



**2012 Mark Twain Award Submission
Masonic Service Association of North America**

Submitted By:

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In late 2008 under the direction of Bro. Alfred L. Jensen (Worshipful Master for 2009) and Bro. Wade E. Sheeler, Secretary, the officers of Newton Lodge #59 developed a mission statement and strategic plan. This was distributed to all of the members of Newton Lodge #59 and was formally adopted at the January 15, 2009 stated meeting.

This plan had many objectives and strategies, but the main focus was involvement with our community. The members felt that community involvement was the key to the health of the lodge.

PLANNING FOR 2012

Worshipful Master Dennis Williams used many resources planning for his year, but the key resources were the Strategic Plan adopted in 2009 and the Warden's Handbook published by the Grand Lodge of Iowa A.F. & A.M. We also use the Lodge of the Year program from the Grand Lodge of Iowa as a guide to assist us in planning our lodge activities. The Lodge has consecutively earned the Lodge of the Year Award for the past ten years. In 2008, we earned the highest level (the Gold), in 2009 we earned the bronze level, and in 2012 we earned the silver level.

The three principal officers and Treasurer and Secretary meet in September each year to develop a budget for the coming year. This is presented to the membership at the November stated communication. Although the budgeting process is important to planning for the coming year, the Lodge of the Year (LOY) program is the most instrumental tool that is used.

The week after his election as Worshipful Master, Bro. Williams called a meeting of his 2012 officers (the dinner and meeting was held on Thursday, December 1st). Bro. Williams reviewed the Strategic Plan with each of his officers. Each officer was given a list of his respective duties. Bro. Williams gave each officer a booklet published by the Grand Lodge of Iowa on the Duties of the Investigation Committee. The calendar for 2012 was discussed with the officers. Proper attire for lodge activities was also discussed with the incoming officers.

In 2011, we increased our dues from \$80.00 to \$104.00. We increased the per capita amount that goes into our Building Fund from \$5.00 to \$25.00 (per each dues paying member). The resources that are contained in this Fund are available for capital improvements to the building.

Worshipful Master Williams redesigned the monthly newsletter. He added spaces in the newsletter where the Junior Warden and Senior Warden could write articles for distribution to the membership. This was done to familiarize the Junior and Senior Wardens with the duties associated with publishing a monthly newsletter for the membership. An increased emphasis was placed on adding articles of Masonic education to the newsletter.

IMPLEMENTATION/EXECUTION

Worshipful Master Williams had a very aggressive schedule for his year in the Oriental Chair. We had a spring and fall "Friendship Night" for prospective members. Traditionally, we have only utilized the early spring prospect night. Our spring prospect night was held on February 2nd. We had five prospective members in attendance and received petitions from four of them. The fall prospect night was held on September 27th, with three prospects in attendance. We did receive one petition from that event.

- a. **Degree Work**: During 2012, we have raised six brothers to the sublime degree of a Master Mason and have two other brothers who have received their Entered Apprentice degrees and are awaiting scheduling of their successive degrees. Each brother who is raised receives a Masonic pin, Masonic Bible, the book "The Craft & It's Symbols", and his Masonic apron.
- b. **Family Social Activities** – we have had several events this year which are directed to our members and their families. On March 31st, we held our annual Easter Party. This fun event is for the children and grandchildren of our members. We also open this up to members of the community who would like to attend. We advertise this event in our local daily paper. We have Shrine Clowns in attendance to entertain the kids with goodies served to the kids before they retire to the lodge room for the "egg hunt". We place hundreds of candy eggs throughout the lodge room and the kids come in for the "egg hunt". Our secretary serves as the Easter Bunny and "presides" from the East. Each child gets to visit personally with the Easter Bunny.

This year we held a Super Bowl Party for our members. We have a giant screen TV in our lodge room and the members were invited to come up and watch the game. We served a variety chips & dips. We also have recently installed a popcorn machine in our lounge area which members can use.

We also held a Member Appreciation Night on August 2nd. The officers grilled hamburgers and we served fresh Iowa sweet corn.

On May 31st, the officers delivered geraniums to our Masonic widows who lived locally. We delivered geraniums to approximately 35 ladies. We had originally planned on having a dinner in their honor, but since several of the ladies are elderly and it is difficult for them to get out, we felt this might be a better approach. Both our members, who delivered the plants and the ladies who received them, seemed to enjoy the event. We received several nice thank you notes from our widows. We are planning on doing this same type of activity on December 1st, when we make deliveries of Christmas poinsettias.

- c. **Member Recognition**- on August 30th, we held a Veteran's Appreciation Night to honor our members who had served in the Armed Forces. Bro. Michael Fletcher, Deputy Grand Master, presented a very interesting lecture on the history of the American flag. We had approximately 10 veterans in attendance. Brothers Verle Kooistra and Junior Ekins were recognized for their service in World War II at the 168th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Iowa. We also recognize the birthdays of our members in our monthly newsletter. Each month, we send out a Masonic Anniversary card recognizing brethren on the occasion of the anniversary of their raising.

Bro. Jack Wright, P.M. was recognized as the 2012 Mason of the Year. Each year we recognize a brother in our lodge for his contributions to our success. They are recognized at our Past Masters Night event and receive a nice walnut plaque.

- d. **Community Activities** – we have participated in several community activities this year. On May 5th, we participated in "Red Pride Day" in the downtown area of Newton. The students at Newton High School are let out of school at Newton and are asked to go various areas of the town to participate in various "clean up" types of activities. This was our first year to

participate. We had members participating in assisting with planting flowers in planters in the downtown area.

On June 7th, we held our first ever "Public Appreciation Night". This originally started out to be a school support dinner, but we changed the focus. We broadened the focus to honor several community leaders. Among those honored were: Sheriff Michael Balmer, Daniel Kelley (a member of the Iowa House of Representatives), Rita Baker (Executive Director of the Jasper County Big Brothers/Little Brothers), Jeff Hoebelheinrich (Chief of Police) and Ina Heinemen (a fifth grade teacher and Woodrow Wilson Elementary). Each honoree was given a framed certificate and was given a few minutes to speak about their respective areas of community involvement. Ms. Heinemen was presented a check in the amount of \$100 to purchase supplies for her classroom.

i) **Jasper County Honor Flight**- our county has hosted four "Honor Flights" to the Washington D.C. area to honor our local veterans and give them an opportunity to visit the various monuments in our nation's capital. This past year, the members of Newton Lodge #59 and Newton Chapter #100 O.E.S. worked together to host a "chicken n' noodle" fundraiser on October 6th. We raised approximately \$1,400 which was donated to the committee which is organizing this trip for the spring of 2013. We also sponsored a hole at their golf outing that same day.

ii). **St. Nick's Christmas Club**-this community activity deserves special recognition in this award submission. The St. Nick's Club was founded approximately 25 years ago by a group of individuals in the Newton community who saw a need to assist needy families at the holiday time. We have participated in fundraising activities for the St. Nick's Club since 2008. We host our annual "Christmas in July" fundraiser. We decorate our dining room with holiday decorations and Santa (i.e. our lodge secretary) makes a special trip down from the North Pole. This is a really fun event and the community has really gotten behind it. We get good involvement from our local paper (The Newton Daily News) and radio station (KCOB Radio).

We have a goal each year of giving this group a donation of \$2,000 with a matching grant from the Grand Lodge of Iowa Charity Fund of \$2,000. Since 2008, we have given this organization over \$20,000. Our efforts help many families in our community at the holidays.

iii). **Upcoming Holiday Activities** – although this submission is being written in mid- November, we have some upcoming holiday activities which need to be mentioned. On November 23rd, we will be hosting a soup-supper fundraiser with the proceeds being given to the Newton Salvation Army. This is the day after Thanksgiving. We have a lighted Christmas parade in town that evening, so we get good attendance.

On Saturday, December 8th we will be hosting "Breakfast With Santa". In the past, we have held a Christmas Party for our members and their families. We would have a traditional holiday dinner with a program to following, including a visit from Santa. Attendance has dropped considerably over the past few years. This year, we decided to take a new approach. Each month, we have our monthly pancake breakfast on the second Saturday. We are inviting the public to attend the pancake breakfast and to bring their kids along for a visit with Santa Claus.

The kids will be eating for free. A lodge in Des Moines has had great success with this approach and we are hoping to emulate them.

Later that morning, we will be hosting the "Shop With a Cop" luncheon. The police officers of the Newton Police Department and their wives, select approximately 15 children to take to the local Wal-Mart. The kids are given money to purchase gifts for their family members. After the shopping activity, the kids and the police officers come to our lodge to wrap the gifts. The members of our lodge prepare a lunch for them and Santa comes with a small gift for each child.

On December 22nd, the members of Newton Lodge #59 will be ringing bells for the Newton Salvation Army.

e. **Communication Methods**

Newton Lodge #59 publishes a monthly newsletter that is distributed to all members of the lodge. We also mail this out to members of the York Rite Bodies and Eastern Star. We mail out approximately 325 copies per month. We also send out electronic email communications. We maintain a website (www.iowamasons.com/59.html) and a Facebook page.

We use our daily paper ("The Newton Daily News"), our local radio station (KCOB Radio), and the "Newton Independent" to advertise our events to the local community.

EVALUATION

Our Worshipful Master planned a very aggressive year in 2012. We had many activities and lots of exposure in our community. Two events had their focus changed before the events were actually held. The School Support Night changed to a Public Support Appreciation Night and honored more individuals than what was originally intended. We also changed our Masonic Widows Appreciation Dinner to an event where we visited the widows in their homes and delivered geraniums to them. We held two "Friendship Nights" in 2012. In the past we have only held one such event. Our many and varied events during 2012, have brought us much attention and visibility in our community.

Worshipful Master Williams will be preparing a dinner prior to our December stated meeting. At that time, he will give a "State of the Craft" address for Newton Lodge #59. He will summarize our successes for 2012 and thank the officers for their support and dedication during 2012.

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MISSION

Newton Lodge #59 will embrace it's members, their families and the community at large by teaching and practicing the principles of Friendship, Morality, Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth while actively embracing high moral, ethical, and spiritual values including fellowship, compassion, and dedication to God, country and family.

VISION

Newton Lodge #59 shall be the premier Masonic lodge in the State of Iowa.

GOALS

- 1. To encourage self development through the study of the principles of Freemasonry.**
- 2. To exhibit excellence in degree work.**
- 3. To be invested in our community through appropriate charitable activities**
- 4. To provide meaningful and enjoyable social experiences to our membership and their families.**
- 5. To improve the financial condition of Newton Lodge #59.**
- 6. To provide meaningful Masonic education to our membership.**
- 7. To practice friendship and fellowship among our brethren and Masonic widows.**
- 8. To encourage good men to seek light within the Masonic fraternity.**

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Enhance communications with our membership through the use of a calling committee, emails, and written correspondence.**
- 2. To print and distribute monthly newsletters to our membership. Continue to provide articles of Masonic education in our newsletter. Investigate the possibility of incorporating pictures and color printing.**
- 3. Continue to maintain a vibrant website for our membership and Masonic community at large. Study enhancements to the website.**

4. **Provide a meaningful program on Masonic education at each of our monthly meetings.**
5. **Continue the Masonic Anniversary recognition program and investigate the feasibility of sending birthday greetings to our members.**
6. **Appoint a social committee to study and plan meaningful social activities for our membership, their families and guests.**
7. **Officers and members attend ritualistic practices.**
8. **Consistently earn the Lodge of the Year and Plus One Awards from the Grand Lodge of Iowa and strive to earn the Gold Level for the Lodge of the Year Award.**
9. **Visit our Masonic widows and elderly brethren.**
10. **Develop community visibility programs to promote our lodge in the community.**
11. **Encourage brethren to learn the various charges, scriptures, and extended lectures.**
12. **Develop a long range strategic plan and review this plan on an annual basis.**
13. **Evaluate recreational opportunities in the building for our members.**
14. **Evaluate our dues structure.**
15. **Provide wholesome and delicious meals for our members at lodge sponsored dinners.**
16. **Continue enhancements to our physical facilities (i.e. develop a program to replace furnaces and air conditioners over the next five years)**
17. **Develop outreach programs to the schools and youth organizations in our community.**
18. **Have a positive gain in membership each year.**
19. **Encourage officers to visit with members at lodge functions and outside of the lodge.**
20. **Provide leadership development opportunities for our officers and members.**
21. **Use Grand Lodge programs that are available to us to help increase the effectiveness of our lodge (examples: Ashlar Award, Master Builder, and Two to Grow)**
22. **Have consistent representation at the annual Grand Lodge Communication by the three principal officers.**
23. **Officers and other members willing to visit other lodges for Masonic degrees and activities.**
24. **Development of a meaningful program for each year's activities and distribute a calendar of activities to each member prior to the beginning of the year.**
25. **Develop a membership program that will retain our current membership as well as prospective members.**
26. **Develop a sense of pride in our lodge and in being a Mason.**

Adopted at stated meeting held on January 15, 2009.

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