



Rio Grande Lodge No. 81, A.F. & M.

CHARTERED A.D. 1851 A.L. 5851
Brownsville, Texas

MARK TWAIN MASONIC AWARENESS AWARD

Masonic Temple
1131 East Jefferson St.
Brownsville, TX 78520

(Corner of 12th St. & E. Jefferson St.)

STATED MEETINGS 7:30 P.M.
FIRST AND THIRD TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH

Mailing Address
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Freemasonry should be grateful on having this type of award accessible to lodges around the country. The requirements compel lodges to work constructively in the community. Going over the sections before hand can prepare and provide room for adaptation to uncontrollable circumstances. Consequently, the community and lodge achieve a win-win relationship. No matter the outcome the lodge learns of its weaknesses in the community and what it should do to reverse it. Our attainment of the award has activities that are ongoing throughout this Masonic year. They provide a vigorous attitude needed to be a driving force in the community.

This the first time Rio Grande Lodge #81 participates in the “Mark Twain Masonic Awareness Award.” The planning process was figured out with the brethren from the lodge and approved before the new Masonic year began July 1. The ideas purposed and activities carried out here are to be evaluated and polished for the incoming Masonic years. The lodge recognizes the task that this award involves and realizes it is needed to move freemasonry forward into the future. There will be attachments which can provide a picture of what we have done and will continue to do this Masonic year.

PLANNING

The Masonic goals for Rio Grande Lodge #81 are to promote goodwill to our surrounding community and the significance of charity. Moreover, promote the importance of Masonic education to our brethren and the populace within the city of Brownsville, Texas. One of our first objectives for the Masonic year was get a new outdoor sign that proclaimed the building in the lot is Masonic. The building in which we are housed is a Texas State Historical Building. We are an interesting and sophisticated group of men, and such public relational sign was needed.

Brownsville Independent School District has a program that is called, “Adopt-A-School” in which a minimum of five activities have to be organized and accomplished within the school year. We decided to adopt Pena Elementary School in which there was a conference with the school’s main principal and head counselor to discuss the terms and conditions before proceeding. A covenant was attained with collaborations with great agencies and businesses in town to assist us in accomplishing our goals with the school. Hence, there was a win-win situation for everyone involved. The Masonic activities fulfilled in Pena Elementary School are activities that are promoted in the Grand Lodge of Texas. There has never been a professional organization or fraternities of any kind adopt a school in the school district; we are the first.

Furthermore, we are currently having “Community Night” on our second stated meeting which is the third Tuesday of every month. The event starts at 6:15pm with hors d’oeuvres and beverages, and with the “Community Night” Presentation at 6:45pm, because our stated meetings commence at 7:30pm. We used to have “Family Night” on such dates; however, the intentional night had to change for possible membership increase. The “Community Nights” are vocational theme nights in which there is a Masonic impact on various occupational fields. Letter like enticements were made and distributed according to the theme night. Also, the Brownsville Herald Newspaper’s Community Section was contacted to showcase our meeting dates and time.

The budget for the “Adopt-A-School” activities has been at zero to Rio Grande Lodge #81 because the expense was transferred to the agencies and businesses who decided to collaborate with us. There is more than enough money in the lodge’s bank account, but why spend if we can have and provide things for free. Additionally, letter like lure for “Community Night” were provided by brethren within the lodge who could credit this type of expense. The lone expense for Masonic awareness has been the new outdoor sign which was budgeted at \$3,000.

The brothers involved in the “Adopt-A-School” Program have been currently seven with more lodge members participation in the coming activities in the Spring Semester. It is difficult to have job working lodge members participate, because the “Adopt-A-School” Masonic activities occur during the day. Hence we have to rely on brothers who are retired or work flex-schedules. On our “Community Night” we have had four lodge members who are experts on the vocationally themed night give presentations not only to the brethren but visitors as well. There will be more brethren giving presentations in the spring time. The “Community Night” affairs are planned so many lodge members participate. The intended beneficiaries have been gotten through aggressive planning, and warm and welcoming enticement. Brothers from the lodge are being masonically educated and inspired. In addition, visiting 18 and over gentlemen have been dropping by our “Community Night” and petitioning.

EXECUTION/IMPLEMENTATION

Rio Grande Lodge #81’s initiatives are original and pioneering of its kind. The lodge members were apprehensive at first, but after the clear and detailed strategy was presented, optimism and enthusiasm filled the lodge. The Worshipful Master made a Masonic planning guide for his tenure in which a calendar of the activities was established. In this Masonic planning guide there are our habitual activities. Over and above, we added “Community Night,” decided to participate in the “Adopt-A-School” Program, and provide empowerment skills presentations by specialized brethren to the Order of DeMolay Chapter housed in our lodge. The lodge members were provided copies of the Worshipful Master’s planning guide so they can follow along and be aware of what Masonic activities are approaching. Along with having the planning guide, the lodge members are being updated with necessary incoming information via-emails and cell phone texts.

The Worshipful Master was made aware that there was a lack of current emails and cell phone numbers of lodge members. Together with the Communications Committee’s chairman and lodge secretary a “Contact Information Update Form” was made and mailed to all the lodge members whom we did not have current emails and/or cell phone numbers to. So far, there has been an approximate 24% response from the mailings and now these brethren are getting updated news. The lodge members are being reached five weekdays before a stated meeting via-email by the Communications Committee’s chairman and two weekdays before a Masonic activity via-cell phone text by the Worshipful Master. In addition, a bi-monthly lodge newsletter was made to inform lodge members who live out of town and non-attending lodge members who live in town know of the Masonic fun that is occurring.

Letter like enticements that were made according to the theme nights were distributed personally to “Community Night” theme vocational sites around the city of Brownsville and Cameron County. Lodge members whose vocations are similar to the monthly “Community Night” theme are giving the presentation. On top of this, the lodge’s stewards are acting hosts with the Worshipful Master during these nights, as well.

Moreover, there are specific brothers who are junior lodge officers, charming, and outgoing who assist the Worshipful Master with implementing the Masonic planning guide. Also, lodge members who have time during the day participate on the “Adopt-A-School” Program.

The great thing about reaching out to the fulfillment of this specific award is the creation of a collaborating atmosphere with non-masons. These non-masons are spouses of lodge brethren, DeMolay members, petitioners, community agencies and businesses employees whom have similar Masonic philosophy on neighbor and community.

EVALUTION/REFLECTIONS

Naturally, the beneficiary of this great endeavor is the surrounding community. Allowing them to be informed of our great fraternity and its undertakings by this organizational awareness plan allows us to also benefit. The lodge is accomplishing a positive public relational image with its Masonic activities, Adopt-A-School Program events, and Community Nights. In return of this positive public image there have been petitioners which will increase our lodge membership. Also, Masonic brothers from lodges which are recognized by our Grand Lodge have been encountered from our “Adopt-A-School” Program events. Some Masonic activities have generated collaborations with other town lodges in which has added fantastic fellowship in displaying the grip of friendship and brotherly love.

The lodge has learned to allow lodge members use their respective vocational expertise on assisting the lodge’s positive image. Of course, along the way there were mistakes, especially from doing something original in our Masonic jurisdiction. There have been two “Adopt-A-School” program events that pictures were not taken because lack of a camera. Hence, a proposal should be made for the lodge to purchase its own camera and not rely on a brother to take his own camera. This way the participating brethren can utilize the lodge’s camera instinctively and have the pictures tell of affirmative Masonic stories. Moreover, we realized that the Brownsville Herald Newspaper does not guarantee weekly fraternal/organization listing of our meeting dates and time in its “Community Section.” Therefore, we have to be on top of the Brownsville Herald Newspaper’s Community Section’s editor and staff on keeping posted our meeting dates and time. Along with reminding the newspaper, we should send the newspaper’s “Community Section” our “Community Night” theme information so it may be posted and the community can know of our special evenings. This acknowledgement has to be done in haste because our Winter Texan Brothers should be arriving and they need to know of our current deeds. As a result of the newspaper’s inadequateness a flyer of our lodge is being prepared for the purpose of displaying them at the city’s R.V. parks and public areas where masons may hang out.

The Masonic activities is giving the lodge an immense identity in the community in which within time freemasonry should be the front running fraternity/organization again whom virtuous men would like to be a part of. The success of the “Adopt-A-School” program this Masonic year can assist us in having another Brownsville Independent

School District contract with another school next school year and the school years after that with different schools. The great thing is that Brownsville has over fifty public schools to choose from and the Masonic collaborative future looks very optimistic. The Community Nights are providing positive Masonic information to our visitors which is something always needed. The visitors are becoming our indirect publicists from the information they obtain from the theme presentations.

Going after this Masonic Award has been a great challenge. Therefore, lodge members need to recognize the time and effort needed to accomplish the goals and partake in lessening the burdens of the usual participating members on activities. Again, still, our lodge has benefitted from our Masonically hard working measures. For this reason, the community was served with dignity and respect. The community is finding out more that freemasonry is an organization that is there to improve it, not only with its upright men, but with its free social service programs. Hundreds of at-risk people have been helped with our Grand Lodge programs.