

"WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO OFFER?"

*A Blueprint for Developing a Successful
Masonic Youth Program in Your Lodge*

The Pennsylvania Masonic Youth Foundation
of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania

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INTRODUCTION

How many times have you heard or read about someone in trouble, and said to yourself, "I'd really like to help him out but money's tight and I just haven't got anything else to offer." It's happened to all of us, at one time or another, and very possibly this happened the last time an adult leader with one of the youth groups suggested that you, as a leader of the Masons in your Masonic community, had the power **and the obligation** to provide substantial help to Rainbow, DeMolay, Job's Daughters or another Masonically sponsored youth group. You probably thought to yourself, "I'd really like to help, but the budget is already tight, and I just don't know what else we can do."

Now, we can't presume to have the **only** answer to that dilemma, but we **can** offer to you a systematic approach which will help you develop the best answer for you!

Attached to this paper is a "CHECKLIST" For A Successful Youth Support Program Established By Your Masonic Community." Masonic Community could mean your local Lodge and affiliated organizations, or it could mean the state-wide, regional or district Masonic organization over which you preside. This is a step-by-step outline of the actions you must take in order to develop a meaningful and effective program of youth support. It is important for you to acquire an understanding of the primary needs of the Masonic-related youth groups. Only with this understanding can you hope to develop an effective program. Study those primary needs, match them to your resources, and start on your special program.

How can you evaluate the resources of your Masonic Community to determine what is available to apply to your program on behalf of youth? Review these seven important areas of consideration:

1. Prestige and authority
2. Manpower
3. Communications
4. Facilities
5. Programs
6. Technology
7. Finance

As you review each area of resources, write down every idea that comes to you, and develop a list of possible activities which you could sponsor to benefit youth. When you are done, share these ideas with those you assigned to coordinate your youth program. A sample list, "50 IDEAS FOR YOUTH SUPPORT BY YOUR MASONIC COMMUNITY," is attached to this paper.

Prestige and Authority

This is a resource which is valuable to you in your own Masonic circles, which you already use to promote other portions of your program. It is a well known fact that when any Grand Master lends his name and prestige to a project, the Masons in his jurisdiction pay closer attention. The same holds true in any Masonically affiliated organization— it is the inherent gift of leadership. Wisely using this influential nature, and the powers granted to the position of authority you now hold, you can make your program work. This is a resource which costs nothing, and is at your discretion to use. An example of an effective use of this resource comes

to mind when I think of the number of times I have seen a Brother Mason grin from ear to ear after having been formally recognized in a Lodge meeting by the Grand Master for some accomplishment or service. If, while presiding in your organization, you were to ask all present or past adult leaders of the Masonic-related youth groups to stand, and publicly salute their **service to Freemasonry** in the vineyards of youth, you would be doing much to increase the self-esteem of these little-known, and unappreciated youth leaders.

Manpower

As a leader of Masons in your circle of influence, you have a wealth of manpower available to help in projects or special activities to benefit youth on a jurisdictional or local level. Promoting the need for Masons to serve as adult leaders is one way to help. Recruiting Masons to work on specific projects is another. You have a group of officers working with you who could be assigned to distribute information about youth groups during their travels. These same officers can probably help identify fertile ground for the establishment of new youth groups. These men can see organizations with young officers, and an interest in youth, and can recommend them to you. You can also appoint committees of interested Masons to help promote and organize your youth support program. Challenge neighboring appendant Masonic bodies — the York Rite, Shrine and Scottish Rite to also get involved in your youth program. In this way, you will reach many of those Masons who have become more involved in the appendant and concordant bodies. Managing this resource properly can provide a valuable source of assistance in all your activities, especially on behalf of youth.

Communications

As a Masonic leader, you have available to you various forms of communication to the Masons in your Masonic community. By using these vehicles to spread information and inspiration about the Masonic-related youth groups, you will help eliminate the problem of Masons being totally unaware of the youth program. See to it that every issue of your official publication includes an article about your youth program, or the youth groups in general. (You can assign a "youth reporter" to write these articles.) Publish or distribute forms by which Masons can refer the names and addresses of children, grandchildren and neighbors as potential members of the youth groups. In your written communications to your officers, remind them that "youth" is a priority during your term, and encourage them to get involved and promote the program in their travels. Encourage your subordinates to include meeting dates of youth groups in their monthly bulletins. Use the communications resources already available to you to help spread the word about the importance of youth.

Facilities

Many Masonic communities have beautiful facilities available for meetings, conventions, special ceremonies, etc. which could be made available for very important youth programs. These facilities may only be made available on special occasions, but by permitting youth groups to use them, you reinforce their place in our Masonic family. Many Lodges have fine facilities which could be used regularly by the youth groups for properly supervised activities. Making these available, at low or no rental fees, if feasible, can certainly help our youth groups. Try to think of the Masonic youth groups as a church youth group— how many churches charge their youth rent to meet in their buildings?

Programs

*T*ry to involve the Masonic-related youth groups in some of your traditional social and service programs. How can they expand the scope of some of your activities? Bring representatives of the youth groups to your meetings. If you participate in any public parades, be sure the youth groups march with you. Can you incorporate a youth choir in any public ceremonies? Perhaps they can get involved with you in community or Masonic service projects. Ask your subordinate groups to have a contingent of local youth group members available to greet you when you make a formal visit, or have them on hand during refreshments following the meeting. Use this resource, the programs you already have scheduled, and then give the young people greater exposure to Freemasonry, and greater visibility within your Masonic community.

Technology

*E*ach Masonic community has available certain administrative aids which might also be helpful to the leaders of the Masonic-related youth groups. Perhaps the availability of a photocopier, or a printing press, or audio-visual equipment could greatly improve **their** volunteer administration of the youth program. Of great value might be the availability of a computer system, with the capability of recording membership data and providing mailing labels and youth group rosters. Perhaps you or your officers have had contact with a Brother who is enthusiastic about his personal computer system and might make it available to the youth group leader. Since the leaders of these youth groups are volunteers, any technological assistance you can provide to help them manage the information they need would greatly improve their time and availability to promote membership growth and activities.

Finance

*I*f available to you, financial assistance may be an appropriate means of helping the youth groups. Some Masonic Communities provide a cash subsidy to the annual budgets of the youth groups. Others sponsor trophies for annual competitions, or provide scholarships. Some Masonic Communities have established fund-raising campaigns on behalf of one or more of the youth groups. Some have gone as far as forming non-profit corporations or foundations through which tax exempt contributions can be managed. Only you can determine how far you can go in helping to finance the youth groups, or even your own youth program. This is not the **only** resource you should consider, and its availability will not make or break your youth program.

One Final Thought

*T*here are many concerns which compete for a Masonic Leader's time and his support. Obviously, many of your predecessors have **not** considered the Masonic-related youth groups as a **priority**. In this age when Freemasonry needs to project a positive image of community concern, sponsorship of a youth group can help highlight Freemasonry's service to the general public. Likewise, if we want to encourage young people to pursue a fraternal career in their adulthood, a positive experience in a Masonic-related youth group will help them develop the favorable impression of our fraternity which we so earnestly desire to project.

CHECKLIST

For A Successful Youth Support Program Established By Your Masonic Community

1. _____ Understand the primary needs of the Masonic-related youth groups in your Masonic community:
 - a. Adult participation and supervision
 - b. Publicity – general public and the Masonic community
 - c. Membership referrals – names of qualified young people to contact for membership
 - d. Quality programs which will attract young people
 - e. Financial assistance, if available.

2. _____ Publicly announce "Youth Program" as one of your personal priorities. By using the power and prestige of your office to emphasize the importance of supporting the Masonic-related youth groups, you will improve the perception of these groups held by the average Mason.

3. _____ Establish structure for planning your youth support program, by appointing a committee, aide, director, coordinator, foundation, etc., to implement your plans.

4. _____ Evaluate the resources of your Masonic Community to determine what is available to apply to your program. (See paper: "What Have We Got To Offer?")

5. _____ Set long-range and short-range goals for youth support programs.

6. _____ Develop plans for action.

7. _____ Implement plans to specifically demonstrate "instant success," building on each successful activity to generate enthusiasm for the program.

8. _____ Encourage your successors to establish support of youth activities as a long-term priority of your Masonic community.

50 Ideas

For Youth Support

By Your Masonic Community

1. Encourage Master Masons to serve as adult leaders.
2. Encourage Master Masons to attend meetings of youth groups.
3. Encourage Master Masons to attend installations and initiations of youth groups.
4. Encourage subordinate groups to sponsor a Youth Night program.
5. Make an official visit to one or more of the youth group state conventions.
6. Invite adult youth leaders to speak at Masonic functions.
7. Invite youth leaders to speak before or after Masonic functions.
8. Invite young people to perform samples of their ritual at Masonic functions.
9. Invite young people to tell, in their own words, what they like about their organization.
10. Include youth support programs in your plans and priorities for your term as a presiding officer.
11. In your visitations, include in your agenda a public recognition of all members present who actively work with youth groups.
12. Present certificates to members who actively work with youth groups.
13. Encourage local subordinate groups to invite youth representatives to public activities, such as fund-raisers, ladies' nights, picnics, parades, etc..
14. Encourage local subordinate groups to "hire" youth groups to provide coat checks, waiter service, car parking, building maintenance, for pay or service award credit.
15. Challenge local youth groups to a competition such as bowling, or mini-golf.
16. Ask youth groups to perform a specific service to your members— such as providing a car wash during one of your meetings.
17. Survey members of local subordinates for names of children, grandchildren and neighbors to refer as potential members of youth groups.
18. Give Masonic-related youth groups publicity through your organizational publications.
19. Encourage/permit subordinate groups to include youth group meeting dates in their monthly notices.
20. Encourage each subordinate group to appoint a Representative to the local youth groups – to represent the officers at public installations, and to report at meetings about their activities.
21. Presiding Officer to declare a "Youth Month" encouraging all subordinates to hold a youth information or promotion meeting.
22. Involve youth groups in service projects at your Masonic facilities.
23. Involve youth groups in fund raising for various Masonic Charities.
24. Involve youth groups in Grand Lodge public activities i.e.: parades, cornerstone dedications, etc.
25. Establish an education seminar on careers, using Masons as consultants, inviting members of youth groups to come and talk to "professionals" about their careers.
26. Coordinate a Masonic day at a local professional or semi-pro sports exhibition and involve all of the Masonic family, including youth groups.
27. Coordinate a Masonic Day at a local major amusement or theme park, and involve entire Masonic family.

28. Include youth participants in local Masonic worship services (i.e.: as ushers, readers, choirs, etc.).
29. Establish a local fund raising campaign to provide financial assistance to youth groups.
30. Include youth participants in social activities at local dinner theater programs.
31. Establish a local youth social night in a supervised safe facility, using existing Masonic buildings or property.
32. Provide computer data service to youth groups for mailing labels, financial records, etc..
33. Distribute youth promotion pamphlets at visitations and subordinate group functions.
34. Direct mail to each Mason in your Masonic community a personal letter encouraging their financial or physical support of youth groups.
35. Conduct or invite a youth leader to coordinate a seminar to educate your subordinate officers about the Masonic-related youth groups.
36. Distribute procedural information on establishing a Masonic-related youth group in a local community.
37. Provide administrative services such as photo copying, mimeographing or printing through your organizational administrative offices.
38. If available, provide youth groups with names of children of Masons, and ages, if this data is gathered and kept in your computer.
39. Produce a direct-mail fund solicitation and distribute to all Masons in your Masonic community.
40. Distribute/sell Masonic youth support buttons, pins, stickers, etc. to raise funds for youth program.
41. Establish a youth program speaker's bureau, registering names and topics of appropriate speakers on the youth program, to be distributed to junior officers.
42. Coordinate a calendar of events for your Masonic community, including the important convention dates and traditional observances of youth groups.
43. Encourage the sponsoring bodies of youth groups to provide meeting facilities at no or low-cost. (Use this rationale: How many churches ask their youth groups to pay rent? Isn't our relationship to the Masonic-related youth groups similar?)
44. Sponsor a membership recruitment contest for the youth groups, rewarding those young people who have been responsible for encouraging their friends to join. Prizes awarded could be pins or certificates, a rebate on annual Convention costs, a special trip, etc..
45. Establish a membership referral service by collecting names and addresses of potential members of the youth groups, collecting them to be distributed to the youth group leaders.
46. Sponsor a youth Essay Contest for a scholarship prize, on a subject such as, "Why I want to be a Mason," or, "Freemasonry's Role in My Community," and invite the winner to present the essay at a large Masonic community gathering.
47. Include names, addresses, and telephone numbers of jurisdictional, regional or District youth group leaders in your organization's directory.
48. Sponsor ritual tournaments for the youth groups by providing a location, meals and judges for the contests. Tournament could include team or individual competition.
49. Sponsor trophies for various competitions at annual youth conventions.
50. **Your ideas.....!**