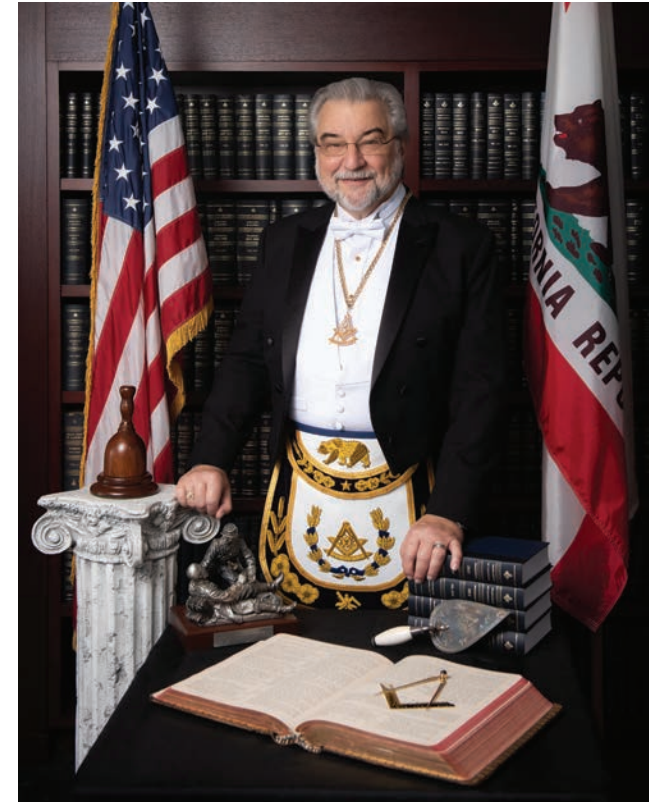




MASONS OF CALIFORNIA

FRATERNITY REPORT 2022



Forward March

WE'RE NOW NEARLY three years into the pandemic. Thankfully, many aspects of our lives have returned to something like normal. But in other ways—both seen and unseen—the toll taken by the pandemic continues to be felt.

That's certainly been the case for our fraternity. We now know that as a result of our lodges being shuttered for much of 2020 and parts of 2021, rendering us unable to confer degrees, we lost close to 10 percent of our membership.

It's been a long road to get to where we are today, with lodges just now beginning

to get back into the routine of bringing in prospects and making new Masons. These past three years have posed a unique challenge, but we're now starting to turn the corner. Entered Apprentice degrees were up sharply in 2022, and as a result of several efforts, both at the Grand Lodge and local lodge levels, we expect 2023 to be even stronger.

Membership wasn't the only challenge we faced as a fraternity—and it isn't the only way we're changing. At the Masonic Homes of California, we're nearly finished with what has been a five-year renovation effort to drastically increase resident capacity and modernize our retirement home campuses and their offerings. Thanks to that work, where in the recent past there had been a multiyear wait to move into the Masonic Homes, today the wait time is zero.

Throughout this period of uncertainty, our members have continued to fulfill their obligation of Masonic relief. Thanks to our membership, gifts to the California Masonic Foundation's Annual Fund topped \$2 million for the third consecutive year—the only three years in its history to hit that mark.

Numbers like that remind us that our members remain as committed as ever to Freemasonry in California. As our lodges fully emerge from a difficult three years, we're well poised to make a bright future for our fraternity.

May the Great Architect of the Universe bless and protect you and keep you in good health.

Randall L. Brill

Randall L. Brill
GRAND MASTER
OF MASONS IN CALIFORNIA



Looking Out, Looking In

IN 2022, THE MASONS
OF CALIFORNIA SET OUT
TO SHOW THE PUBLIC
WHAT THE FRATERNITY IS
ALL ABOUT.

THOSE WHO KNOW Chay Wright best know him to be a creative, curious, and spiritual man. Friendly, even-tempered, and artistic. What many didn't know was that he's also a Freemason—until he came right out and said it, that is.

BY IAN A.
STEWART

This summer, Wright, a musician and member of three lodges in Los Angeles including **Beverly Hills No. 528**, was among the scores of California Masons who

took to social media to declare their membership using the hashtag #ImAMason and to explain what they get from Masonry—something that for generations had been a source of immense confusion and misinformation among both members and the general public. For Wright's post, he filmed a short video from his audio-recording studio. "When people find out I'm a Mason, it's usually followed by the question, 'What's a Mason?'"

Wright began. He went on. "A Mason is a man who constructs his life's journey on a foundation of principles and morals."

Soon, the replies came pouring in. "People were like, 'I've never heard Freemasonry articulated in that way,'" Wright says. "Most people said, basically, what I described Masonry doing for my character is who they know me to be."

That kind of frank, open exchange was increasingly common among California Masons and the wider public in 2022, a year in which the fraternity went to great lengths to increase positive awareness of Freemasonry. Whether online, in person, or through the media, the idea was to show how many people have Masons in their networks, and to encourage current members to become comfortable talking about their experiences with others. That was perhaps most in evidence during the two-week #ImaMason campaign, which reached more than 2.8 million people over Facebook and Instagram.

Those efforts have reverberated in ways big and small—from helping usher a new generation of initiates into the fraternity, all the way down to something as simple as seeing a "like" on a Masonic-themed Facebook post.

TALKING ABOUT FREEMASONRY

The need for members to feel comfortable talking openly about Freemasonry has emerged as a significant priority over the past two years, during which the organization has set out to fulfill its 2025 Fraternity Plan. In the context of a significant drop in membership during the pandemic—many through suspensions, moves out of state, or death—simply maintaining similar levels of members in future

years will require a significant increase in new initiates. Research has consistently shown that prospects first learn about the fraternity from

the people closest to them—family members, friends, and colleagues.

And yet a majority of members say they don't feel comfortable talking about Freemasonry with

those close to them, often under the incorrect belief that they're prohibited from doing so.

By helping members discuss the fraternity with their friends and family—and giving them the tools to do so confidently and accurately—the hope is that they'll

inspire the next wave of Masons to take the first step toward lodge.

That's why, in May 2022, the Grand Lodge produced a new guide to frequently asked questions about the fraternity, its membership requirements, and other basics. To date, more than 13,000 copies have been printed and distributed to Masons, lodges, and prospects, with more than 1,000 more digital downloads made over the web.

In addition to creating resources for current members to better serve as fraternal ambassadors, the Grand Lodge also devel-

oped new online content geared toward non-members who are



"People were like, 'I've never heard Freemasonry articulated in that way.'"

—CHAY WRIGHT

interested in learning more about Freemasonry. A series of dynamic new webpages for prospects (respectively titled What Is Freemasonry, Becoming a Mason, and History of Freemasonry) were rolled out over the summer, alongside several articles on frequently searched topics related to Freemasonry. During the Annual Communication in the fall, visitors and passers-by to the California Masonic Memorial Temple in San Francisco—which hosts nearly a quarter-million people each year—encountered QR codes linking to new content about the history of the building and its importance to Freemasonry in California. Overall, traffic to the Grand Lodge's homepage (freemason.org) increased by nearly 260 percent from the spring to the summer. As a result of those efforts, organic search traffic—that is, people naturally guided to the site through a web search, rather than a paid ad—increased by more than 400 percent over the same time period.

People outside the fraternity have always had questions about Freemasonry. More



than ever, in 2022, the Masons of California were better positioned to provide them with those answers.

REACHING NEW MEMBERS

Perhaps the most impactful of these efforts was the fraternity's first-ever online awareness push. The multi-pronged program involved, first, the #ImaMason campaign to activate current members to post messages on their social media accounts explaining what Freemasonry has meant to them. In addition, a subsequent campaign was launched to connect interested prospects

to more information about Masonry and to lodges near them.

That 10-week campaign was delivered to more than 1.16 million people throughout the Bay Area, Central Valley, Los Angeles, and San Diego, primarily over Instagram and Facebook. Those who responded to the message were routed to their local lodge or connected with representatives from the Grand Lodge Member Services department who could answer questions and refer to them to a lodge. Meanwhile, the Grand Lodge beefed up its membership development team, bringing on a new advisor to serve as a liaison between prospects and lodge officers and to help interested candidates begin their Masonic journey. (For more, see page 7.)

Ultimately, that effort led to roughly 1,600 new prospects being connected to lodges throughout the state. And those new prospects were spread evenly, with nearly 85 percent of all the lodges in the state having at least one prospect referred to them—and nearly all those lodges seeing multiple prospects.

That surge of interest bodes well for future membership in the fraternity. (Since 1988, the Grand Lodge of California has only had more than 2,000 new initiates in a year once.) That's a particularly good thing, as the toll of the pandemic on the fraternity has more clearly come into view in 2022.

Consider: At the outset of the pandemic, in March 2020, the fraternity was on track for a net gain in membership for the first time in nearly 60 years. With lodges closed for much of that year, however, membership remained virtually flat. As the shutdown stretched on and applications for degrees were put on hold for much of 2021, the fraternity was unable to make new members. Meanwhile, suspensions for non-payment of

dues—combined with normal membership turnover (deaths, demits, expulsions)—created a net loss of between 3,000 and 4,000 members, a bit less than 10 percent of the entire fraternity.

The good news is that things are picking up. Thanks in part to the awareness campaign, plus the backlog of candidates delayed by the pandemic starting to progress through the degrees, 2022 saw a significant jump in Entered Apprentice degrees. That should continue: In December 2022, a survey of lodge leadership found that nearly 75 percent of all lodges had at least one online prospect progressing toward an application.

That may well make 2023 the year of the Entered Apprentice degree. However, an equally important aspect of the fraternity's membership equation is retaining current members. Suspensions, which spiked

TALKING THE TALK

The need for members to have open and frank conversations about Masonry with others emerged as a pressing priority for maintaining membership levels.



A SIMPLE GUIDE TO MASONRY

Download a digital version of the booklet, full of straightforward questions and answers about the fraternity, or pick up a hard copy today.

Go to freemason.org/openingthedoor to download a pdf of this booklet



during the pandemic, remain stubbornly high (more than 1,400 in 2022). Moreover, those being suspended have an average tenure of 32 years of membership in the fraternity—in other words, they're longtime, highly committed Masons. In many cases, suspensions are the result of clerical issues like a changed address, and the members aren't even aware they've been suspended.

Nearly three-quarters of suspended members say they hope to be brought back into good standing.

To that end, the Membership Restoration program, first launched in 2020, is making it easier to bring those members back for a simple, flat fee. In 2022, more than 400 members were restored through the program. And a new, centralized, online dues-payment system has shown promising results. Lodges using the online system saw 12 percent more members pay their dues on time compared to those still writing paper checks directly to the lodge secretary.

The pandemic was a significant setback for overall membership in the fraternity. But with programs to strengthen the membership

pipeline at every stage of the funnel—and with Masons themselves leading the effort—the future does finally look bright.

LOOKING FORWARD

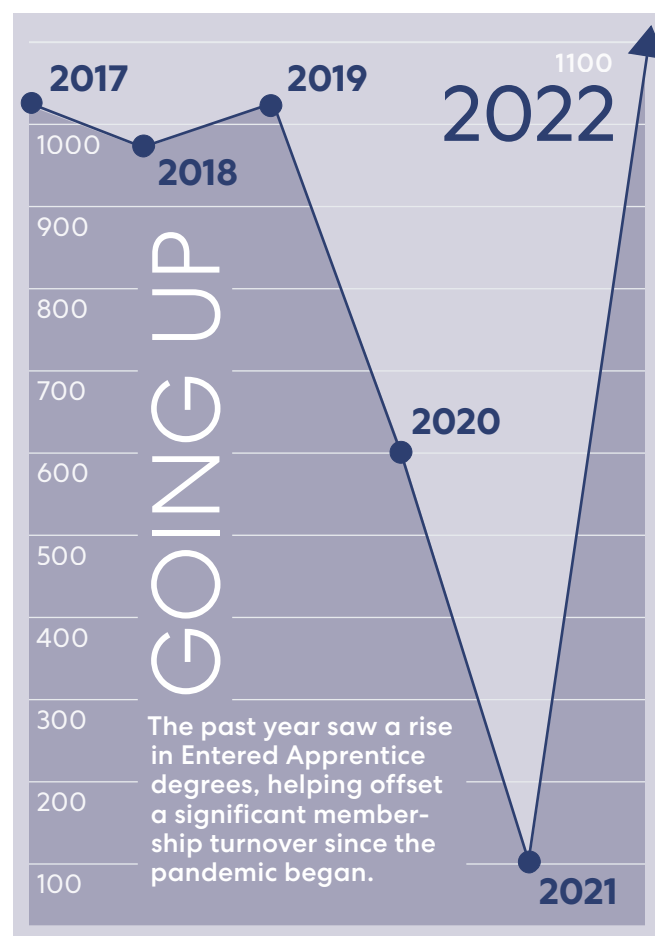
As it was for so many lodges, the past year was a busy one at **Claude H. Morrison No. 747** in San Diego's Imperial Beach neighborhood. The lodge initiated an incredible 18 new Entered Apprentices in 2022, the most in the state. Combined with a glut of second- and third-degree conferrals that had been postponed during the pandemic, the result was a packed lodge schedule. "We were doing degrees almost every week," says Michael Peralta, who served as lodge master in 2022.

As the calendar turns to 2023, there isn't any letup for the lodge, either. As of early January, the lodge had 10 more petitioners awaiting degrees, plus another 10 prospects lined up behind them.

"I can't compare us to other lodges, but in my term as master, we really focused on [paying attention to] our applicants," Peralta says. "We try to entertain people who come into our lodge. If a random person comes, we talk to them, answer their questions."

But Peralta says the main driver of membership continues to be word of mouth. Members at the lodge are open about Freemasonry, he says. They talk with friends, cousins, and coworkers about what the lodge means to them. As a result, those curious acquaintances become visitors to the lodge. And visitors become petitioners. And petitioners become members. And members become ambassadors, starting the cycle all over again.

In that way, he says, Freemasonry in California continues to move forward, changing and evolving as a living testament to its timeless traditions. ■



Blake Green

**MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ADVISOR,
MASTER, SACRAMENTO No. 40**

Can you tell us more about your role as a membership development advisor, connecting prospects to lodges?

My role as membership advisor is to provide people interested in Masonry with the information they need and, if they wish to proceed, to connect them with a local lodge to start their journey.

I'm the proverbial Virgil, guiding prospects along on their journey from initial interest to meeting their new lodge.

What do you find most rewarding about the job?

Masonry has made a tremendous impact in my life, and I enjoy being able to talk to people about the amazing possibilities that "knocking on the

door" can provide. Being able to follow up later and find out that someone I referred is now a happy member of a lodge is the real reward of the position. I'm able to make an impact on someone else's life, as well as bring lodges new and engaged—and possibly long-term—members. I do believe successful prospecting is the lifeblood of the fraternity.

What makes you well-suited to this kind of work?

I have experience in this role at my own lodge, Sacramento No. 40, where I reach out to all the prospects and answer their questions. Now, I get to perform the same job on a more statewide basis.

What's your favorite memory in Freemasonry?

It would have to be my first time as master for a third-degree ceremony, when I was able to raise my good friend as a Master Mason after guiding him through his initiation.

What prospecting advice do you have for lodges?

Every lodge can benefit by truly thinking about the impression they leave on someone. Just by being diligent and welcoming, they're already providing the brotherly experience that Masonry promises. ■

The Network

FOR THE CALIFORNIA
MASONIC FOUNDATION,
PARTNERSHIPS ARE THE KEY
TO EXPANDING REACH.

Effect

HOW CAN ONE plus one make three?

For the Masons of California, there's an inherent logic to that unlikely equation. It's apparent every time a new member volunteers their time, energy, and ideas to a

BY IAN A.
STEWART

worthy cause. Or when they share a new perspective with the group. Or offer to make an introduction. It's what happens when two parties bring their energy, resources, and talents together to create something that's even greater than the sum of their parts. It's

a special kind of synergy—and one that can allow even a small organization to make an outsize effect on the world around it.

And when it comes to Masonic philanthropy, it's something like a guiding principle.

For generations, the Masons of California have proven themselves to be committed to fulfilling their fraternal obligation to provide aid to those in need and improve the communities around them. The past year was no different. Members pledged more than \$11 million in total gifts to California

Masonic Foundation programs. Over the summer, as the conflict in Ukraine became front-page news, California Masons teamed up with their neighbors in the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of California and the George Washington Union Grand Lodge Supreme Council to raise more than \$76,000 for the International Committee of the Red Cross to support relief efforts in Ukraine. On top of that, they also helped organize countless scholarships, fundraisers, and volunteer efforts at the lodge and district level. From food and clothes drives to school-supplies giveaways, beach cleanups, and more, both locally and statewide, Masons have and continue to make a point of showing up and lending a hand.

And yet as anyone who's ever been in a lodge full of Masons knows, when it comes to making the greatest possible impact, it isn't just about dollars and cents. Instead, the secret ingredient is a dash of teamwork. Because when Masons bring different people together—with all the ideas, connections, and resources they bring to the table—they're able to truly multiply their reach and extend their influence. "We can make such a bigger impact by having great partners," says Mark McNee, the vice chair of the California Masonic Foundation and a member of several Bay Area lodges including **Seven Hills No. 881**.

NOT GOING IT ALONE

Mike George has seen firsthand how that can play out. A longtime teacher and school administrator in San Diego, George is now co-chair of the San Diego-area Masonic Public Education Advisory Committee. Both professionally and through the Masons, he's seen just how impactful—and necessary—it is to bring groups together to solve big challenges.

On the PEACs, that's the name of the game. Members of the committee act as tentacles reaching into the local community, connecting schools, administrators, and nonprofits with the Foundation's statewide initiatives. This year, the PEAC partnered on its scholarship program with Reality Changers of San Diego, a group George was familiar with from his work in the local schools.

The connections that George and his team make have also, for instance, helped smooth the way to introduce the national literacy nonprofit Raising A Reader with the county school district—the second-largest district in the state. Since 2012, that's led to Raising A Reader's bringing its family-reading book-share program to 67 classrooms in the county. Says Michelle Torgerson, the group's CEO, "Raising A Reader would not be the organization we are without the Masons, and we wouldn't be able to serve tens of thousands of students and families without the California Masonic Foundation. This partnership has allowed us to reach families who need these early literacy supports the most."

Or as George puts it, "Bringing our philosophy, our money, and our belief in early education together with the needs of the school district through a research-proven program like Raising A Reader shows how all these things are intertwined," he says. "To make a difference, you can't just do it through one group, unless you're a mega-group."

Statewide, Masons' support has helped Raising A Reader expand into more than 800 classrooms. Since 2011, Masons have given more than \$3.5 million to the program, which

"We can make such a bigger impact by having great partners."

aims to reach the 1,000 classroom mark in the near future.

During the summer of 2020, the Foundation was able to put that partnership to even greater good. With public schools closed for in-person instruction, Foundation staff connected Raising A Reader's literacy and education expertise with their Major League Baseball partner organizations through Masons4Mitts. The result was a novel program in which Masons helped organize and deliver more than 7,000 book bags through the teams' youth-baseball programs—an important resource-sharing milestone for both the Foundation and Raising A Reader.

In San Diego, that spirit animates the Foundation's recent approach to philanthropy. Working with its partners in the local school district, as well as Raising A Reader, Major League Baseball, and locally based college-success nonprofits, the Foundation and its PEACs are embracing a new role as

connectors. "We've always had partners, but now we're shifting to be more like a seed organization bringing people together—like venture philanthropists," McNee says. Over the coming year, the Foundation plans to put a special emphasis on the region through place-based philanthropic efforts, using the power of its network to amplify the impact of its work.

A RALLYING CRY

In 2022, the Masons of California showed just how much faith they have in that philosophy. All told, the fraternity gave more than \$11 million to the Foundation, driven in large part by planned gifts and bequests. In addition to reaching an all-time high in average annual gifts, the past year also saw an increase in overall member giving, lodge officer giving, and recurring online gifts. Grand Master's Circle-level and Anniversary-level donors were both up in 2022. More than \$2 million of that went to the Foundation's Annual Fund, which supports its

A BANNER YEAR

Once again, Masons gave generously to the California Masonic Foundation in 2022.

\$11,443,592

TOTAL GIVEN TO THE ANNUAL FUND, MASONS4MITTS, AND THROUGH PLANNED GIVING.

\$2,058,454 \$319

GIVEN TO THE ANNUAL FUND BENEFITTING PUBLIC EDUCATION, THE DISTRESSED WORTHY BROTHER RELIEF FUND, AND MASONS4MITTS

AVERAGE MEMBER GIFT—THE LARGEST AVERAGE IN OUR HISTORY.



JOE STOUT, CHAIR OF THE ORANGE COUNTY PUBLIC EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE, SPEAKS DURING A PUBLIC SCHOOLS MONTH EVENT AT DAVIS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN SANTA ANA.

scholarships and educational initiatives, as well as the Distressed Worthy Brother Relief Fund, which connects Masons and families in need with services and resources through the Masonic Homes. It was the third consecutive year that Annual Fund giving has topped \$2 million.

"Masons believe in the power of working together to solve big issues," says Doug Ismail, president of the California Masonic Foundation. "We see our job as bringing great people and organizations together to further our mission of supporting young people in making college a reality and ending cycles of poverty."

Endorsement of the Foundation's partnerships was perhaps nowhere more in evidence than in the record support for Masons4Mitts. Through that program, the California Masonic Foundation works with the charitable arms of four Major League Baseball teams to supply under-resourced children with leather baseball mitts and connect them to youth-sports programs run through those clubs. Through these programs, Masons4Mitts and its partners provide children with a safe place to play while

they develop key collaboration skills, learn about health and nutrition, build productive study habits, and more.

In 2022, California Masons set fundraising records in each of the four Masons4Mitts regions, giving more than \$280,000 statewide to Junior Giants, the Los Angeles

"Now we're shifting to be more like a seed organization bringing people together—like venture philanthropists."

Dodgers' Dreamteam program, the San Diego Padres' Junior Padres program, and the Los Angeles Angels' RBI youth baseball league. This year also saw all-time gifts from the Foundation to the San Francisco Giants Community Fund surpass the \$1 million mark—making it the first Masons4Mitts club to hit that figure. That milestone was celebrated with a special pregame ceremony at Oracle Park in September. Since launching the program in 2011, California Masons have raised more than \$1.8 million for young people through Masons4Mitts. That translates

CATCHING ON

Masons4Mitts set fundraising records in each team region in 2022.

NORTHERN
CALIFORNIA
\$123,846

ORANGE
COUNTY
\$36,072

LOS ANGELES
\$70,453

SAN DIEGO
\$50,835

to 90,000 mitts for kids in need—although in each case, that support is about more than just baseball or sports equipment. Says Sue Petersen, executive director of the Giants Community Fund, “This milestone isn’t just about looking back at a successful fundraising campaign. It’s about the future. This gift represents all the years ahead for the more than 50,000 kids who get to participate in sports while gaining confidence and learning how to live healthier lives.”

Reflecting on nearly a decade and a half of cooperation between the Foundation and Junior Giants, Ismail marveled at the impact on so many young people that the program had made. All of it, he said, started with a simple conversation between himself, John Bermudez, and Rich Modolo, the first Masons4Mitts team captains. From that single spark, a million-dollar idea was born.

Incredible as it may seem, the math made sense. ■



SUE PETERSEN, HEAD OF THE GIANTS COMMUNITY FUND, PRESENTS A CUSTOM JERSEY TO FOUNDATION PRESIDENT DOUGLAS ISMAIL, GRAND MASTER JEFF WILKINS, PRINCE HALL GRAND MASTER DAVID SAN JUAN, AND GIANTS LEGEND DAVE DRAVECKY.

COURTESY OF S.F. GIANTS

FACES OF THE FRATERNITY



Steven L. Yeffa

PAST MASTER, PLEASANTON No. 321,
GRAND MASTER CIRCLE DONOR

What inspired you to give to the California Masonic Foundation?

As California Freemasons, we can see the direct benefit the Foundation provides to our members, their families, and our community. The work of the Foundation is exemplary of the obligations we take as Masons and should, I hope, inspire us all to offer what we can to further our

mission. Inspiration, for each of us, comes from a very personal place. For me, as I look at the impact our Masonic Homes and the Raising A Reader program have on the lives of others, it inspires me to contribute to their successes.

How does Masonic relief or charity fit into your life outside of Freemasonry?

My wife, Stacy, and I are pleased to contribute to

a number of causes, both within and outside of the Masonic family, including the youth orders. But we carry the principles of Masonic relief into all aspects of our lives. We are proud to continue to be a source of relief to those in need. In fact, just this past year, my company [Flight Adventure Park] started a 501(c)3 to offer scholarships to our team members and to provide relief for those team members that are food- or home-disadvantaged. These are all principles taught to us by Masonry.

What role do you think Masonic relief can play in promoting positive awareness of Freemasonry?

As Freemasons, we remember the core principles of brotherly love, relief, and truth. These are not exclusive to how we interact with one another in our lodges, but rather how we conduct ourselves in our daily lives. I carry these concepts with me in all aspects of my life, work, in church, and in my interactions with others. Kindness in our communities, honesty in business, courtesy in society, and fairness in all things are not the exclusive purview of Freemasons, but if we, as Masons, stand for those principles, then others will also see what we stand for as a society of friends and brothers. ■

DANIEL HERTZBERG

Intelligent Design

AT THE MASONIC HOMES OF CALIFORNIA, A YEARS-LONG RENOVATION IS NEARLY COMPLETE—AND RESHAPING THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION.

IF THERE'S ONE SPACE that captures the difference even a few years makes at the Masonic Homes of California, it's the old crafts room.

BY DREA
MULDAVIN

For years, the sewing and crafts room on the second floor of the Adams Building languished as a dark, under-utilized, and frankly not-particularly-welcoming space that most of the senior

residents of the Masonic Homes' Union City campus tended to avoid. Located at the northern end of the circa-1960s building, it was largely inaccessible to many of the residents of the building's other floors, many of whom use walkers or wheelchairs to get around. "It was choppy and blocked off, and just really dated," recalls Kimberly Hegg, senior director for recreation, events, and

volunteer services at the Masonic Homes' Union City campus.

That was then. In 2022, the crafts room—along with the rest of the Adams Building—was reborn, part of a more-than-\$115 million, five-year campus renovation plan that is reshaping the Masonic Homes into a modern healthcare organization. The Adams Building reopened in March 2022 as a light-filled, amenities-rich home for 48 seniors requiring assisted-living care.

Each floor of the building is now color-coded, with distinctive patterns displayed on signage outside elevators to better orient residents and visitors. Each floor includes resident rooms on either side of a central lounge, dining area, and nurses' station. On the second floor, there's a new communal space known as Charlie's Lounge (an ode to Charlie Chaplin, who shot five films in the nearby town of Niles). The lounge features bar-style seating, club chairs, and a double-sided fireplace. Nearby, the old crafts area has been reborn as billiards room; there's also a library and reading area, a sunroom leading out to the new patio and outdoor vegetable garden, and a ceramics studio. An old meeting room adjacent to the lounge has been reconfigured into a movie room, games area, and conference center. Throughout, the flooring is even (no raised thresholds under doorsills) and entryways are generously wide, making it easy to navigate a walker, wheelchair, or electric powerchair through the space. "It's super mobility-friendly," Hegg says. "We have people down there all the time now. It's so much more inviting."

A SYSTEM-WIDE UPGRADE

The Adams Building is just one element in what has been a wide-ranging effort to modernize the campus and, by extension, the overall organization.

Thanks to the recently completed renovations, the Masonic Homes in Union City has raised its capacity by 52 people, most of the rooms for which are dual-licensed for either independent or assisted-living residents. And the campus now has far more space for those requiring memory care services. In the Wollenburg Building, which was constructed in 1960 as the campus's first hospital ward, recently completed renovations have seen former double-occupancy apartments converted into private studios with their own bathrooms. The fifth floor now serves exclusively as a secure memory care neighborhood, while the third and fourth floor can flex between assisted living and memory care as needed. The difference is stark: Where the campus had just eight dedicated memory care beds pre-renovation, it now boasts between 30 and 46, depending on demand and configuration.

"As a result, the average wait time for a new resident to move in has dropped from almost two-and-a-half years to, for most services, nothing."



STAFF AND RESIDENTS TOUR THE NEWLY OPENED WOLLENBURG BUILDING AT THE MASONIC HOMES' UNION CITY CAMPUS.

Meanwhile, at the Masonic Homes' Covina campus, work is nearing completion on the new skilled-nursing facility that will include 32 total apartments, split evenly between memory care and long- and short-term rehabilitative care. Says Sabrina Montes, the chief strategic officer for the Masonic Homes, "It's like the curtains are raised. We're opening up and moving forward in an exciting way. It feels like we're moving into a new era."

Systemwide, the Masonic Homes of California have increased capacity by 58 percent compared to pre-pandemic. The share of apartments given to memory-care residents and those requiring assisted-living services or skilled nursing has also increased relative to the number of independent-living units—a reflection of the changing nature of residents' needs. "It's a rebalancing," Montes says. "We've increased assisted living and memory care because that's where the need

and demand has been, and we want to meet the needs of our membership."

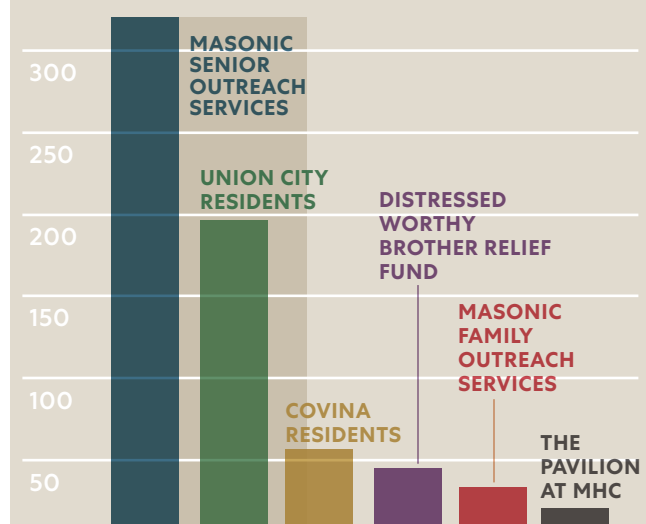
As a result, the average wait time for a new resident to move in to one of the two retirement homes has dropped from almost two-and-a-half years to, for most services, nothing. "For years, we hated having to tell Masons and their wives that they couldn't move in because of the waitlist," says Joseph Pritchard, the chief operating officer of the Masonic Homes. "Now, finally, we're able to bring them in right away. It's totally changed our ability to deliver care."

DESIGN WITHIN REACH

But as the design touches inside the new Adams Building show, the facelift isn't simply a matter of added capacity. The Union City campus renovation plan, which was set in motion five years ago and spearheaded by president and CEO Gary Charland, also included repaving the roads leading up from Mission Boulevard, grading and renovating a large patio area known as the Sedam Plaza, adding a mosaic walkway up to the Siminoff Temple, and introducing new drought-tolerant landscaping throughout the campus. There's also a new veterans memorial fountain outside of the Adams Building featuring the names of every past Masonic Homes resident who served in the armed forces; a newly configured flagpole seating area outside the Head Building; and new railings, sidewalks, and scenic vista cutouts along the main road overlooking Union City and the distant San Francisco Bay. The work was funded through the Let's Write the Future campaign, which raised more than \$7.5 million from the California Masonic Foundation. "In my 29 years here, I have never seen so many changes," says Soledad Martinez, the executive director of the Masonic Homes in Union City. "It's such a

THE HELPERS

The Masonic Homes of California operates retirement homes in Union City and Covina. But through Masonic Outreach Services, their influence is felt even more widely.



NEWLY PAVED ROADS
WITH EASILY ACCESSIBLE
WALKWAYS AND CUTOUTS
CIRCLE THE MASONIC HOMES'
UNION CITY CAMPUS.

serene space now, which is so important for the overall health of our residents."

For all that work, however, the most comprehensive upgrade of all has been the opening in late 2021 of the Pavilion at the Masonic Homes—a brand-new, two-story facility offering memory care and assisted-living services to California Masons, residents of the Acacia Creek Retirement Community, and, for the first time, the general public. (The short-term rehab portion of the Lorber Building, known as Transitions, is also open to the public, who pay market rate.) By having memory care and highly skilled nursing services available just steps from the main campus and Acacia Creek, residents of both communities are now able to age safely on campus, whatever their health needs.

Taken together, these changes point toward the latest evolution of the Masonic Homes, which will celebrate its 125th

anniversary this fall. Far from being a widows' and orphans' home, as it was first conceived in 1898, the Masonic Homes of California today has distinguished itself as a trusted expert in senior care, memory care, and

compassionate assisted-living services for the elderly.

A COMMITMENT TO CARE

Outside of its retirement homes, the organization is also evolving into a more holistic deliverer of care. In 2022, Masonic Outreach Services fielded more than 3,000 calls for help through its Masonic Assistance Line. Through Masonic Family Outreach Services and Masonic Senior Outreach Services, the organization connected 364

California Masons and their family members throughout the state with counselors who are able to help direct them to referrals, advice, care management, and, in many cases, temporary emergency funds.



TOP OF THE CLASS

The Masonic Homes' short-term rehab in Union City was named by U.S. News and World Report in its report on the Top Nursing Homes in the country.

Meanwhile, the Masonic Center for Youth and Families has continued to see an explosion in calls for its services. Now working primarily online, MCYAF (which includes offices in San Francisco and Covina) provided educational, behavioral, therapy, and family counseling to nearly 700 clients around the state in fiscal year 2022—including 223 Masons and their families. That's nearly double the size of the program's clientele five

years ago. MCYAF has also entered agreements with a wide range of outside partners recently, including the Pomona Unified School District, the city of Covina's Police Department Youth Accountability Board, and several San Francisco-area high schools.

On top of that, beginning in 2020, MCYAF has made its team of counselors available to the staff and residents of the Masonic Homes, who now have access to world-class mental health services.

Several other, behind-the-scenes changes also point toward a bright future for MCYAF, including the 2020 approval to provide Medicare services (which has allowed the organization to serve seniors living at the Masonic Homes) and its 2022 contract with Kaiser Permanente to provide in-network services. That move opens MCYAF up to more than 9 million people in California.

THE NEXT 125 YEARS

With the Masonic Homes' "quasiquicentennial" now in sight, it's remarkable to look back at just how much the organization has changed, Montes says. And with the Covina skilled-nursing building set to open soon, that evolution will continue.

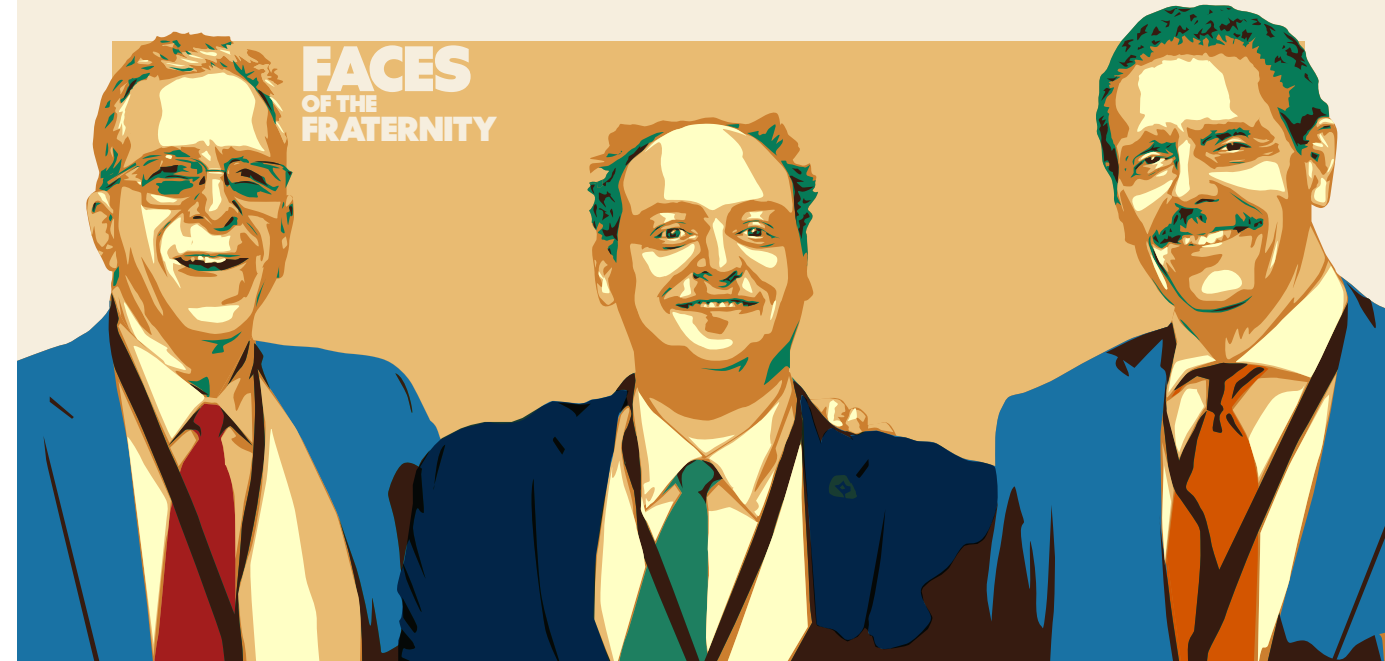
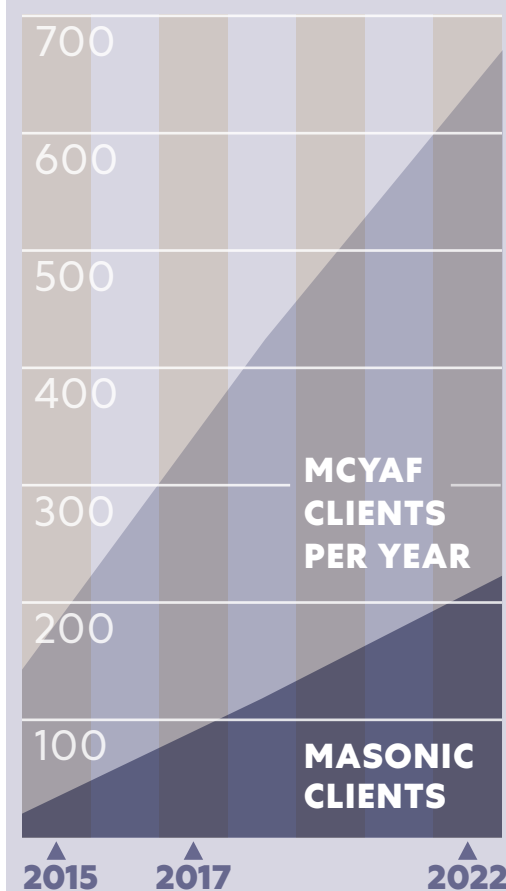
As for what comes next, she says extending the organization's reach beyond its walls is key. So too is making sure that current members understand the range of services available to them and their families. "We want to be our members' first choice for retirement support and services," she says. "We want them to see our communities as the place they want to go to.

"In order to evolve, we need to meet our members' changing needs," she continues. "To be there for them, wherever they are, in a way that remains relevant and meaningful."

In that sense, it's clear that even at the Masonic Homes, some things never change. ■

REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

The Masonic Center for Youth and Families has seen demand for its mental health services skyrocket among both Masons and the public.



Jacob Gershbock

(ABOVE, CENTER)

GRAND MASTER CIRCLE DONOR MASTER,
IONIC COMPOSITE No. 520

Your lodge, Ionic Composite, made a generous gift to the Masonic Homes this year. What went into that decision for your group? Our lodge has always had a strong philanthropic nature. When Worshipful Jeff Bear,

BY IAN A.
STEWART

who's now on the Masonic Homes' board (above right), was master, he'd pass around a plastic bear-shaped piggy bank at all of our events and people would give money. I believe we're the only lodge that's had 100 percent officer giving every year since they've tracked it. So when the Let's Write the Future campaign started, as a lodge, we decided to give \$25,000, which we finished

paying last year. But as the work on the Covina campus has progressed, we started talking about opportunities to make a larger gift, and decided, OK, let's go ahead and up our gift from \$25,000 to \$100,000 over three years.

So it's really a part of your lodge's culture of charitable giving.

We take our charitable obligations to each other very seriously here. We understand the promises we made to one another are more important than a simple dollar-figure can reflect. No amount of money can adequately account for what we mean to one another. So when

we have the ability to give back, we give.

You're 35 years old. Lots of people don't start thinking about charitable giving until they're near retirement. What was it like for you to step into this lodge culture of giving while you were still in your twenties?

It was natural for me. My whole family's always been active in charity, including with the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles. I remember as a kid, we'd have these humongous events with volunteers gathering to call basically everyone in L.A. and solicit donations. I was 7 or 8 years old and making \$5 a week in allowance, and I gave \$20. It was a natural extension of *tzedakah*, the Hebrew word for acts of righteousness, or charity. There's always people worse off than you, and so it's our job as people, as humans, to help them. ■



BY NEARLY ANY MEASURE, 2022 was a banner year in Masonic giving. More California Masons gave than ever before—and they gave more than ever before. The result is more support for more people, both within the fraternity and in the wider community around us. Together, these Masons are helping us make more of an impact than ever. While not all donors are listed here, each and every gift has made a difference. We are forever grateful for the impact we can make when we work for those in need.

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NOVEMBER 1, 2021–
OCTOBER 31, 2022

The **21st Century Club** recognizes the fraternity's most generous donors—those who've given \$10,000 or more since 2000. These donors make a lasting impact and provide critical relief to those in need.

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NOVEMBER 1, 2021–
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demonstrate
that Masonry
is a force for
good in our
community
and that we’re
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CONTINUED ON PAGE 26

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Lodge officers lead by example, demonstrating to all members that charity is one of the most treasured values of our fraternal heritage.

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American Canyon No. 875
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Artesia Sunrise No. 377
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Carpinteria No. 444
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San Leandro No. 113
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The Downtown Masonic No. 859
The Thirty-Three No. 878
Veritas No. 855
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**"We are taking
the positive
stand that we
should take
care of our
community. In
doing so, we
are practicing
those moral
values outside
the lodge that
we are taught
in the lodge."**

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Michael B. Smith, Yorba Linda No. 469
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"Our charitable work reflects well on the image of Freemasonry generally. In the long run, that attracts good men to the fraternity."

—DANIEL BENNETT,
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NOVEMBER 1, 2021–
OCTOBER 31, 2022

These are gifts received through trusts, estates, and the Foundation's life-income giving program—one of the most important forms of support and a powerful reminder of Masonic charity.

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