

Here are six Lodge status presentations given at the April 2008 Minnesota Grand Lodge Session. The six Lodges chosen were not necessarily the best Lodges in the state, but they are a cross-section of some of the good ones. The Lodge Recognition Program is a reflection of many of the ideas that made these Lodges successful.

### **1. North Star #23- St. Cloud**

"Hello, my name is Paul Brown. I am this years Master of North Star Lodge #23 in St Cloud. We were chartered in 1858 and as of December 31 2007 have 200 members and on our way to another double digit year. We own our own building, and have a great renter that provides some outside income. Last year we raised 14 new Brothers, Affiliated 3 and Restored 1. Many of them found us after seeing our members in other community efforts or programs.

Mentoring/coaching had much to do with our sustained growth. Every new Brother is assigned a Mentor/coach and we all make it our own responsibility to make sure the new guy feels welcome. Another huge success is our Cipher club. We also recognized and took some action regarding our varying Demographics in the lodge.

So this year we tapped into another area of interest by including a more family approached event. We host a social night on the 3rd weekend of the month. This includes both Masons and prospective members.

We really enjoy doing our own degree work and if necessary make the one day class available to our new Brothers.

The meetings (when we aren't doing degree work) are fun and interesting. We try very hard to accommodate lodge Education as a value to our Brothers.

We hold Officers' Meetings once per month. Plan out the course of the next quarter or year and maintain a flexible attitude for all of these programs to meet many of the un-foreseen adjustments.

We have a solid Temple board that attends to the needs of the building thus freeing up much of the time for the officers. Perhaps the real reason for our continued success is that fact that our Lodge is involved with several community service programs, such as Highway clean-up, The kids ID program held at the county fair and other times through-out the year. Just to name a couple.

There are several members we could thank individually but in the end it really takes a team approach. Everyone knows the secretary of the lodge is the guy that really keeps us in check and our lodge is no different. We are fortunate enough to have him here with us today, Worshipful Brother Richard McNairy.

Our Brothers really care for and support each other.

We are really looking forward to another great year.

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## **2. Glen Avon Lodge #306 Duluth MN**

"Hello, my name is Ted Kiefat. I am this year's Senior Warden/Acting Master of Glen Avon Lodge #306 located at Duluth MN. We were chartered January 19, 1922 and have 111 members. We call the Masonic Center of Duluth home and are happy to have a venue to call such.

I was asked to give a little insight on why we are successful as a Lodge. Now there are a lot of reasons, but I firmly believe the main reason is Leadership. Over the last 5-6 years we as a Lodge have had some great leaders that have really, well, brought back the pulse of the Lodge. We've learned from, and have been energized by, their particular talents: One was particularly good at attracting new members; another was a masterful ritualist and orator; another was an innovator who used technology to improve everything from our newsletter to our lectures. He even piped Mozart into our Lodge room to make it more inviting before and after meetings, and during breaks. Despite their variations of talent, the best of our recent leaders all had one thing in common: Hard work. They recognized that being Master of a Lodge does not entitle a Mason to sit out his year as an honored figurehead. Instead, they showed through their labor and example that being Master requires a Mason to be his Lodge's most energetic servant. It's the way he demonstrates his love for the Fraternity, his Lodge, and his Brothers. We have learned that our member Masons will follow and revere such a Master.

Over the last year we raised 19 new Brothers. How did we accomplish that? Normally we won't have that many in a class, and you might say what happened was somewhat of a fluke, but I think it also shows the rewards that can be reaped when Lodge members reach out to the community: take one our new Masons, he joined just because a Brother took the time to say hi to him every time we meet after Lodge, We found out he is a Senior DeMolay, and away it went and before we know it there he was with four other Senior DeMolays & his brother wanting to join with him and there are so many other stories just like these, But here are some other ways, generally, they found us through the guys that we raised in the last couple of years & thru our social events. Mentoring had much to do with it. We have an LEO WB David Vosen that has really changed how we look at an LEO, not only does he act as a mentor, he also puts together a list items for the new brothers from well thought out program books, to Masonic Music CD's one for each Degree, WB David Vosen makes our new guys really want to learn and stay active in our Lodge. With that every new Brother is assigned a Mentor and we as a Lodge make it our own responsibility to make sure the new guys feel welcome and accepted amongst Brothers.

We have a number of social events that generate interest including: Robert Burn's Night, visitations to other Lodges, dinners before each Degree, our Annul Finn Night, a guest night movie Night, our Summer Backyard Brotherhood, you see we use to have High Twelve Every month and the same four or five Brothers were able to be there, I mean it's just too hard to do lunch these days, so we started doing the Brotherhoods, were

we have cook outs at a different Brothers house or cabin once or twice every couple of weeks, from spring until fall, and all family and friends are welcome to come it's great for the strengthening of the word Family.

We pride ourselves on doing our own Degree work. Though help is available to us and we sometimes must ask for it, our first preference is always to challenge our own members to tackle the parts and improve their knowledge of the ritual. We recognize that performing and conferring Degrees upon new Masons is our most important function, and the thing that will most sustain us as a Lodge and band of Brothers. It reinforces the Lessons of Masonry and gives us a healthy sense of shared accomplishment and pride. We've also found, as I've sure many of you have, that one of the surest ways to get a frequently absent Brother to come back to Lodge is to assign him at least a small part in a Degree.

Our meetings are fun and interesting. We don't waste time in the business part of our meetings as we always have some kind of interesting presentations, and want to make sure we are able to have a social aspect to our evening as well.

Another reason I think we're successful is that our Brothers have shown they really care for and support one another. To us, the pledge to "contribute to the relief of poor, distressed Brother Master Masons, their widows and orphans," are more than just words. A couple years ago, one of our members fell on hard times. Some core members of the Lodge got together and quietly paid his mortgage one month, a gesture Grand Lodge recognized with great kindness and compassion of its own by matching the contribution, which got our Brother's family through another month. In part because of the assistance of his Brothers as a crucial time, his situation has since improved and stabilized. Yes, we talk about Brotherly love, but we also show it, and more than once I've even witnessed a Brother in Lodge, say the words: "I love you guys." Once a Lodge has that kind of closeness, its members begin to crave it, and they keep coming back for more. But, again, like good leadership and all good things, that closeness is won by sacrifice and effort for one another.

And finely, I can't stress this enough, a strong lodge isn't made up of just the Brothers that belong to it, but the Brothers that participate in it, We at Glen Avon have made it a point to get outside of our own four walls and make sure that we not only know the brothers of Glen Avon but the Brothers from other Lodges as well, we owe the same taken oath to all Brothers not just the ones in side of our four walls.

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### 3. Western Star Lodge #26 in Albert Lea

Hi, my name is Steve Claybourne.

I am a Past Master and the current Secretary of Western Star Lodge #26 in Albert Lea, Minnesota.

I am honored to have been asked to be part of this presentation, but I was also kind of surprised. As **Right Worshipful Brother John Cook** and **Worshipful Brother James**

**McNeely** can verify, I have voiced objections to the way the Lodge Recognition Program was defined. I am, however, in favor of its goal, to make better and stronger lodges.

Fifty years ago Western Star Lodge had over 500 members. 25 years ago we had 325 members, and today we have 157 members. In the last two years we have raised 8 new Masons and let go of 5 petitioners that we felt were not serious or were unworthy. Last year we lost eight members while we raised 2, for a net loss of 6. So, according to the Lodge Recognition Program, our L.R.P. ranking is a step above the minimum requirements.

So why am I up here?

Well, the Brothers of Western Star Lodge have done a few things right, and it is of those things that I speak.

YES, we are losing Brothers faster than we are raising them and, I'm afraid, this trend will continue for a few more years. However, we view this situation through a practicality/reality filter. We are losing members who have not been attending lodge for quite some time and are not participating in Lodge functions. So while our numbers are shrinking, we are metaphorically "thinning the garden". Those who regularly come to lodge have been growing and thriving in Masonry. The new members are being given good and wholesome instructions for their labors. They are invited to participate in, and actively represent, Masonry in Albert Lea. We have not recycled a Past Master through the East since 1914.

We have streamlined our meetings. Minutes and routine bills are posted outside the Tyler's door and unless objections are voiced, they are approved automatically. The Master works from an agenda and his facts are all readily available. New ideas, new projects, and opportunities to express different views keep our meetings from becoming boring. We have several educational meetings each year from our LEO, and anyone who has an interesting story is encouraged to talk. We put on all of our own degree work - from memory, with the exception of 3 lectures.

Western Star is able to raise enough money, through pancake breakfasts and matching funds programs, to contribute several thousand dollars annually to benevolence.

- With assistance from Grand Lodge, we were able to bring \$2,014.00 of flood relief to Rushford's Mystic Lodge #168. Not counting the books and furniture we donated to them.
- We annually give away three thousand dollars in scholarships.
- A dollar a ticket of each pancake breakfast goes to the Ladies Auxiliary for the Shrine Hospital. This mounts up to perhaps \$2500 to \$3,000 each year.
- This month will be the fourth time we have dedicated an entire breakfast to raising money for Freeborn County to buy things that are not in the Sheriff's budget. The list includes updated armaments, a K-9 unit, an emergency "communications-center" trailer, and now Disaster Response radio equipment.
- At Christmas time we were able to make \$300 contributions to each;

- the local Red Cross chapter,
- the local food pantry
- And the Salvation Army.

Recently, we heard of a school in our area that wanted to participate in the DNR's "Archery in the Schools" program and that required \$1500.00 to match the DNR Grant. Another Pancake Breakfast and matching funds from Masonic Charities got the program going last month.

The real key to our Lodge success, we feel, is getting to know one another on a personal level, like a real family. We drink coffee together, we cook pancakes together and we have fun together. We care about each other. We are constantly trying to re-involve the inactive members, but when we initiate a new Brother, he is invited to start attending lodge meetings immediately. We open on whatever degree is appropriate for our newest Brother, so that he may participate. As soon as he is through his degree work, our new Brother is given a chance to be part of the operation, on a committee, or working a pancake breakfast; until he learns enough to start controlling some process, and when that happens, that job becomes his, and he becomes one with us.

In addition to our monthly newsletter and our web page, which **is kept current**, we keep a blackboard, an old-fashioned chalkboard, hanging in the dining room. On it are listed the next two or three week's events and it is updated constantly. Many of us stop by the lodge dining room for a cup of coffee every Wednesday morning between seven and nine. It's not a scheduled meeting, but the 25 to 30 people who usually drop in, wouldn't miss it, if at all possible. "Wednesday morning coffee" has been going on for over 30 years because it is the product of a desire to visit with one another. As a consequence, we update our Masonic schedules regularly. We plan, we follow up, and we stay in tune with each other. Also, Wednesday Coffee is an excellent place to bring prospects so we may each evaluate the other.

So while our shrinking lodge numbers will probably not earn us any higher L.R.P. ratings, the brothers of our lodge will continue the work that Masons should be doing. Our strength is not in having large numbers; it is in the spirit that naturally flows from the close friendship of brotherly love.

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### **Minnesota River Valley Lodge # 6**

Good Morning, my name is Mike Sullivan; I was the Master of Minnesota River Valley Lodge # 6 for 2006 and 2007. With me is our current Master – Lew Price.

We were chartered in 1999 when 4 Lodges merged. The merger combined the strengths of the 4 and provided for the whole, the resources the Lodges lacked individually. We

have approximately 170 members. On the average 30 members attend our monthly Stated and Steering meetings.

In 2007, we Raised 13 new Brothers to the Sublime degree of Master Mason, with 8 others being either Entered Apprentices or Fellow Crafts at the close of the year. Our base programs are taken from the 4 elements contained in an article by the Grand Lodge LEO Ed Halpus where he specifies that every well run lodge contains the elements of: Ritual, Spiritual, Social and Educational. We add Finance Management as an important 5th element.

The 1st element is our fine ritual work which connects today's Masons to every Mason before us. Our degree program has become a source of pride for us. We can conduct the 3 Degrees and lectures, mostly ourselves and where we cannot we are grateful to our brothers of Lebanon Lodge for their excellent assists. In '07 we performed 21 degrees. The huge amount of planning and arranging of the degrees is a result of considerable commitment and effort from our Ritual Director WB Mike Kottwitz. He has set three priorities for our degree work:

1. We have many Brothers on the sidelines to demonstrate to the candidates, unity and the importance of the undertaking.
2. That we celebrate with the candidates, after each degree, and...
3. To encourage our new brothers to be engaged in the degrees, allowing for redundancy on the degree team.

Our goal is for our Lodge to become entirely self-sufficient in the performance of this vital work.

The 2nd element, the spiritual, is provided by our excellent Chaplain Alan Green, who provides meaningful prayers and words of comfort to the Lodge as well as challenging us to be active in the support and assistance of our brothers and widows who are in need of comfort, counseling and prayer. Furthermore, our Chaplain lists the names of Brothers and Widows who are in need in each newsletter so we are reminded of whom we can serve in visitations.

The 3rd element is the social interaction between Brothers. We have several informal social events throughout the year, a Table Lodge, food booth fund-raisers, and Kids-ID engagements. With these, we establish strong bonds between mature and new brothers as we work together. Without exception, we have time before and after all Lodge meetings to visit and eat together. Our great advantage is we truly do like each other. We find ways to interact with our new brothers from the time they are elected to receive the degrees.

Another vital program within this element is the mentoring of our new members. As soon as a petitioner is elected, our coordinator assigns the candidate a mentor. The expectations of the mentors are to befriend the new Brother, to help him understand the more subtle workings of the Lodge, background on our different programs, volunteer opportunities, Grand Lodge events, and information about the other bodies in Masonry.

The 4th element is educational. At every meeting, our LEO, WB John Loutzenhiser, presents either an article on Masonic community or humanitarian subjects which informs and often amuses. Additionally we periodically have a guest presenter which attracts more Brothers to the Lodge meetings. Our LEO also has monthly questions on Masonic

subjects in each newsletter, which he challenges us to answer before the next month's publication.

The 5th element is strong Financial Management. We have the advantage of an outstanding financial committee to oversee the investments and expenses of the Lodge to ensure long term stability.

A Master determines his lodge's personality and explores its strengths. It is within his power to decide if he can fit them for the builder's use within these 5 elements. We strongly believe it is the foundation of what has worked for us and for the good of our beloved Craft.

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## **5. Rochester Masonic Lodge #21**

"Hello Brothers, my name is Bill Cleveland. I was last year's Acting Master and I am this year's Master for Rochester Masonic Lodge #21. We were chartered in 1858 and have 320 members. We own our own building, and have outside income from several rentals units.

Last year we raised 11 new Brothers. Mentoring was implemented and strongly enforced because of severe problems during our spring degree work. A mentor report is asked for at each meeting while degree work is being conducted. They are to meet with and assist the new brothers with meeting times, and proficiency exam preparation. These meetings should form brotherly bonds and stronger ties to the fraternity.

We had a number of social events for our brothers last year. These events included a traditional table lodge and a night out for our widows and our Hiram Award winner. I also had the officer's over for a BBQ and Poker night at my house one evening during the summer. Every Saturday morning I visit the lodge and meet with anyone who comes by. We will go over the degree work, or play card games like poker or Munchkin. Coffee is often made and they are fun times. This June we are also planning to attend a baseball game with the Rochester Order of Eastern Star.

Our community outreach programs include a section of heavily traveled highway that we cleanup 3 times a year, hosting a hunter safety training class, ringing bells for the salvation army, and we gave away five \$500 scholarships, 3 to high school seniors and 2 to college nursing students. I hope to increase that dollar amount for next year. We also processed over 1200 kids IDs during 4 events throughout the year including Kids Day America, the P.A.I.R transportation fair, and neighborhood block parties.

One of our new activities the past 3 years, and that has generated a lot of attention is the MN Special Olympics Polar Plunge. This year 5 brothers jumped into the water, compared to only 3 last year. We raised \$1200 last year, but more than tripled that to \$4000 this year, almost 4% of the total money raised in Rochester by the 436 jumpers.

I strive to keep our meetings fun, short and interesting. We don't waste time in the business part of our meetings, and I have asked my LEO to have at least 6 education presentations during the year. These normally occur on non-degree work nights. With our new overhead projector system we installed last year, these presentations are very interesting and memorable.

One of the reasons for our success is the great communication among the Officers'. We all have e-mails and are able to share ideas, notes and concerns very quickly. The needs of our Lodge building are taken care of by a temple board consisting of representatives from each body. We have a large building with renters and many expenses. The temple board takes care of all the money and concerns of running a business.

We do all of our own degree work and even presented the 2nd degree at the Owatonna one day class last fall. The work is done in formal wear to better impress the candidates and show who is on the degree team for that night. This year we have 7 new members who started the first degree with us on February, 6 completed the second degree, and should have 7 again for the third.

We are very busy currently planning for our 150/100 year anniversary on May 17th. I have an invitation card for those that are interested. We have MWB Akram Elias coming back to Minnesota as the guest of honor and speaker for the night. There will also be a live band and dance after the dinner. We have a commemorative 1oz silver coin celebrating our anniversary that we are selling with the profits going towards the Masonic Cancer Center. The lodge is also publishing an updated history book paid for by contributions from our members. We also have plans to be in the Rochester fest parade with a Masonic Float on June 27th.

I have all the degree dates planned out for the year, and hope to have a quarry lodge in the fall for our first degree work night in early Oct. The details for this will be planned by the officer's over the summer while we are dark. I believe it is important not to lose our momentum over the summer.

And last, but not least, in addition to our newsletter communication, we have a great website run by our LEO with a calendar, project information, pictures, and general Masonic information. There are plans to expand it to better include the other Masonic organizations within the southeast area.

To make all of this work, I have to thank all of my officers and several past masters who are active and keep the ball rolling. Our secretary Paul Allen and treasurer WB John Pavek both do a great deal of work to keep the paperwork and communications flowing.

## **6. Compass Lodge #265- Robbinsdale**

Greetings from Robbinsdale. My name is Mike Foye. I am the sitting Master of Compass Lodge #265 located in downtown Robbinsdale. We were chartered in 1906 and have 405 members. We rent our building from our Temple Association, composed of members of the Lodge and OES chapter. We have some investments set aside, and draw a little on interest earned each year to supplement our income.

Last year we raised 12 brothers, and gained another one or two by affiliation from other lodges. This past year was the first in a while where we raised more brothers than we lost (mostly by deaths). We do our own degree work but a few of our new Brothers decided to come through the One Day Class, and we found a neighboring lodge which had degree work scheduled on a more convenient night for 3 others. Every new Brother is assigned his own Mentor.

Aside from these Mentors, we put special focus on coaching last year's class through their Proficiencies, and found that to be a great motivator for the new guys to remain active.

Of the gentlemen we raised last year, one is our Marshall, one our Tyler, and two are our Junior and Senior Stewards. Our officer's line seems to be what most people mention often. We have no Past Masters in our line. The only Past Masters in office in our lodge are the Lodge Education Officer, Secretary, and Treasurer. This is the first year in at least 6 years where we don't have at least one PM in line, and the youth of our officer's line is part of our success.

A big part of our success is a genuine respect and admiration for each other. We have Wednesday morning coffee and doughnuts at the lodge throughout most of the year for the guys who are able to meet during the day.

We do a number of social events during a year, roughly one every month and a half, and some of the highlights last year include:

- A successful Table Lodge, with a pretty awesome Master of Ceremonies □
- Hiram Award night was very well attended, with attendance around 100, including several people from Grand Lodge
- A Christmas party for families, which had about 75 people (40+ kids) in attendance, and a magician for entertainment

We try to maintain an active presence in our community, both on the part of the lodge, and our Compassmen group, very active OES chapter, a very active Job's daughter's group, and an active DeMolay group. The lodge makes a high visibility donation to our local fire department education program, appearance in parades; we do a number of Kids ID events over the course of a year, and have a very active Robbinsdale Area Shrine Club as well as several other units in our area.

We have two Stated Communications a month, and try to accomplish all our business, including a brief education program, in the first one. For many of our second Stated Communications, we have a special educational program.

Extremely important to our success is that we have Officers' Meetings about once per month. Much of our long-term planning and leadership coordination is established at these meetings.

We look forward to another great year