

NORTH CAROLINA THE MASON

SUMMER 2025

Official Publication of The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina



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Together WE R.I.S.E.

ON THE COVER:

*Photo: Pat Howard, PM
Junaluskee Lodge, No. 145*



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*Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of
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Together WE ARE RISING!!!

By Robert W. Rideout, Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina



To the Esteemed Brethren of the Craft,

Nine months ago, a storm unlike any we had seen in recent memory swept through Western North Carolina. It left behind more than just physical destruction—it tore through homes, disrupted lives, and tested the very fabric of our communities and our fraternity. In those moments of devastation, when the waters rose and the future seemed uncertain, we were faced with a choice: to retreat in despair or to rise in unity.

YOU CHOSE TO RISE.

You reached out—not just with words, but with action. With compassion, with strength,

and with purpose. You became the leaders and the healers that our Craft has always called us to be. You reminded the world—and each other—that Freemasonry is not merely a collection of rituals or traditions, but a living, breathing force for good. And today, I write to you not only with pride, but with deep gratitude and awe.

Through our shared vision and unwavering unity, we have raised, distributed, or earmarked over **\$665,000** to support our brothers, our lodges, and our communities in Western North Carolina. That number is more than a financial milestone—it is a symbol of hope. It is a testament to the enduring power of brotherly love in action. It is a reflection of our sacred commitment to be there for one another, not just in word, but in deed.

When we launched Together WE R.I.S.E., we envisioned a Craft that would stand shoulder to shoulder, lifting each other up in times of need. We could not have foreseen the tragedy that would test that vision so soon. But you proved that we were not only ready—we were built for this moment. You showed that our strength lies not in our buildings, but in our bonds. Not in our titles, but in our tenacity. Not in our ceremonies, but in our character.

You have shown the world what it means to be a Freemason in the 21st century: a man of action, of compassion, of unwavering resolve. You have reminded us all that Freemasonry is not just relevant—it is essential. In a world too often divided by fear, anger, and

indifference, you have been a force for unity, for healing, and for hope.

The program we call **Together WE R.I.S.E.** is more than a slogan—it is a call to action. It is a philosophy rooted in four pillars: Recognition, Innovation, Structure, Everyday. It is a reminder that we are strongest when we act together, when we lift each other up, and when we live our values not just in lodge, but in life.

As we look ahead, let us not lose the momentum of this moment. Let us continue to be the steady hand in times of chaos, the voice of hope when others fall silent, and the light that guides our communities forward. Let us continue to R.I.S.E.—not just in response to tragedy, but in our daily lives, in our lodges, and in our hearts.

Brothers, we are not just rebuilding—we are transforming. We are writing a new chapter in the story of our Craft. A chapter defined not by what we have lost, but by what we have found in each other: resilience, compassion, and an unshakable bond of brotherhood.

Let us carry this spirit forward. Let us continue to serve, to lead, and to love. Let us be the example the world so desperately needs. Because when we stand together—united in purpose, grounded in principle, and driven by love—there is nothing we cannot overcome.

Together WE R.I.S.E.



Together...

WE
R.I.S.E.

Measuring Impact: What Does a Successful Lodge Look Like?

By Jonathan A. Underwood, Grand Secretary



How do you measure the success of a lodge? It's not just attendance or fundraising totals. True strength is found in the bonds among brethren—and that bond becomes real when it's lived out in service.

Do we notice when a brother stops attending? Do we reach out—or do we fall into the trap of saying, "He doesn't come, so he must not care"? Men join our fraternity for community. Whether a man attends regularly or not—**keep in touch**. It is never enough to join Freemasonry for its name alone. Masonry is a brotherhood. Call your brother—all of them.

But impact doesn't end at the Tyler's door. It must extend into the community. Are your members volunteering at schools, cleaning parks, mentoring youth, or building with Habitat for Humanity? Masonic labor isn't just symbolic—it's physical, visible, and meaningful.

At Freemasons Hall in Raleigh, we're working to set an example of how our fraternity can be seen and felt. We've opened our doors to meet real needs:

— We host **Lifeline Screening** twice a year, providing low-cost preventive health services to hundreds.

— We welcome nonprofits like the **Police Benevolence Association** and the **Wake County Historical Society**.

— We host the annual **Wilkerson College** picnic, and our building is open daily to members—and with notice, even after hours.

***A lodge should be a haven.
A home away from home.
Your lodge can do the same.***

Consider a monthly community breakfast or open coffee hour. Offer refreshments for teachers, first responders, or civic volunteers. Create space for grief support, veterans' groups, or tutoring. You don't need a grand budget—just open doors and willing hearts.

Of course, it takes resources to keep a building clean, welcoming, and safe. While we cannot run lodges as businesses or commercial halls, nothing prevents us from accepting appropriate donations or honorariums from nonprofit users to offset costs. With care and compliance, our buildings can be both sustainable and charitable. But first—you have to open the doors.

Most lodges sit at the heart of their towns—but too often, they're dark except one night a month. That needs to change. Our halls were never meant to be hidden or silent. They were built to serve.

Let your light shine. Be open. Be active. Be essential—and even abroad.

Together WE R.I.S.E.

THE PHOENIX SOCIETY

Recognizing Lifetime Donors to the North Carolina Masonic Foundation

“... as the years go by, I verily believe that the property given to this Foundation will reach great and desirable proportions.”

— R.C. Dunn, *Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina, 1929*

In 1929, Grand Master R.C. Dunn called for the formal creation of a Masonic foundation to grow charitable giving across our state—primarily through wills and estates. That vision was brought to life under the leadership of his successor, Grand Master John Jasper Phoenix. The North Carolina Masonic Foundation (NCMF) was born as a perpetual source of Masonic relief, education, and support.

Today, the Phoenix Society honors that enduring legacy by recognizing the impact of lifetime giving to the NCMF. From its earliest gifts to those given today, every dollar builds the “great and desirable” charity envisioned nearly a century ago.

THEMELIOS LEVEL **Building the Foundation**

Themelios, the Greek word for “foundation,” marks the beginning of a donor’s journey in Masonic charity. Gifts at this level support the NCMF general charitable endowment—fueling scholarships, relief, and Masonic Homes each year.

CUMULATIVE GIVING RECOGNITION

\$10–\$120: Thank-you letter, year-end recognition, and newsletter mention

\$121–\$500: Website listing, social media badge, Phoenix Society decal, plus all above

\$501–\$1,000: Commemorative lapel pin, plus all above

\$1,001–\$5,000: Custom Phoenix Society apparel, plus all above

Recurring giving is a simple way to grow your impact—start with \$10/month and help strengthen our charitable foundation.

For more information, visit **MFNC.org** or contact Chris or George today at:

Chris Richardson

crichardson@mfnc.org

or

George Marut

gmarut@mfnc.org



**NORTH CAROLINA
MASONIC
FOUNDATION**



GIVE TO NCMF



Celebrating Brother George K. Davis

By Paul Vincent

Although he didn't know it and didn't suspect a thing, Brother George K. Davis would become the guest of honor for several masons who traveled far and wide to pay him a much-deserved visit during his stay in Oxford, N.C. earlier this year. A visit filled with brotherly love and affection was in due order when it was learned that Bro. Davis, who would turn 101 this June, is not only a 70-plus year Mason but a veteran of three foreign wars!

Members of Davis's home lodge, Widow's Son No. 75, made the journey west to partner with officers of both the Grand Lodge of North Carolina and the Scottish Rite of New Bern, to commemorate their brother's century of service and sacrifice.

On the afternoon of Thursday, February 13, 2025, the masonic entourage convened at Bro. Davis's temporary residence while recuperating at the Oxford Health and Rehab Center. After several handshakes and kind words, the group's Scottish Rite members wasted no time kicking off the grand occasion by donning their caps and presenting Davis with one of his own. WB Johnny Surles, Valley Secretary, presented Davis his 50-year cap in recognition of his years as a Scottish Rite Mason.

A host of additional awards were then conferred on the centenarian with WB Marty Silverwood, DDGM-1, presenting him one of Grand Master Rideout's lapel pins and the Master of Widow's Son, WB Jon Worthington, affixing his lodge's 2020 bicentennial pin to Davis's blue plaid shirt. RW Steve Norris, Dep. Grand Master; WB Phil Johnson, Sr. Grand Deacon; WB Alvin Billings, Jr. Grand Deacon; and MW David Wicker, PGM,

gifted a special plaque in appreciation of Davis's distinguished military service.

In a career spanning nearly thirty years between three branches of the United States Armed Forces, Bro. Davis served in the US Coast Guard, US Army, US Army Reserves, and US Air Force. While initially too young to enlist during the Second World War, Davis's father allowed him to join the Coast Guard in 1942 to keep his son out of combat. He would re-enlist in subsequent years, his tours of duty taking him to Korea during that conflict as well as Vietnam, eventually retiring in 1969.

In capping this unique celebration as well as memorializing Bro. Davis's commitment to his country in WWII, WB Scot Hardwick, Past DDGM-1, unveiled an ornately framed, official USCG ensign.

As the festivities wound down and the brethren parted ways, the significance of this exceptional opportunity was not lost on those attending. "Not often do we get to honor a brother who has reached these milestones in life," WB Phil Johnson reflected. Even so, Davis no doubt credited the good Lord with both his longevity and recollection as "God in heaven took care of me more than anybody," he said. Coming from a brother who's seen a thing or two, or three, this mason's faith is well-founded.

It is with sadness, that we share that Brother Davis laid down his working tools for the last time on 2/23/2025, just 10 days after this cherished visit. Brother Davis will be deeply missed.

From a Child in Crisis to a Man Committed to Serving Others

By Thomas Boyd

Like many others who come through the doors of the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford (MHCO), my early years were marked by neglect and abuse. I didn't have the tools or support system to process the trauma I had experienced. I rebelled, and because of that, at just 10 years old, I was placed in a residential care facility in South Carolina by my biological father.

This facility was very different from the one I would later come to call home. It wasn't designed to help children with troubled pasts; it lacked the compassion, structure, and understanding that healing truly requires.

At age 13, everything changed when my father moved me from a harsh South Carolina facility to the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford. The night before, he called to say I'd be transferred the next day. That morning, I was told to act as if it were a regular day. After the other boys went to school, I packed my belongings into two trash bags and waited. My father picked me up, and we journeyed to North Carolina. Knowing little about MHCO, I was anxious, but Program Director Mrs. Lisa Trivett's warm smile eased my fears. After intake, I was taken to my new cottage, where everything felt different in the best way.

I had my own room and shared a bathroom with one other person. This was a huge shift from my previous placement, where twelve boys shared one room, one bathroom, and there was minimal personal space. I met my cottage parents, Mr. and Mrs. James, who welcomed me with open arms. That afternoon, when the other children returned from school, they treated me like a brother. For the first time in a long time, I had friends—and more than that, I had a family.

Over the years, MHCO became the foundation I desperately needed. I graduated from J.F. Webb High School in 2010 and then entered MHCO's Independent Living Program, which was still relatively new at the time. I was the first Direct Care resident to complete the entire program, eventually graduating from Vance-Granville Community College in 2013.

During my final semester at VGCC, Brother Wayne Robinson, longtime Pressman for the School of Graphic Arts (SGA)—a residential vocational program at MHCO offering printing services to the public and the Masonic community—announced his retirement, concluding decades of dedicated service.

Administrator Brother Kevin Otis, approached me about the opportunity to begin training as the next Pressman. I eagerly accepted the opportunity to give back to the place that had given me so much. I began as a part-time apprentice, learning under Brother Wayne, who had dedicated over 40 years to SGA. By October 2013, I became a full-time employee and over the next decade I worked my way up to Assistant Manager and now serve proudly as Manager of SGA.

MHCO is more than just a workplace, it's a place I consider home. It's where I met my wife, Tabatha Boyd, who also was a resident of MHCO. It is the place that instilled in me the values to become the man I am today and has given me the meaningful opportunity to invest in the lives of current and future residents, just as others once invested in mine. My time at MHCO has been invaluable, and I wouldn't trade it for anything.

In September 2024, I began a new journey—one that felt like a natural continuation of everything MHCO imparted to me: service, integrity, and brotherhood. Growing up at MHCO, I'd heard a lot about the Masons, but my understanding was limited. My interest started to grow during my time at SGA, working alongside men like Brothers Wayne, Steve, and Eddie—each of whom is a proud Mason.

The turning point came when I had the privilege to attend the Imperial Session in 2024 to promote MHCO and SGA. While there, I witnessed firsthand the brotherhood, compassion, commitment to service, and unwavering dedication to uplifting others that define Freemasonry. The values of integrity, humility, charity, fellowship, and lifelong learning resonated deeply with me. It was in that moment that I realized I wanted to be part of something greater than myself, something built on purpose, principle, and the desire to make a lasting difference.

I petitioned Oxford Lodge No. 122 and was initiated on February 17, 2025. On June 16, 2025, I was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason. I look forward to growing deeper in the light of Masonry and carrying forward the values that helped shape me into the man I am today.

From a child in crisis to a man committed to serving others—my story is not just about where I've been, but about where I'm going. And I know I will never walk alone.



North Carolina Charity

By Johnny Surles, Grand Lodge Charity Committee

As Chairman of the Grand Lodge Charity Committee, I have had a chance to speak to many Brothers, sisters, and non-Masons during some of the lowest points in their lives. Prior to Hurricane Helene I would get maybe 2 or 3 calls a year for assistance. This changed drastically in the aftermath of Helene. After the storm, the call went out to the Masons of North Carolina to help our Brothers in need, and help we did. As Masons we have a moral obligation to assist people in need. There are many forms of charity – donations to food banks, volunteering at shelters, medical aid, and money to individuals. Charity reflects the best of human nature. It teaches humility, promotes solidarity, and reminds us that we are all interconnected. Even the smallest act of offering a meal, listening to someone in distress, or donating old clothes can spark meaningful change in someone's life.

As I began calling individuals, fire departments, and churches in order to try to assist in bringing some normalcy to their lives through the financial help you have provided, I have heard devastating stories. These include stories about people watching the water wash their homes away and then watching the house splinter as

it collided with trees in its path. In some cases not only was the house washed away but in several instances, there was a loved one inside the house.

In a world where many face hardship, charity stands as a beacon of hope. To give to a person in need, without the hope or expectation of recompense, is the practice of charity. Every Mason reading this took a solemn oath to practice charity. The Masons of North Carolina have gone above and beyond just helping people. The charity we practice has the power not only to alleviate suffering but to inspire a cycle of kindness that uplifts everyone involved.





From the Quarry

60-Year Service Award

Creedmoor Lodge No. 499



Creedmoor lodge presented brother **Oscar Glenn Parrot** his 60-Year Diamond Jubilee award and pin. Photo (L-R): Lodge Secretary Thomas Sherron, Bro. Oscar Glenn Parrot, and WM Davey Jones.



Annual Ladies Night and Service Awards Supper

Biscoe Lodge No. 437



On October 19th, 2024 Biscoe Lodge honored the ladies who support our Lodge, our Widows and service awards recipients.

Four generations of Parsons were present for the 50-year Veteran award presented to Brother **Ronald H. Parsons**.

Building a Family Legacy

Sanford Lodge Lodge No. 151



I joined Sanford Lodge No.151 in 2015, unaware of any family members who had been part of the fraternity. While it's possible that some were, I had no knowledge of them at the time. A few years later, my father, Charlie Tyler, and my brother, John Tyler, followed in my footsteps and joined as well.

On February 4th, 2025, I had the profound honor of raising my son, Jackson Parker, to the Sublime Degree. I was fortunate to serve as Master for all three of his degrees—an experience I never imagined but one that we will both cherish for a lifetime. Adding to the significance of the moment, Jackson's grandfather also played a meaningful role in each of his degrees, making the experience even more special.

Before my initiation, I believed I was the first Mason in my family. Now, in 2025, we are proudly building a family legacy within this great fraternity.

Fraternally,
Darrell Ehendit



Quilts of Valor Presentation

Conover Lodge Lodge No. 709



During our regular stated communication meal in February, WB Ben Setser (who secretly set up the ceremony) called the room to order and asked that Mike Matty, PM Conover 709, and Brother Michael Mcree be brought front and center, where Amanda Truitt from Quilts of Valor foundation presented us each with a quilt.

These quilts are hand made and given to service men and women as a offer of healing and appreciation for their service.

A great night was had by all, and the quilts are much appreciated by myself and Brother Michael Mcree. If this is something you would like to look into for member of your lodge, go to:

QOVF.org/nominations-awards



A Family Legacy Continues

Unanimity Lodge No. 7



Brothers of Unanimity Lodge No. 7, in Edenton, welcomed two new candidates Thursday evening, March 13, 2025. It was a truly memorable degree ritual as Kris Simons and Derrick Camino were regularly initiated Entered Apprentices. Bro. Simon's entrance into the lodge was an especially proud moment for Bro. Mike Simons and WB Mickey Spruill who are Kris's father and grandfather, respectively. Bro. Mike conducted the degree ritual from the east and WB Mickey gave the lecture.



Cabarrus County EMS

Cannon Memorial Lodge No. 626



Cannon Memorial Lodge #626 had the honor of welcoming a special guest at our stated communication on Tuesday night, April 1st, 2025.

Matt Ford, representing Cabarrus County EMS, visited the Lodge to present a generous donation of an AED machine. This meaningful gift was made possible through the efforts of our own Brother Lee

Goodman, who serves with both the Kannapolis Burned Children's Fund and the Kannapolis Fire Department. His dedication to the Craft and more especially to our Lodge, helped to make this a reality!

On behalf of all the Brethren of Cannon Memorial Lodge, we extend our deepest gratitude to Brother Lee Goodman, Matt Ford, and the Cabarrus County EMS. Your kindness and generosity will have a lasting impact. Thank you for helping us take care of one another!!!



60 year Diamond Jubilee

Lee Masonic Lodge #253



16 brothers travelled from Mooresville Masonic Lodge No. 496 to Lee Masonic Lodge No. 253 on Monday, April 14th 2025 to make the special presentation of a 60-year Diamond Jubilee to Bro. Bobby Whitehurst.

The award was presented by Worshipful Master Brian Curvin of Mooresville #496. Bro. Whitehurst has been a member of Mooresville for 20 years of his last 60 and served as the Treasurer from 2012-2014. He was raised as a master mason on February 4th 1965 in Alexandria-Washington #22 in Virginia. Bobby has been a true, faithful, and active brother of Mooresville Lodge #496.

Four New Master Masons!

Jefferson Penn Lodge No. 384



Jefferson Penn Lodge No. 384, Reidsville, NC, and Leaksville Lodge No. 136, Eden, NC, held a joint 3rd degree on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at Leaksville Lodge.

Three Fellow Craft of Jefferson Penn Lodge No. 384 and one from Leaksville Lodge No. 136 were raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason.

There were 37 brothers from several lodges within the 22nd Masonic District, as well as from Greensboro, Franklinville, and Thomasville, who participated in the degree work. Also in attendance was the DDGM of the 22nd Masonic District, WB Clifford Shrewsbury.

WB Joshua Payne, the 22nd Masonic District DDGL, delivered the Master Mason Degree Lecture. Right WB Matt Cockman, Grand Judge Advocate, gave the Charge to the new Members. and presented each with one of the Grand Master's Lapel Pins.

WB John Durham, Master of Jefferson Penn, and WB Paul D. Cooke, Master of Leaksville, appreciate all of the help that was given to make this degree possible. It was a good day for Masonry in the State of North Carolina.

Gratitude

By Kevin Otis, MHCO Administrator



It is with gratitude that I share my thoughts on the successes during my tenure at the Masonic Home for Children MHCO and the promise of new beginnings as my time comes to a close. In June of 2012, I was asked to share my vision for a children's home. The main elements were providing a continuum of care, marketing, vocational development, and providing a trauma-informed model of care. Many gracious individuals have been involved in helping this vision become the reality for MHCO. MHCO has expanded the Independent Living Program to include young adults in need beyond those who graduated from the Direct Care Program. Transitional Living Cottages have been developed to help guide older adolescents toward the Independent Living Program and independence. The Community Support Center provides outreach support to families across the state, while offering resources to our human services partners and other organizations. Marketing efforts have helped address MHCO being a "Masonic secret" and become better recognized as an option for more families, employees, stakeholders, and donors. Vocational development has cultivated important employment opportunities for youth, while providing various vocational preparedness educational activities. The CARE Model helps all employees reflect on their approach to better assist children in overcoming their traumatic situations and develop toward a better today and tomorrow. These developments directly related to the vision plan shared thirteen years ago.

It is with gratitude that many more projects have been successfully accomplished during my tenure. Several capital projects have been completed with little-to-no cost to MHCO thanks to donors, grantors, and support from so many. These include: the new pool, two playhouses, basketball court, outdoor lighting, the farm road bridge, refurbishing the gym and weight room, twelve Eagle Scout projects, a nature trail, and the restoration of God's Half Acre. These and other projects would not have been possible without your support.

The recent furniture campaign was a tremendous success as MHCO was able to provide bedroom furniture to all the Direct Care and Transitional Living Cottages, with funds to provide new furniture for the Independent Living Program Cottages. MHCO has begun developments and a silent campaign for a refurbished playground complete with several new features. Please contact MHCO if you would like to help with this campaign.

MHCO has established the Ambassador program, partnered with Wheels 4 Hope, provides office space for Granville County United Way, Smart Start, Parents as Teachers, Granville Education Foundation, American Red Cross, and Baptist Children's Home Foster Care and Adoption services to operate. MHCO's grant submission process greatly increased over this period. Over a dozen new grantors during the past six years have provided hundreds of thousands of dollars toward operations and special projects. This doesn't include the Paycheck Protection Program grant which helped MHCO maintain full employment during the pandemic. MHCO continues to steward grantors and foundations which has resulted in continued and increased awards from grant sources. All these initiatives and projects have been put in place for one purpose: to continue to provide exceptional care for the residents and expand services to help others in troubled circumstances.

Personally, this year concludes a forty-year journey I did not plan but would not change. It has been a true blessing to have a career focused on helping children and families in troubled circumstances. Ms. Kevin has been with me on this career path the entire time. Earning her MSW from the University of Illinois, Ms. Kevin was the Chief Clinical Officer at our previous employer supervising 19 programs impacting over 300 children daily. I know a great number of Social Workers but would place Ms. Kevin at the pinnacle in her work, commitment, and impact. MHCO has truly benefited from Ms. Kevin being a part of the Home. Her support included covering the front desk, helping with case management for ILP residents when needed, making desserts and meals for the BBQ teams, Board, Community, Kids, and Staff, creating auction art for the Galas, and many more unobtrusive yet extremely helpful support. GM Dalton Mayo said it during his year, "We got two Kevins for the price of one." With Ms. Kevin – you got much more than another me.

As our time comes to a close, we have a sense of overwhelming gratitude, happiness, and sadness. While we are pleased with what we have been able to accomplish, each event this year comes with a sense of "this is over." Working with children has been the focus of our careers. We have experienced various situations, successes, failures, challenges, happiness, sadness, and tragic events. We have had the honor of being a part of thousands of children's lives. For many the experience changed their lives for the better. For others, they could not overcome their trauma, emotions, and coping strategies they needed within their previous living arrangements. For others, even with the difficult time they had in care, they have shared with us that their limited experience in residential care was the best years of their lives. In doing this type of work, you begin to accept the children as part of your family, while attempting to maintain a healthy and professional balance. So many referred to us as Mom and Dad. We have always been Mr. and Mrs. Kevin, to the point many thought our last name was Kevin

before they got to know us better. At MHCO we have been involved with children who have been here our entire time. As they and others complete milestones, we are happy for their success and development, while also being sad that these experiences are final experiences. Being able to be a part of these children's lives has been an honor and blessing for which we are extremely grateful.

In addition, we repeatedly share how fortunate we have been to be able to meet so many wonderful people this late in our lives. We have made wonderful friends. These friendships have led to going on vacations, weekends, mission trips, Masonic events, concerts, dinners, and other rewarding and personally enriching activities. We truly appreciate how kind and receptive you have been to us. In the words of GM Sigmon, "I am glad our paths crossed."

As I travel across this wonderful state, I am reminded that the front windshield is much larger than the rear-view mirror for an important reason. It is where we are heading that is the most important focus, not where we have been. This year will provide a wonderful opportunity for new leadership to cast their own vision. I was blessed to follow amazing predecessors who built a tremendous foundation. My prayers are that our collective accomplishments will be beneficial to the next leadership team and will aid toward increased programming, continued best practices, expanded reach of services, and support great successes for those receiving services. I know you hear the gratitude of those who have come to this campus and are in a better place thanks to the kind and caring folks who contribute in various ways so children can be children who develop into proud and responsible adults. Gratitude comes full circle as those who give of themselves are thankful for being able to provide caring support for the children. Thank you all so very much for your prayers, positive energy, and gracious support. What we have done together allows the children to see our vision clearly and make their own come into focus. With gratitude and best wishes, ko.

Dues Card Talk

By Julian Setzer, Grand Steward



Everyone reading this message today probably has their dues cards with them. Whether in your pocket or electronic, I want you to think about how much that dues card means to you.

Now, I want you to understand that a dues card means almost nothing to me. Because a dues card is simply a piece of card stock printed with your name on it. It was made for you. You didn't make it yourself. The dues card itself means almost nothing except that you have paid a fee for this year's scrap of paper.

The lesson here is that Masonry is lived, not bought. The dues card is nothing more than an outward expression of your willingness to be a Mason this year. It says absolutely nothing about your current character as a man, as a community member, or as a brother Mason.

That is because, as our Grand Master says brilliantly, we vote with our feet. We vote with our hearts, we vote with our mouths, we vote with our helping hands. We do not vote by virtue of membership in this fraternity alone.

I want to ask you a simple question. Have you ever used your dues card to vote? Have you ever raised it in the air? The answer is NO. You have not. And you will not. I wish our Masons themselves were so inclined to vote freely with their wallet to support their home lodge so that we didn't have to impose dues on our members.

The vote I'm talking about is the way in which

you choose to live your life as a Mason. As a Man. As a Father. As a Grandfather.

If you have been to a district meeting with the Grand Master, you know that we vote with our actions every day. "Together We Rise" is a call in response to signify that we are all swimming in the same direction. Living lives of virtue and self-betterment for our communities and families.

These principles and virtues of Masonry which everyone thinks is tied to a scrap of paper in your wallet are actually found in the helping hands we extend to our brothers and our widows in times of need. The charity we practice from our hearts, not because we are told to or informed it would be a good idea for our upward mobility. These principles are timeless, immovable, and harmonious.

As Masons we have an obligation and duty to support our brothers and to whisper wise counsel. When that wise counsel is not heeded, we absolutely have the same obligation and duty to call our brothers to attention, and if needed, to admonish them to carefully practice the question they answered when they were without the door awaiting initiation - "do you agree to cheerfully conform to the principles of Masonry"?

Such ACCOUNTABILITY is a characteristic of Masons, because I am as particular about my reputation and the character of the men I associate with as you all are. As you vote with your actions throughout your life, consider that your dues card isn't the big prize. It is the license to vote with your actions in the name of the Fraternity. Wield your honor as a Mason with care, and protect your character and reputation by acting upon the square.

3rd Annual Time for the Kids Charity Gala

by Charlie Roberson, MHCO



The Masonic Home for Children extends its deepest gratitude to everyone who helped make our recent 3rd Annual Time for the Kids Charity Gala an unforgettable evening in support of the children and families we serve. Because of each of you, we raised over \$70,000 for the children in our care.

To all of our Masonic friends and their families, thank you for spending your evening with us and standing beside our mission. Your presence brought warmth, joy, and generosity to a night filled with purpose and community spirit.

We are especially honored to have welcomed UNC basketball legend Phil Ford as our guest speaker. His heartfelt words, shared wisdom, and connection to The Masonic Home for Children made the evening even more impactful and inspiring for all who attended.

A special thanks to the staff at The Masonic Home for Children, whose dedication and behind-the-scenes work brought this event to life. Your passion is the heartbeat of this organization, and your work does not go unnoticed.

We extend our sincere thanks to our Gala committee, chaired by Mrs. Susan Wicker, who graciously served this year's Gala.

Together, we celebrated not only a successful evening, but a brighter future for the children in our care.

Thank you for believing in our Home, our mission, and most importantly, our children.

For more information or to learn how you can continue supporting The Masonic Home for Children, visit <https://www.mhc-oxford.org>.

***Save the date for next year's gala
June 20th, 2026 in Charlotte, NC***





Easter Egg Hunt & Ladies' Night Out Dinner

By Jason Caldwell

Semper Fidelis Lodge in cooperation with the Jacksonville Chapter Order of DeMolay held three separate events at the lodge on April 19, 2025.

The day began with our monthly Fellowship Breakfast at 8 A.M., attended by members of Semper Fidelis Lodge No. 680, Knights of Solomon Lodge No. 766, members' families, and the community.

At 10 A.M., the DeMolay Boys, together with lodge members, organized an Easter egg hunt for the community. 1,000 eggs were hidden about the lodge backyard. Roughly 50 children of various ages participated. Following the Easter Egg Hunt, Worshipful Brother Tony Saenz cooked hamburgers and hot dogs for all. Many members of the community, were present and expressed their gratitude to the lodge for inviting them. They were favorably impressed to see what Masonry is about. This event will become an annual activity for the lodge and the community.

At 5 P.M. we had our monthly "Ladies' Night Out Dinner" at a local restaurant. This program encourages Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts to attend with their ladies and meet other members.

In conclusion, approximately 130 individuals, both Masons and non-Masons, had the opportunity to experience the fellowship of Semper Fidelis Lodge No. 680. This truly was a great day for Masonry.



Conover Lodge Honors WB Fred Lee Sherrill Jr.

By Michael Matty, Conover Lodge No. 709

On April 27, 2025, members of Conover Lodge No. 709, alongside friends and family, gathered to honor Worshipful Brother Fred Lee Sherrill Jr. with his **70-year service** pin and certificate. This memorable day in Masonry was marked by shared stories and cherished memories, uniting four generations of family and Masons in a celebration of WB Sherrill's remarkable legacy.

WB Sherrill's Masonic journey began at Catawba Lodge No. 248 in Newton, North Carolina, where he was initiated on August 5, 1955, passed on August 23, 1955, and raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on September 2, 1955. In 1956, he became a charter member of Conover Lodge No. 709. His leadership shone as Master of Conover Lodge in 1960, followed by his appointment as Secretary in 1961—a role he faithfully served for 62 years until passing the jewel to WB Mike Matty in 2023, making him only the third Secretary in the lodge's history.

WB Sherrill's Masonic record reflects a lifetime of discipline, service, and dedication:

- 1955: Raised to MM at Catawba Lodge No. 248
- 1956: Charter member of Conover Lodge No. 709
- 1960: Master of Conover Lodge No. 709
- 1961–2023: Secretary of Conover Lodge No. 709
- 68 years: Service in Scottish Rite (33rd Degree)
- 42 years: Service in Hickory York Rite
- 68 years: Service in Oasis Shrine
- 68 years: Service in Eastern Star
- 2018: Recipient of the Montford Award
- Recipient: Harris Dudley Secretary Award
- Member: Lux Libertas Lodge and Orphans Lodge
- Recipient: 25-, 50-, and 70-year service awards

The ceremony was attended by distinguished Masons and family members, all blessed to witness this milestone. Most Worshipful Past Grand Master Mack Sigmon presented the 70-year pin, while Most Worshipful Past Grand Master Rick Moore presented the certificate. WB Sherrill's daughter, Lynn Sherrill Murphy, had the honor of pinning her father.

Family members present included WB Sherrill's son, Lee Sherrill, and his wife, Melinda; daughter,

Lynn Sherrill Murphy, and her husband, WB Mark Murphy; granddaughters, Leslie Sherrill Zahm and Anna Pauline Murphy; great-grandson, Andrew Zahm; and great-granddaughter, Amelia Smith.

This day of fellowship and recognition not only celebrated WB Fred Lee Sherrill Jr.'s 70 years of unwavering commitment to Masonry but also created lasting memories for the Conover Lodge community and his family across four generations. It was truly a great day for Masonry.



Unveiling The Lafayette Trail Marker to Honor Bicentennial Visit of the Marquis de Lafayette

By Micheal Dodson, Phoenix Lodge No. 8

On March 5th, Phoenix Lodge No. 8, A.F. & A.M., proudly hosted Mr. Julien Icher, Founder and President of The Lafayette Trail, Inc., for a historic unveiling ceremony commemorating the 200th anniversary of General Marquis de Lafayette's visit to the United States.

The event marked the official installation of a Lafayette Trail Marker at Phoenix Lodge, recognizing Fayetteville's significant role in Lafayette's grand tour of America in 1825. The ceremony brought together esteemed guests and organizations dedicated to preserving the shared heritage of American history and Freemasonry.

Among the distinguished attendees was Most Worshipful Grand Master Robert Rideout of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, accompanied by several Grand Lodge officers, who participated in the unveiling and offered remarks on Lafayette's enduring legacy as a Freemason, patriot, and steadfast ally to the American cause.

Also assisting in the ceremony were representatives from the Marquis de Lafayette Chapter of DeMolay, the National Sojourners, the Valley of Fayetteville Scottish Rite, the Sons of the American Revolution, and the Fayetteville Independent Light Infantry. City Councilman Mario Benavente was present on behalf of the City of Fayetteville, reflecting the city's ongoing commitment to historical preservation and civic engagement.

Following the unveiling, guests were treated to an insightful historical presentation on the life and legacy of the Marquis de Lafayette, delivered by Mr. Julien Icher. The presentation was followed by a reception featuring heavy hors d'oeuvres, offering attendees the opportunity to fellowship and reflect on the significance of the occasion.

A special note of gratitude is extended to Past Master Nick Yakas for his unwavering dedication and efforts in facilitating the partnership between Phoenix Lodge No. 8 and The Lafayette Trail, Inc., which made this meaningful project possible.

This collaborative event not only celebrated a milestone in American and Masonic history but also reaffirmed the enduring bonds of fraternity, patriotism, and community that unite these noble institutions. The newly unveiled Lafayette Trail Marker stands as a lasting tribute to the enduring friendship between the United States and France, and to the timeless principles of liberty and brotherhood.





Saralyn's heart dropped to the pit of her stomach as she spoke the only four words that came rushing to her mind, "My baby has what?"

Already the mother of an older son who arrived a decade earlier without complications, it was the first time she had heard the term arthrogryposis. This pregnancy, she was older, and for that reason, the doctor had been monitoring her progress more closely. She learned that at her nine-week scan, a bend in her baby's wrists and hands had been detected – but, because there were not yet any major concerns, nothing was said. However, at her 20-week appointment, the increased curvature was undeniable.

"We were told arthrogryposis was a rare musculoskeletal condition," she said. "My husband, Robert, was in shock but trying to hold it together for me. We were both scared to death."

Google searches didn't reveal a lot of information on the condition affecting fewer than 50,000 people in the United States.

However, it did further frighten Saralyn by underscoring the chances of limited movement and what could be a tiring struggle to achieve the simple functions of daily life. "When I was 6 years old, my dad broke his neck and was paralyzed from the neck down. I watched my mother be a caregiver to not only my sister and me but also my father from that day on. Would my baby also be dependent on someone else to care for him? I just kept asking God, 'What's next?'"

Shortly after the delivery of her baby boy, the wait to find out "what's next" ended. Ty's pediatric orthopedist soon came to visit, and Saralyn and Robert were very happy with the great interest the young physician showed in their newborn son. He seemed resolute to find solutions for Ty, who would be his first arthrogryposis patient. Saralyn simultaneously worked to discover physical and occupational therapy service options to get a head start on Ty's ability to gain movement. But when Saralyn asked about a surgical plan, the doctor responded that it would not be needed until Ty was about 3 years old.

"I had joined a support group online for moms of kids with arthrogryposis, and I knew that wasn't true for the children I was learning about," Saralyn said. "All the moms I met there told me, 'You need to go to Shriners Children's Greenville and meet with Dr. [Lauren] Hyer.' So, that's what we did – and the rest is history."

In February 2024, treatment began with an in-depth evaluation. Ty was scheduled to see Dr. Hyer at the end of the week; however, Saralyn says she and Robert knew they made the right choice when Dr. Hyer surprised the family by stopping in to meet their baby boy the first day – observing his physical therapy appointment. Rounding out the medical team and deepening the well of expertise at Shriners Children's was Dr. Shea Ray, who specializes in corrections of the hand and wrist.

Ty's first operation was a tendon release to improve range of motion in his left elbow, as well as a procedure that fixed the curling of several of his toes. Surgery for his other elbow is next. The family is relieved to have access to experts to create a customized plan as Ty gets older, further aiding in his ability to lead a fulfilling, more independent life.

"We are so grateful that we found Shriners Children's," said Lane, Ty's grandmother, who accompanied Saralyn during a recent visit. "The doctors and therapists don't just offer hope – they deliver action and results."

Your gifts help kids like Ty live their best possible lives.



Shriners
Children's
Greenville

950 West Faris Rd.
Greenville, SC 29605
ShrinersGreenville.org

To donate: **864-255-8765**

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Supreme Council Biennial Session

By A. Gene Cobb, PGM, S.G.I.G. of North Carolina



Every two years, the Supreme Council gathers in Washington, D.C. for the Biennial Session. It is a time to celebrate our achievements, promote our progress, and focus on our future. I hope to see as many of you in Washington this year for the Biennial Session as possible.

This year, scholarships will be awarded from over six hundred youth. RiteCare, our charity for children, will offer its report on our philanthropic endeavors.

Membership will share the progress of our educational programs, VMAP, and Fellows Program. Decisions made by the Council will be shared in Finance, Jurisprudence, and plans for the 250th anniversary of our country. We will remember those who have passed to the celestial

lodge above. This year, I will be privileged to lead the Albert Pike Memorial Service at St. John's Church at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 18, 2025.

Our progress depends on the work of the Valleys and the Orients of this Mother Council of the World Jurisdiction. I believe that the strongest Valleys work within themselves and with other Valleys of the Orient to help others at all times. That means we do not operate as silos. We operate in every way we can to resource and help each other learn, subdue passions, and improve ourselves in Masonry.

Any focus on our future must continually find ways to converse openly with civility. Arrogance has become too acceptable today, and I consider it unmasonic conduct. Kindness needs to re-emerge in all our present undertakings. From a website, I posted this message on Facebook some time ago:

It's OK to have an opinion.

It's OK to disagree with someone's opinion.

It's not OK to humiliate someone because they don't think the same way you do. Show some respect. Society needs more of it.

Scottish Rite Masons in North Carolina, whether attending Biennial, Valley Meetings, Orient Opportunities, Reunions, or whatever, can bring kindness to the world.

The first song I ever learned to play on the guitar was "Try a Little Kindness" by Glen Campbell. I was just reflecting on that memory the other day and came away with this thought: "I think I will!"

It is time to reflect

How to get Published in The Mason

by Russell L. Scull, GL Board of Publications

A catchy, leading, “this title interests me” title is a great start. Let’s start with getting into the basics of good storytelling, yes, the famous Who, What, Where, When and Why. Your article is important to you and the facts have to be presented in an interesting manner. While bullet points are probably the most efficient way to present facts, they are boring.

Now some facts. ‘Who’ should you submit your article to? This is simple, email your article to ncmason@glnc.us. The THE MASON Editor is Donald Butto. This will be the entry point for your article.

‘When’ is as important as who, so when should you submit your article? As soon as your activity or story is completed. Remembering that THE MASON is published on a quarterly schedule; the schedule and submission deadlines are listed on the Grand Lodge website: <https://www.ncfreemasons.org/ncmason/>

Moving on to ‘Where’ will the article appear? The simple answer is: this, will depend on the article’s length and relevance. Will the article be looked at as a lifestyle piece or a Lodge event piece such as an Installation of Officers? We have had articles that fit both categories. Many start out as Online Supplement articles and after further research evolve into printed lifestyle interest articles.

Next, is ‘Why’. Why would the rest of the Craft be uplifted by your story? Is it because they can relate to the happenings or learn a new way of accomplishing the task? An exciting presentation of your lodge reflects our entire state.

‘What’ do I do to get my information into THE MASON. The article in the Connecticut Freemason, ‘Submission guidelines’ by Frank Way - January 2024 issue describes many facets quite succinctly. I have changed references to relate to North Carolina, with permission from Frank Way.

1. Email submissions to ncmason@glnc.us.
2. Text content should be in a docx, or txt file format and attached to the email.
3. Photos should be .jpg or .png image files and attached to the email. (Not embedded in the .docx)
4. Photos should be of the highest resolution possible.
5. Photo captions should be included in the word or txt file, not in the body of the email or filename of the photo.
6. Use original photos. Photos should not be downloaded from Facebook or other websites. These images are low-resolution and are not print quality.
7. If your material has been run in ANY other publication, we need to know that and must request permission to reprint it.

Ideas for making a good article:

- First, keep in mind that our humble publication actually has a far-flung audience, not limited to North Carolina brothers. Include the full names of locations and individuals involved. While brothers here in North Carolina might know them, most others will very likely not.
- Degree articles should, above all else, include the names of the candidates. Anything interesting and unique about the degree should be highlighted.
- If your brothers/lodge do something unusual, or have an interesting tradition, consider writing an article. Brothers love getting innovative ideas from other Lodges!

As all good articles have a recap, tell your story and enjoy remembering and following the points outlined above and you may see your article in print.

Respectively Submitted,
Russell L. Scull PM, KYCH

NORTH CAROLINA

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Planning is underway for a North Carolina Masonic celebration of America's 250th birthday in 2026, with events scheduled for Moore's Creek, Guilford Courthouse, Halifax, Edenton, Kings Mountain and Fayetteville. The goal is to commemorate the critical role Freemasons played in the battle for independence and the founding of our nation. We will come together to celebrate as Masons and pay homage to those enlightened and courageous brethren who made it possible for us to live, think, work and worship in freedom.

A limited-edition commemorative necktie will be sold at the annual communication this year, with proceeds supporting the 2026 celebration. Produced by The Craftsman's Apron, the handsome red, white and blue tie features iconic images from revolutionary-era North Carolina

including Royal White Hart Lodge No. 2, the Edenton teapot and a hornet's nest.

EVENTS PLANNED TO DATE ARE:

21 Feb 2026 – Field scout of Moore's Creek Battlefield – Currie

7 Mar 2026 – Field scout & wreath laying, Guilford Court House Battlefield – Greensboro

10-11 Apr 2026 – Halifax Day luncheon, tours, scout to Person's Ordinary – Halifax & Littleton

4 Jul 2026 – Unanimity Lodge Degree in the Chowan County Court House – Edenton

4 Jul 2026 – Statewide Recognition of Independence Day by lodges

25 Sep 2026 – 250th Anniversary Dinner at the Annual Communication – Winston-Salem

3 Oct 2026 – Victory Dinner, Phoenix Lodge – Fayetteville

17 Oct 2026 – Kings Mountain Battlefield Event – Kings Mountain

All lodges are encouraged to participate in and help lead their local 4th of July celebrations. This is an opportunity to increase our visibility, educate our neighbors about Masonry's role in the founding of the country and be seen as positive force in our communities.