

# Freemasons Make an Impact on Norwood at Orient Lodge

BY JACKIE MASLOFF

Off the main thoroughfare of the town of Norwood on Day Street sits a large red brick structure known as the Norwood Masonic Building that is home to several Masonic lodges, including Union Lodge, Lafayette-Dover and the largest of which is Orient Lodge. All three lodges are in the 6th Masonic District within the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, and Orient Lodge is one of the largest lodges in the district, chartered in 1861 by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

A lodge is a home to freemasonry, which is a fraternity of men that get together not only for social reasons and companionship but also for service to their community. Orient Lodge provides a variety of opportunities for both independently led charity work, lodge and member donations, Lodge sponsored community service events, and collective opportunities in and around the 6th Masonic District.

Led by their Master, Worshipful Donald E. Barry, Sr., Orient Lodge participates in numerous community activities. One of their largest events is the TONY awards which just celebrated its 40th year in Norwood. TONY stands for Ten Outstanding Norwood Youth and is given to ten high school students who live in Norwood. Between 30 and 45 nominations are made from September to October 31st. Each nominee is sent a packet in which they have to answer five questions about their volunteering and how they volunteer with their faith. There is also a 300 word essay on what volunteering means to them. In order to be considered a nominee they must fill out the form. Each form, once submitted, is assigned a blind identification number.

The blind forms are then judged on one night in early December at the Lodge by five Judges, one from the Women's Community Committee, one from the Town officials, one from the business community, one from the clergy in town, and one from the Masons. The forms are rated 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest. The two co-chairs of the TONY the scores to determine the top 10 winners.

The nominees are invited to a banquet that is held on the last Monday in January at the Lodge, where all nominees are recognized



**Orient Lodge.** PHOTO COURTESY OF WAYMARKETING.COM

and given a certificate for their accomplishment. There is usually an interesting speaker who talks on volunteerism. This is followed by two separate awards: the Father Robert Dwyer Award for extra special service to one's Church and the Joe Pierce Scouting Award for extra special work in Scouting.

The final event at the Banquet is the announcing of the ten winners in no particular order. Each receives a plaque, a citation signed by the Governor and a \$1,000.00 savings bond.

For the past couple of years, the Lodge has also awarded a Teacher of the Year Award to an outstanding teacher in Norwood. Nominations are made by peers, and the final candidate is determined by an executive board. Sean Richardson, one of the past winners, was so in-

fluenced by the Lodge that he joined Orient Lodge and is one of the officers this year.

Members of Orient Lodge also hold does blood drives throughout the year and held one Memorial Day weekend. They encourage people to come to the drives by cooking pancakes, sausages and coffee for all who donate blood.

Orient Lodge also sponsors an ANGEL program to help school children who may need help with an emergency purchase, but the parents are unable to afford it. An example would be broken glasses that the family cannot purchase. The ANGEL fund is not meant to provide ongoing support but to help with specific individual needs.

The CHIP program, or Child

Identification Program, is also sponsored by the Masons of Massachusetts, partnering with the Massachusetts Crime Prevention Officers Association and the Massachusetts Dental Association. Orient Lodge, as part of this program, holds several events throughout the year in which identifying materials are donated and provided to families to assist in future identification should the grim task ever become necessary. CHIP has identified more than 275,000 children since its inception in 1988, and it continues to assist families today.

Materials provided by the program include a videotaped interview of the child that can be quickly distributed to the media in order to reach a huge audience; fingerprints; tooth print bite impressions, which are as unique as fingerprints and a cheek swab using a Q-tip to gently rub the inside of a child's cheek to gather DNA material. Worshipful Don mentioned that the Grand Lodge is now making an investment in this program so that all new digital equipment will be used.

Orient Lodge also works with the local Boy Scouts Troop 242. In order to start the celebrations of the Lodge's 150th anniversary next year, the local boy scouts helped with reupholstering of the all seats in the main Lodge room and painting of the benches and chairs. The rest of the room will be painted over the summer. The Lodge continues to work closely with the local troop as several of the mem-

bers of the Lodge are assistant Scout Masters.

The real celebrations for the 150th anniversary begin in September on the 11th with the Installation of Officers for the coming year. February, which is the actual anniversary date, will be highlighted by a charter re-dedication ceremony to which the Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts has been invited to officiate. In May there will be a special church service in which members and their guests will walk from the Lodge to the First Congregational Church in Norwood accompanied by the Shrine Bagpipers. Completing the celebrations of the day will be a harbor cruise with dinner.

Orient Lodge has 210 members with typically 50 coming to the meetings held on the second Monday of the month, from September to June. As previously mentioned, the building is host to other Masonic Lodges as well as Samoset Chapter of Eastern Star, a fraternal organization primarily for women but one in which both men and women participate, as well as a few other Masonic bodies. According to the Master, Worshipful Donald Barry, Orient Lodge likes to "keep the building as busy as possible and not have it like a museum."

Orient Lodge frequently holds Open Houses for those who are interested in joining the Lodge. If you would like more information, you can email the Lodge at [orientmaster@norwoodlight.com](mailto:orientmaster@norwoodlight.com).



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