. **Principal Talk:** Ask the principal of a local school to speak to the lodge about schools, school programs and ways lodge can help. Invite the community. The event can serve a dual purpose. It can inspire the lodge to become involved with the schools and can be an event open to the community.

## **What Things Can a Small Lodge with Less than 100 Men Accomplish?**

Size has a lot, but not everything, to do with what a lodge can accomplish. We know of a small lodge in a very small town in Kansas where anyone who is anyone is a Mason. (You can discover more about that lodge in the Masonic Renewal Committee's video, *Getting the Most from Your Fraternity*). Here's the impressive list of the things they have done in the community:

- **Sponsor the July 4th celebration and picnic every year.**
- **Sponsor grade school basketball tournament.**
- **Provide medical supplies for local EMT unit.**
- **Provide funds and labor to renovate local ball Park.**
- **Sponsor local student to Boy's State.**
- **Sponsor local youth to Shrine Bowl Band Camp.**
- **Raise funds to assist new public library.**
- **Adopt a needy family at Christmas time.**

By the way, the little lodge referred to above is located right in the center of Toronto, Kansas, a town of only 300 people where 74 of the men are Masons. A Past master of that lodge, Brother Jeff Sowder, was the Grand Master of Masons in Kansas in 1997.

## **What Things Can a Lodge with 100-200 Men Accomplish?**

A lodge with 100-200 men in a small town or city can make a lot happen. First of all, it's important to find out which members are available and interested. A lodge with 150 members but only 20 or 25 active cannot do as much as the same-sized lodge with 40 or 50 active members. So, the first thing you may have to do is to determine how you can reach additional members and get their support.

Volunteering for an effort in the community or in a community school should be enough to gain member interest.

Here are several suggestions where you might help in the community:

- **Help a local hospital in a volunteer or fund-raising effort.**
- **Help the local United Way with its volunteer effort.**
- **Sponsor a scholarship program with another civic club.**
- **Sponsor a speak-up contest open to high school senior boys and girls.**
- **Sponsor a pancake breakfast with the Boy or Girl Scouts.**
- **Sponsor a food-for-the-hungry campaign with a local store or business.**
- **Volunteer to deliver food or toys at the holidays.**
- **Create an event for kids at a community or state fair.**
- **Visit the elderly at a nursing home.**
- **Partner with a local charity to raise funds for cancer research.**
- **Develop an award for excellent contributions to the environment.**
- **Sponsor an environmental club at a local high school.**
- **Partner with a youth club at school for a highway SWAT team.**
- **Assist with traffic control at a community event.**
- **Work in the local library to help keep it open evenings for working parents.**
- **Assist with a clinic or health facility.**

**And on and on and on. . . .**

## When You Elect to Solve a Special Problem

There may be times when you identify a problem in your community and there may be no agency who can help you solve the problem. It could be problems associated with children, the elderly or the homeless – although certain public service agencies generally have some responsibility in each of these areas.

You may, for example, hear of a child who needs transportation for treatment and can't afford the airfare. Or, you may learn of a band that has been selected to play in the Rose Bowl Parade but is having trouble raising funds. Or, you may determine that you want to provide special recognition for the work of several teachers in a local elementary school and are looking for a way to make this possible through your lodge.

In cases like these, planning is essential. If you are going to go it alone, you need to map out each step carefully.

If this is your first attempt, consider forming a partnership with another organization. You'll meet new people, make new friends and share the effort. In the process, some may become interested in Freemasonry and want additional information. Be prepared to explain what Freemasonry is when you first make contact. Take appropriate materials with you and explain what you are trying to do.

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## Projects in the Community for Your Consideration

Below is a brief description of 50+ projects for consideration. You will want to develop a plan for the one you select.

### Community Involvement Projects

1. **Paint Patrol** – Identify objects in your community that can use a coat of paint. (Park benches, swing sets, fences are examples.) Clean and paint. Don't forget the "Wet Paint" signs.
2. **Food Drive** – Volunteer to collect and distribute food at Thanksgiving and Christmas. Coordinate with a local social services agency. Consider a church as a partner.
3. **Feed the Poor** – Become involved with a local food kitchen and provide the labor for a holiday meal. Consider a partnership with the local church or synagogue. Perhaps the lodge could serve as a center.
4. **Toys for Tots** – Become a partner with the local Toys for Tots effort usually sponsored by the U.S. Marine Corps. If none exists, set a goal of providing several hundred reconditioned toys for kids in need.
5. **Coats for Kids** – Mount a drive to collect coats for kids by announcing in the community that the lodge will be a collection site for donations. Have all donated coats cleaned and arrange for distribution through a local social services agency or church.

6. **Volunteer to Read** – Develop a reading center with the local library and volunteer as readers for children who visit the library. If the library already has a program, become a volunteer or offer your services to a local church.
7. **Clean a Stream** – Identify a local stream or small river and develop a volunteer effort to clean the banks of waste and debris. Work with the local EPA or waste management agencies and ask for help in organizing the cleanup.
8. **Build a Play Area** – Identify an area in the local community or on the school grounds and plan to build and donate a safe play area for kids. Be sure to check if local permits are required and purchase any potential liability insurance you may need.
9. **Books for Sale** – Plan and initiate an annual book drive through the local lodge. Collect, display and sell the books you collect. Offer refreshments and information about Freemasonry. Donate the proceeds to a local school.
10. **Collectable Fair** – Plan and host a very large flea market with all or a portion of the proceeds going to support a youth activity in the community. Advertise asking for donations and additional volunteer support. Involve Masonic youth in many ways.
11. **Median Magic** – Plan and develop a garden project for a median strip either in your town or along a local highway. Work with the road commission or the community planner to organize your effort. Display the lodge's name.
12. **Fishing Rodeo** – If you have a river or pond in your area (where there are fish), or you know of a pond on private property where the owner will give you permission to fish, arrange for a fishing rodeo for kids with prizes and games. Make it a real family event.
13. **Art Exhibit** – Arrange for an exhibit or fair for local artists to display and sell their works. Consider making it an annual event and get judges to select the best in different categories and award prizes. Expand it to include crafts if it goes well.
14. **Games Day** – Plan and host a Games Day in association with the 4th of July or a similar celebration. Arrange for fun games in different age categories. Supervise the events. Plan with the local Recreation and Parks Council or the local school.
15. **Way to Go** – Volunteer to serve as drivers at local senior citizens home. Volunteer to make a van trip to a local mall or shopping center or to drive residents to a local beauty salon or barber shop.
16. **Photo Contest** – Sponsor a photography contest for young people in different age categories in association with a local mall or shopping center. Arrange for judges, displays, and prizes. Contact the local paper for publicity and to publish the winners.
17. **Essay Contest** – Sponsor a major essay or writing contest for kids of different ages. Arrange for prizes and to have winning entries published. Contact the local school or college for assistance. Consider Memorial day or the 4th of July as possibilities.
18. **Blood Drive** – Serve as volunteers for a local blood drive you organize with the Red Cross or serve as volunteers in an existing drive. Contact all lodge members for support through their involvement and as donors.

19. **Man Your Post** – Contact the local Salvation Army to determine if there is an opportunity for your lodge to help out over the Christmas Holidays as collection “Santas” or in some other volunteer capacity.
20. **Paper Partners** – Contact the area’s largest newspapers and see if you can initiate a collection point for newspapers to be recycled. Contact the appropriate agencies to learn how to do this and look for partners. Make recycling day a fun day and make a difference too.
21. **Phone-A-Thons** – Many local charities have annual telethons to raise money for everything from support of Public Television to Jerry Lewis’ Kids Campaign. The entire lodge can work the phones for an evening and get on-the-air-credit.
22. **Eye Care** – Work with several local optometrists to provide transportation to individuals in the community who are unable to get to the doctor’s office for glasses or treatment.

## **Large Projects the Lodge Could Adopt**

If you are looking for a bigger challenge in the community, here are several that might fit the bill. Remember, consider other partners if you really want to make a difference.

23. **Masonic Marshals** – If your town or city has a major parade or fair, consider asking your lodge members to be a part of an effort to provide guides or marshals for the event. Be responsible for parking, direction, crowd control and other activities the fair organizers need. Make sure your lodge gets the proper recognition and press coverage for your participation.
24. **Abuse Symposiums** – If no one in the community is planning or providing information about child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse or spousal abuse, it would be a worthwhile project. Organize a symposium in association with a local college, hospital, or social services agency. Arrange for public service announcements (PSA’s) and advertise widely. Encourage local professionals to provide the information and materials. Consider this on an annual basis.
25. **Crisis Center** – Many smaller communities do not have a crisis center or crisis hot line. These services can help people in need when they do not want to contact the police or call 911. Staffed with properly trained volunteers, like Masons, they can be instrumental in handling many emergencies including preventing suicides and abuse.
26. **Homeless Help** – Some communities have no assistance for the homeless and can use the help of a large lodge membership in planning and staffing a shelter in association with a local church or social services agency. Masons can provide assistance as staff. They can receive and inventory donations of food, clothing or money, and can serve as security monitors or cooks.
27. **Hospital Help** – Most hospitals have a director of volunteer services. These institutions count on volunteer assistance like Masons could provide. To help supplement the staff of a hospital, Masons and their spouses can volunteer to serve in the gift shop, in the lobby, as tour guides, and in many other ways. Don’t forget to look for a Shrine Hospital and volunteer there as well.

28. **Equipment Drive** – Many agencies that serve in the community need equipment to do their job well. They can use everything from computers to new fire trucks. Many communities need to raise funds from the public in order to purchase these items. Consider volunteering as a partner with one of these agencies to help promote an essential piece of equipment or to pledge to purchase it using funds raised by the lodge.
29. **Home Care** – In every community there are scores of individuals who are unable to care completely for themselves in their homes or who have no relatives to check on them periodically. Develop a system for lodge members to serve as volunteers these individuals can call when they have a specific need. Work with the appropriate local agencies to see how this can be done effectively.
30. **Meals on Wheels** – Volunteer a dozen men in the lodge to serve as volunteers to deliver meals to individuals in a community identified by the local Meals on Wheels organization. If no such organization exists, determine through the local social services agency ways in which the lodge might help. It is probably beyond the means of most lodges to do more than deliver meals on a regular basis because of food preparation, safety and nutritional factors.
31. **Teaching Excellence** – There are many individuals teaching in our schools who are excellent with children and who do an outstanding job. Develop a program to recognize these individuals by granting scholarship awards. Teachers who qualify and win receive a grant to be used to further their educational excellence through travel, course work or other experiences related to what they teach. A lodge that gives a \$2,500 - \$5,000 award each year to three teachers in their community could receive considerable publicity.
32. **The City That Reads** – Masons can be the backbone of a literacy effort that targets one of the more serious problems in America. Adult and child reading abilities are hampered by many problems, some of which a strong volunteer effort can help eliminate. Masons should not necessarily be asked to teach reading, but they can serve a variety of roles in support of a literacy effort. If every Mason in a lodge of 80 active members were to volunteer 50 hours a year fighting illiteracy, experts estimate that more than a dozen adults or 30 young children could improve their reading levels by three grades or more in a single year. Now that's making a difference.
33. **Where's The Beef** – In a number of communities, there are opportunities to operate a road-side beef or chicken bar-b-que stand and use the profits to support a local effort in the school or community. During the best season, these can help you raise thousands of dollars and provide an opportunity for great fellowship and publicity as well. It is estimated that a stand in a good location can net as much as \$750 - \$1,000 on a weekend. Over the course of ten or more weekends, that could amount to \$10,000 – a meaningful sum for a good cause and lots of fun as well. Be sure to check on local permits and ordinances and pay particular attention to the local retail sales tax laws.
34. **Learning Excellence** – Meaningful scholarships can mean the difference between a young person attending a college or not. To be of assistance, your lodge may want to try and raise funds to support a major effort. For example, if the lodge could recognize learning excellence by granting ten \$1,000 scholarships to deserving high school seniors, it would be offering a meaningful and significant contribution. If the lodge could do that for a period of five years, it would really make a difference. To do this, most lodges would have to gear up for significant fund-raising. But it can be done.
35. **Boys and Girls Clubs** – The national organization for Boys and Girls Clubs can help a lodge be a sponsor for a community involvement project or plan an event that involves children even if there is a local DeMolay, Rainbow or Jobs Daughter organization in the lodge. Serving as a volunteer to these children in need through an existing organization can help the lodge make a difference where

it counts the most.

36. **Boy and Girl Scouts** – These two worthwhile organizations never have too much volunteer assistance. Masons can help the scouts arrange for camping trips, field trips, teach crafts and skills and a wide-range of other programs, all of which typically need adult volunteer assistance. Contact your local Boy Scout or Girl Scout headquarters to find out how.
37. **State Fairs** – Many states have a large state or county fair where there are opportunities to get a booth and raise money for a worthy cause. Some fairs allow games of chance, food stalls or some other opportunity where all or a portion of the proceeds go to charity. It's a great opportunity to get the name of your lodge in front of a lot of people, but, as importantly, it's a great time to meet new people, have fun, enjoy fellowship and raise funds in a very short period of time. Once you get an established location, stick with it year after year.
38. **Pancakes for Dollars** – Nearly every lodge has an opportunity to plan and host a local pancake breakfast and to open it to the public. This is a low-cost way to involve the lodge in the community and to raise funds at the same time. Generally, these kinds of affairs take a lot of planning and support from the lodge but it pays off with good attendance and a lot of goodwill. On a typical Saturday morning a moderate-sized lodge can serve up to two hundred \$3.00 - \$4.50 meals. And if most of the food is donated, the net profit can be \$600 or more. As you can see, if you hosted a pancake breakfast once a month from September through May you could raise \$5,000 for a worthy program in your community.
39. **Potato Bake** – We know of a small lodge in rural Oklahoma that has hit upon a gold mine with their baked potato stand. Every Saturday in the summer through late fall, the members man a baked potato booth on a parking lot of the mall in the center of town. Over the course of a year, this small lodge has raised more than \$7,000 for local scholarships just by baking and serving potatoes with all kinds of toppings. They have juice and sodas and are thinking of expanding to include french fried potatoes served Oklahoma-style and Tex-Mex potatoes which include, of course, chili peppers.
40. **YMCA and YWCA** – In many smaller towns these worthwhile organizations will welcome the partnership of the Masonic lodge as a means of broadening their volunteer effort and, most particularly, their programs for young men and women. Opportunities range from working on a weekend in a crafts program to being volunteer leaders in a day camp during the summer. Regardless of the task, you should be able to count on the organization to help you get organized to make a difference.

## When Your Lodge is in a Large Town or City

It might appear that rural lodges have a better opportunity – or an easier time – of becoming involved in the community. Frequently, the lodge is in the very heart of small rural towns. But city lodges have many opportunities that small rural lodges don't. Some projects may require more than one lodge to accomplish it. That's easier if the lodge is in the same building. In major cities like New York, Philadelphia and Chicago, there are at least five lodges meeting in one Masonic building.

41. **The Department of Education** – Lodges can create partnerships with the Department of Education to develop special programs that will make a difference. Often the lodge will be asked to provide funds to underwrite a special program and it may respond with a major fund-raising effort. Other

times the lodge can become more directly involved with the local elementary school through a reading or literacy program.

42. **League of Women Voters** – Lodge members can help get out the message to vote by volunteering their time and effort to supporting the civic goals of The League. They would be involved principally by handing out literature and using the phone to try to convince more people to vote.
43. **Recreation and Parks** – In most cities, there is a council that manages the city's neighborhood parks and playgrounds. Speak with a local parks official to determine what the local lodge can do and under what restrictions must they operate. Ask the Recreations and Parks official whether there is a tournament (e.g. softball, volleyball, etc.) that the lodge might help sponsor and serve in other ways as well.
44. **Adopt-A-Spot** – Identify some area in your community that your lodge will clean up and secure for community use. Consider a local park or play area. Develop additional sponsors and have a local planner draw up a multi-year plan or site development for you to follow. Consider partnerships with the DeMolay, Rainbow or Jobs Daughters to maximize results.
45. **Adopt-A-Highway** – Be responsible for keeping a portion of a road or highway clean of debris and litter. Coordinate with other agencies so that you maximize your efforts. This is a popular effort that clearly shows Masons can make a difference.
46. **Environmental Protection** – Every community has some environmental concern that Masons in a large lodge could help address. From cleaning up the local stream to picking up plastic and other debris where it will do damage to wildlife, to handing out booklets on the proper use of garden sprays and fertilizers. Masons could find many proactive ways to become involved in their urban setting and make a difference.
47. **Staffing as Volunteers** – Many city events, facilities and recreational areas need volunteers in order to remain open and active. The local zoo needs volunteers to serve as guides, direct visitors or operate the gift shop. Your lodge could help the city, meet new people and learn a great deal if it were to provide a staff of volunteers who would be trained by the zoo. Similar opportunities are available in the local museums, special exhibits, and local gardens and parks, as well as the local visitor's bureau.
48. **Helping Kids in Need** – In every large city there are scores of young boys and girls that have a need for special care, surgery or treatment that their families cannot afford. Some can pay for the care but not for the transportation or for the costs of an extended stay. Organizations like the Ronald McDonald House serve as hosts for children and their parents during special treatment at little or no cost to the family. You can help establish both the funds and the location to make this possible in your community. Your local hospital can be helpful in identifying other organizations with which you can partner.
49. **Kids Support** – If your city has a Ronald McDonald House or if you have established a local facility for transporting and housing children and their families in need, you can provide important operating assistance through the donation of dollars or by purchasing special materials and equipment that the facility might lack. We have heard of a lodge that rented 200 videotapes from a large video rental store and had three delivered each week for over a year. Other lodges have purchased TV's and VCR's for the homes.
50. **Getting There** – Some children who have special needs for hospital care or surgery that is not available in the local area need transportation with their family to another city. The lodge can arrange

for this transportation through local fund-raising efforts which include Masons and others who are interested in this opportunity. Transportation costs, which can run into several thousand dollars can be raised through the community and in the private sector if a coordinated campaign is initiated to raise the funds and manage their disbursements through a local foundation or charity. For additional information on how to accomplish this, please contact The Masonic Renewal Committee of North America.

51. **Helping Up Mission** – In Baltimore, MD the Helping Up Mission is an organization that provides meals, housing and training for people living on the street. In one year they can help hundreds of men and women start on a path to personal renewal. In your town or city similar organizations exist. They count upon volunteer efforts and funds to make their work successful. Your lodge can contact a local organization like this and see what opportunities you may develop. For a list of agencies that accept volunteer partners like your lodge can provide, please contact the local offices of your United Way.
52. **Soup Kitchen** – Many cities have special facilities for feeding the homeless and the hungry. These are often associated with the local church or synagogue but are non-denominational in terms of whom they serve. They need volunteer help preparing and distributing food, cleaning up, storing food, handling their clientele and many other tasks that occur on a daily basis. Volunteering a team from the lodge to work on a certain day each week or contacting the agency to learn of other ways you can help would be one way the lodge can make a difference.

## Howdy Partner

In virtually every community, civic organizations such as the Lions and the Kiwanis are always planning projects that need additional help. Imagine the new friends you could make – not to mention the new members – if you were to partner with one of these organizations on a major project in the community.

Even though it would be impossible to mention all of the different kinds of community projects these organizations provide, we have been able to identify the following types of projects for each organization. See how many appeal to you, then contact them and see what you can develop.

**Lions Club** – The world's largest service organization, the Lions Clubs' primary commitment is to blindness prevention and services to the sight-impaired. Each club has other service objectives as well. For information about the Lions Clubs in your community, contact Pat Cannon at the International Association of Lions Clubs (708) 571-5466, ext. 349.

**Kiwanis** – Kiwanis is a worldwide service organization designed for individuals desiring personal involvement in the leadership and improvement of their communities. Special emphasis is placed on Priority

## Ways to Get Involved with Your Community Schools

On the pages that follow, you will discover 50 ways you can get involved with your elementary, middle and senior high school. You may need to adjust these ideas to make them fit your particular circumstances, but most will work in your area.

1. Volunteer lodge members to read to children on a regular schedule working with a specific teacher.
2. Initiate a scholarship program for learning excellence and present a cash award to one student in each grade who meets established criteria.
3. Sponsor an event with the school to raise funds for a computer lab. Work through school purchasing to determine specs and best buys.
4. Assist the librarian in an after-hours volunteer reading program to promote reading enjoyment for adults and children.
5. Organize a Book Exchange where students and members of the community can donate books for children and adults. Distribute through the school library.
6. Deliver books and other learning materials to children who are out of school for an extended period. Work with the “visiting teacher” and the principal.
7. Volunteer as chaperons or hosts on a series of school-related field trips/events.
8. Plan and host a book fair with parents and teachers. Donate proceeds towards a major purchase for the school library.
9. Develop a contest in which students who read the greatest number of books receive an award or prize.
10. Sponsor a creative writing contest in which the children write about a specific subject and the lodge arranges for special prizes or awards.
11. Provide teachers or the library with subscriptions to magazines for children. Ask the librarian for a recommended list.
12. Fund an after-school or summer reading camp on school property. The lodge could provide compensation for teachers and materials. Parents could also pay.
13. Establish a forum where students who want or need extra assistance can go for help. The lodge could be the learning center. Teachers plus lodge volunteers could create an excellent program. Compensation may be required.

14. Arrange for a limited number of part-time jobs for students with a need and an excellent academic record. Don't let the hours exceed 15 a week or school work might suffer.
15. Reward learning excellence by offering summer jobs to kids who meet a predetermined criteria. Ask the guidance department to establish the criteria you will follow.
16. Ask several members of the lodge to serve on a school improvement board. If none exists, ask the principal if you can establish one. For more help, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.
17. Provide in-school day care on a scheduled basis for parents who need to visit the school. Use school facilities. The lodge can provide the volunteer staff.
18. Showcase students in your lodge trestle board who have achieved academic excellence. As the school for photographs. Any time you publish a student's photograph and personal information ask the parents/guardian for approval.
19. Showcase the names of the All-Star Reading team in the local newspaper. Purchase a full-page and arrange for photographs of the students. Make sure your lodge is credited with the sponsorship.
20. Offer the local high school a series of field trips to businesses in the community so that students gain additional knowledge about the workplace. Take the time to prepare each company's presentation.
21. Arrange for equipment from businesses represented by lodge members to be donated to the local school. This could include older computers, office equipment, audio-visual equipment and other supplies.
22. Establish and fund a School Improvement Team with goals for the 21st century. See the goals published in *Moving America to the Head of the Class – Keeping the Promise* published by Educational Excellence Partnerships, 1615 L Street NW, Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036.
23. Identify needs in music and art. Work with the local college or other lodge members to fund and implement a 20-hour enrichment program with the school.
24. Underwrite and assist field trips to local orchestra, art museum or other cultural exhibition. Provide funds for transportation.
25. Volunteer to work in your school as a tutor or mentor. Ask at least five other men in your lodge to volunteer with you. Form a mentoring team. Have fun.
26. Honor a special educator with a significant reward, cash or other gift that recognizes teaching excellence.
27. Arrange for selected merchants in the community to provide a small discount for children and faculty members of a local school.
28. Underwrite and organize a contest that would ask students to become familiar with the town's history. Ask for a display, model, map or some other type of project that would encourage their

additional discovery.

29. Arrange and host a Read-A-Thon where students assemble in the school one day each quarter for a reading experience. Arrange for games, prizes, instruction, book sales and other activities.
30. Develop a reading and writing pal program with your local school. Ask each lodge member to partner with one student for a period of one year. Assume that each member will make a commitment of one hour on the phone per week and one two-hour face-to-face every other week for a year. Total annual commitment approximately 100 hours.
31. Sponsor an unsung hero's award to spotlight the high school boy or girl that the coaches identify as unselfish in their support of their high school team.
32. Host a local alcohol and/or drug awareness seminar for all students. Work in conjunction with the local social services agencies or the National Masonic Foundation for Alcohol and Drug Awareness Among Children. Contact Larry Chisholm at (202) 331-1933.
33. Provide a video library for a local school. Purchase tapes from a list of available topics for school use available through the librarian. Make sure you give your lodge credit by putting your lodge's name and a brief statement about Freemasonry on the case. At approximately \$20 per tape (from public broadcasting) a library of 25 titles is about \$500.
34. Purchase a video projector for the school and donate it in the name of the lodge. Cost is approximately \$2,300. For more information, contact the Masonic Renewal Committee of North America.
35. Organize and underwrite a special Discovery Series of field trips to unusual places for the school in your area. Work with school authorities to learn of the important places you might visit.
36. Encourage innovation and discovery by sponsoring a Discovery Fair in association with your local science teacher. Announce significant awards. Contribute prizes based upon criteria developed with the school's science department. Look into the National Science Foundation awards.
37. Work with local businesses to establish a Creative Fair where students submit artwork, photography, videotapes, original music and creative writing for scholarship or other prizes.
38. Volunteer to supervise three evening events during the school year. The lodge could volunteer as chaperons or they could provide other services from parking to security.
39. Develop, host and sponsor a Classics Film Forum. Use the catalog provided by your local librarian or contact Films Incorporated (800-323-4222) or CRM International (800-421-0833) for a list of rental films suitable for showing in the schools.

40. Provide transportation for students the school identifies as needing help getting to local school events. Check with your insurance company before you volunteer.

## The Big Brass Band

You will find in the next 10 suggestions examples of challenging projects a lodge may undertake. They are different from the prior list in that they will require a significant and lasting commitment by the lodge and cannot be achieved with only one or two men. Lodges that undertake one of these projects are really interested in partnerships and with excellence in education. Please understand also, that a number of the projects listed in the first 40 can be enlarged to fit this category as well.

41. **Lookin' Spiffy** – Work with the school administration to identify some area in the school that is in need of repair that is not on the Board of Education's maintenance agenda. Develop a plan for cleaning or painting this area and assume its responsibility for one year. The lodge might be responsible for painting one section of the building or refinishing the seats in the gymnasium or auditorium. Or, the lodge might purchase and install pull-down screens in each of the classrooms. The lodge could also purchase a platform for a TV monitor and the appropriate wiring and jacks and mount one on each classroom wall. Check with local codes and other requirements before beginning.
42. **Clean and Green** – Work with local school officials to determine the exterior needs of the school including the play area. Develop a plan that identifies what you are planning to do and get the school to approve. Complete the cleanup and paint as needed. Once each quarter, have a team of lodge members meet for a Saturday morning for a quick refresher. Once each year, have a major event or move on to another school.
43. **Learning Excellence** – Develop a criteria for learning excellence. Work with school officials and teachers to determine the scope and importance of the award. Look for ways the lodge can raise the funds to make a meaningful contribution or scholarship to the winning student(s). In the course of one year see if it is possible for three awards to be given: one each in the elementary, middle and senior high school in the amounts of \$1,000, \$2,500, and \$3,500. Make a significant event out of the award ceremony including the use of the winner's photograph in the local papers (first obtain parental approval) as well as looking for other ways in which the winners might be recognized in school events, parades, local events and sporting highlights.
44. **Teaching Excellence** – Excellence in learning begins with excellent teachers; individuals who are clearly identified as being above average in terms of their contribution and commitment to the children they teach. It makes no difference whether that teacher is a history teacher or an art teacher, the same high standards for teaching prevail. Excellent teachers are often motivated to leave the classroom for "greener" pastures. Incentives, like the lodge might provide, may keep them where they are. For the lodge to initiate and sustain a program of teaching excellence, it will probably have to limit its contribution to a single teacher a year. If the lodge can arrange for additional fund-

ing partners, it can expand its gift to include other teachers. The larger the grant, the more impact the lodge makes and the greater interest it creates on the part of the educators involved. For the purposes of planning, this award probably needs to include annual grants to teachers in the amounts of \$5,000, \$3,000 and \$1,000. With numbers like these, your lodge can generate significant interest.

45. **Poster Perfect** – Develop a county-wide poster contest that promotes goodwill, racial understanding and parental involvement. Arrange for year-long sponsorship and involvement. Get local businesses to participate by displaying all entries and the winners. Have the winning posters made into T-shirt with the artist's name and the name of the school and show the contest was sponsored by your lodge. Arrange for the winning posters to be displayed in advertisements you purchase in the local newspapers. Make other suitable announcements and presentations.
46. **Mentoring Magic** – Ask a large segment of your membership to participate in a mentoring program with the local elementary or secondary school. Work with the local principal or Board of Education or on a statewide level with the Director of Community Partnerships to identify the criteria and expectations for the program. Commit to a one-year effort with as many students as the school identifies as needing adult partnerships. Ask the county or local Department of Education if they offer mentoring training and other help in establishing such programs. Work closely with the school PTA so they can handle questions should they arise. Develop a planned itinerary of events, meetings, and other tasks your lodge team agrees to undertake. Arrange for the local press and media to be informed about your contributions. Remember, if 20 members of your lodge develop a mentoring program with 20 students in the school, the year-long effect would be beyond the effort of most other community programs and deserving of significant reward and recognition.
47. **On the Job Training** – A number of European companies have established important partnerships with young men and women early in their social careers – usually by the 8th or 9th grade. They assist the young person during the school year by providing part-time and summer jobs while investing in their development as potential workers. When the student has finished high school, the company provides scholarships for those who demonstrate aptitude and interest in the skills required for their firm. At the end of their schooling, they are offered full-time jobs as experienced workers. Mercedes Benz does one of the best jobs of developing technically competent workers and working with them during their schooling in exchange for their commitment to work for Mercedes Benz upon graduation. This type of program is probably not possible in many communities, but in certain locations and with certain companies, working with students in their middle school and high school years may be an important way of locating and retaining quality workers in the long run. Many national firms have such programs available and only need a local organization to help get it off the ground. Perhaps a local member's company could consider such a program. It won't be easy, but finding a good job upon graduation will be very high on the list of student needs and the lodge can help in a number of ways.
48. **Quality Fun** – In many communities, kids have no place to go after school. We've heard time and again that the shopping malls are the only place they can go and the merchants don't want them there. The lodge is not the answer in terms of an ideal location, but the members of the lodge, in cooperation with the parents and the school, can provide the stimulus for developing a series of after-school activities that the kids will want to attend and in which they will remain involved. We heard about a group of volunteer parents who opened up an old movie theater, rented films and showed them on weekends to kids in the community. All of the employees were volunteer parents: the projectionist, the ticket agent, the popcorn and soda vendors and the ushers. The cost to the children was the cost of the film rental – usually a fraction of what it would be on a for-profit basis. In many communities there are facilities like this available. In some communities, the school will

serve as the center if there is proper insurance and adult supervision. In rare cases, the lodge can partner with other groups in the community and with the school to actually construct a recreational center. We know of lodges that have done this on property they own and built their lodge there also. It's a big financial commitment, but it is a step in the right direction.

49. **State History** – Most schools require at least one semester of state history and geography from each student for graduation. Since every state and province in North America has an exciting and revealing story, it would be fun to tell it on videotape. Assemble quality producers and editors who understand how to use video as a teaching tool. Don't cut corners or you will wind up with a program no one will watch. To do this project correctly will demand time, creative energy and resources. Three 40-minute videotapes can cost between \$25,000 and \$60,000 if done with broadcast quality. Working with the state superintendent for history or social studies, local and state-wide organizations, corporations and other fraternal or social clubs, will provide many individuals anxious to help. Explore possibilities with local cable stations or independent producers to donate services. Partner with other lodges or Grand Lodge to make this generous contribution to the local school system a reality. Remember to name your lodge and any other contributors in the closing credits. By doing so, the number of students who will see your name over the five-year shelf-life of the tape will easily number in the thousands. The press will also be interested in such a sizable contribution.

50. **The Grand Daddy of them All** – Masons are famous for their contributions to learning. A number of state school systems were founded by Masons. Over time, the system has eroded to where it is no longer first class. Students suffer as teachers are overloaded or are hired with less than desirable qualifications. Pressures on families mean that kids may come to school less able to perform than they did 20 years ago. Reading appears to be the key. A child that has reading appreciation skills when entering school is much more likely to succeed than one who has none. Schools which are pressed for time and budgets may be forced to pass a child who lacks skills in reading even when he or she should be retained for extra help and training.

On a local basis, this project will be difficult to initiate. But, on a statewide or even national basis, it would be far easier. Here's the goal: Masons agree that no first-grader will go to the second grade unable to read. Guaranteed. Through the efforts of the lodge in sponsoring reading and teaching excellence through partnerships created by the lodge with the school and with the state Department of Education, and through the volunteer efforts of members working with local school officials and teachers, Masons will become the "Good Housekeeping" sponsors of reading and literacy.

Any child who is considered "at risk" will enter a special program developed by the Masons and funded through the local lodge to ensure that the student gets the remedial attention and guidance he needs. Masons in the lodge will not be responsible for teaching students to read unless they are