

Damascus Lodge #10

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Damascus Lodge Summary

The brethren of Damascus Lodge decided to take on the challenge of educating the public about Freemasonry, thus educating ourselves. We feel that we successfully reached our goal in two ways:

An updated website and trestleboard that presents clear messages about the fraternity;

Four (lodge sponsored) public lectures that enabled us to deliver our message in a transparent and meaningful way.

Our public lectures were overwhelmingly successful. The largest event was held at Utah Valley University where over 300 non-masons attended. These efforts have allowed us to better connect with our community and fraternity resulting in many petitions for membership.

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Damascus Lodge Planning

In August 2010 four members of Damascus Lodge met to discuss the future of the lodge. These four brothers were the then current Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Senior Deacon, and Treasurer who was also serving as Deputy Grand Lecturer for the lodge.

The purpose of this meeting was to develop a plan to attract new members to the lodge and to inspire the current members to be more active participants. After much discussion the four brothers came to the conclusion that the best way to accomplish this was through education. This was to be done with a budget of no more than a thousand dollars.

The first objective was to educate the public that we are here; we are viable and actively engaged in the community, while at the same time dispelling the myths and misconceptions about the fraternity. The second objective was to inform the members about the activities of the lodge while at the same time educating them on the history and mysteries of the fraternity, making them more informed and hopefully more inspired ambassadors of the craft.

During this meeting the four brothers put together a questionnaire/profile to be completed by each member of the lodge (See appendix 1). They also scheduled a meeting to take place in September of 2010 for all the members of Damascus to discuss the ensuing year, the questionnaire, and any ideas they might have to help further our cause. Damascus Lodge at the time of this meeting had 37 members 27 of them attended and were active participants.

Four key ideas were developed. 1. Start a monthly trestle board. 2. Hold four lodge sponsored public lectures. 3. Participate in the State Wide Masonic Open House. 4. Revamp the website by connecting it to our Facebook page and Meet Up group, at the same time make it more informative and user friendly.

Damascus Lodge Implementation

Through the questionnaire and subsequent meeting we were able to identify several key individuals whose vocations dealt with web design and promotion, company newsletters, and even one brother who had already done some public speaking.

Our trestle board "The Damascus Gate" (See appendix 2) comes out each month with the exception of July and August which is combined into one. Each of the three Dais officers contributes an article each month. We also encouraged our members to contribute material for the trestle board as well. So far this year we have had 8 different brothers submit material for consideration. The cost to the lodge so far is around \$100.00.

The power point for the public lecture was put together by Brother Matt Nelson after he had many conversations with several of the most knowledgeable brothers in our lodge as well as the Grand Lodge (See appendix 3). We scheduled the lectures to take place in four different venues. The first lecture took place on March 8, 2011 at Brigham Young University in the Student Hall lecture room. The room holds approximately 70 people. There were 34 people in attendance 24 of them were non-masons. The second lecture we hosted inside our own lodge room on April 6, 2011. The lodge room holds around 100 people. We had 48 people attend 35 of them being non-masons.

We scheduled the third lecture for June 1, 2011 at Utah Valley University; this was by far the most ambitious event of the four. We rented the Ragan Theatre which is located on the campus of the University and holds 700 people. The promotion for this event was also stepped up. We asked all the members of the lodge to help by posting on Facebook, e-mailing friends and family, hanging posters and passing out flyers.

The business owners who are members of our lodge were asked to contact the local newspaper to see if they could get the paper to cover the event. The Grand Master was invited to attend and participate in a Q & A session after the presentation. The turnout was great we had 357 people attend with over 325 of them being non-masons. For the fourth lecture we scheduled it to be held at the Provo City Library in the Young Events room on October 13, 2011. This room can hold 100 people; there were 75 people in attendance 60 of them being non-masons. The cost for the four lectures was just over \$500.00. (See appendix 4 for some of the flyers and posters used and newspaper articles written about the events.)

Damascus Lodge participated in the Utah Grand Lodge state wide open house on May 21, 2011. The Lodge had flyers printed up to pass out and post around town (See appendix 5). The week before as well as the night before 25 of our brothers put flyers on cars posted them on community bulletin boards and any where else we could think of. The day of the event 10 of our most knowledgeable brothers were at the lodge to conduct tours and answer questions. We had over 100 non-masons come through the doors. The cost to the lodge was just under \$100.00.

The revamping of our website was turned over to our internet committee made up of six brothers who work in that field for a living. These brothers went to the five newest Master Masons in the lodge and questioned them on why they chose to be masons and had them write down what was the 5 most important questions they needed answered before petitioning the lodge.

They took those questions and had eight of our most knowledgeable brothers answer them. After some deliberation those questions now appear on our website. The committee was asked to make the website more user friendly and make it more accessible to our members as well as link it to our other internet interests; they have done a great job. The cost to the lodge was \$0; these brothers have donated all of this to the lodge. (URL is www.utahvalleymasons.com).

Damascus Lodge Reflection

The four ideas we have discussed here, have given us wonderful progress toward our goal. Damascus Lodge started the year with 41 members, we have lost 6 members this year, 1 brother passed away, 5 others were dropped for NPD, but we have raised 12 Master Masons, 5 other gentlemen have been passed to the degree of Fellowcraft, and 8 others have been initiated Entered Apprentice's. We even had two brothers affiliate with our lodge as well. The enthusiasm in the lodge is at an all time high and we consistently have 25 to 30 members at our stated meetings and a couple of times this year we have had close to 40 brothers present for a degree. While this is not the 100 % we would like, it is a step in the right direction. The four brothers who started this process over a year ago met just the other day to talk about the year. We all agreed that the year was extremely successful and for the most part we would not change anything, with one exception. The one thing we would do just a little bit different would be to promote the lectures more aggressively, including the use of local Radio and TV.

The process of participating in the Mark Twain Service Award has been a most rewarding experience. We have learned things about our lodge and ourselves that we might not otherwise have learned, for example some of our strengths and weaknesses as individuals as well as a group. It has made a close lodge of brothers even closer and for that we will be forever grateful. One little side note, at the time of this writing Damascus Lodge percentage wise is one of the fastest if not the fastest growing lodge in the State of Utah.
