

THE DRUG AND ALCOHOL ABUSE PROBLEM--  
LODGES CAN HELP!

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This Short Talk is specifically aimed at what individual lodges can do! However before undertaking any program please check with your Grand Lodge to see what may be doing on within your Grand Jurisdiction and what program your lodge could undertake that would best fit into an overall program within your state. We need to work together!

Editor

Freemasonry embodies the values that are needed to combat our nation's drug and alcohol abuse problem--belief in God, patriotic support for our country, and a full appreciation of and respect for others from all walks of life. It is only natural that Freemasons should feel the impulse to do something to help with youthful drug and alcohol abuse.

There is probably no one in this country who isn't aware of our nation's drug and alcohol abuse problem. There have been countless programs launched to address the problem in a variety of ways. From Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" public awareness campaign, to localcommunity treatment centers, to the solid community relations work of cops on the beat, there are many efforts already underway to stem the tide of drug and alcohol abuse.

**There are many things a Blue Lodge can do.**

However, a good idea and the best intentions are not always enough to increase awareness, raise money, or get participation in drug and alcohol abuse prevention. There are practical hurdles that must be overcome for a Blue Lodge's efforts to be successful. Here's a checklist of some of the questions that should be asked and answered before embarking on a drug and alcohol abuse prevention related effort.

- ≅ Where does the program fit in with what else is going on in the community?
- ≅ Is there or has there already been a similar effort that failed? Why?
- ≅ Is there another charitable organization or government agency or non-profit social service organization which might consider the proposed program to be a duplication?
- ≅ Whose cooperation would be beneficial or necessary to the success of the program?
- ≅ What budget might be needed for the program? Where will the money come from?
- ≅ How much time and what kind of time (i.e., evenings, weekends, days) will the program require?
- ≅ How should the program be run--i.e. would one Brother, or a Masonic family member or group, be most appropriately in charge of most of the project, or should there be a sizeable committee? Should the working group or committee include other representatives from the community?
- ≅ How should the program be publicized? What newspapers, television stations and radio stations should be contacted? Who will write news releases?

To get a sense for the importance of these questions, consider some of the observations of R.W. William V. Quackenbush, Second Queens (NY) Masonic District, who, after marching in a "Just Say No to Drugs" Parade, thought a poster contest in the public schools in his area would be a great way to help convince kids to stay away from drugs and alcohol. According to Brother Quackenbush, the following points are important to running a successful poster or essay contest:

- ≅ The brother who takes on this project should be retired, or otherwise have free time available, in view of the fact that schools are most easily visited during the day.
- ≅ There must be a budget. Decide on prizes and miscellaneous operating expenses and then solicit funds. Usually, each school should be allotted the same amount.
- ≅ Meet with the district director of Drug and Alcohol Abuse (or,

if none available, with the school principal) and get their support of the poster program.

≅ Prizes--U.S. Savings Bonds, plaques or something for the school's use (athletic equipment, musical keyboard, etc.). Remember that clothing as gifts presents size problems.

≅ Get appropriate local government officials to attend the award presentation ceremonies.

≅ Take pictures and prepare appropriate captions. If local newspapers do not cover the awards ceremony, take the pictures to them. Media coverage is very important.

≅ Posters can be displayed in banks, community centers, etc.

≅ Funds left over could be given to the kindergarten classes for a party.

What kinds of programs can a Blue Lodge sponsor to help with the drug and alcohol abuse problem? Here are some ideas. Many of the programs listed below have already been sponsored by Grand Lodges. Many can be done on a smaller scale by Blue Lodges or Blue Lodges can work with their Grand Lodges in support of these kinds of programs.

≅ Poster contest in the public schools- (See above.)

≅ Essay contest in the public schools on a drug and alcohol abuse prevention theme-- Bandera Lodge No. 1123 in Bandera, Texas awarded a computer to each of two winners-- a fifth grader and an eighth grader--as part of the contest it sponsors each March during Public Schools Week.

≅ Computers teaching about drug and alcohol abuse prevention--The Wisconsin Grand Lodge makes computer programs available to its Blue Lodges at a nominal cost. Students answer a series of questions.

Once the questions are completed, the student earns the reward of playing a follow-up computer game. The computer programs were originally developed with the assistance of the Grand Lodge of Kansas.

≅ Make lodge facilities available for 12-step meetings!

(Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Al-Anon, etc.)--Several U.S. Blue Lodges have made this their major program emphasis and have built warm relationships with people in the community who are part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

≅ Bumper stickers, for the cars of Blue Lodge members and family, to give evidence of Freemasonry's support--An attractive Masonic bumper sticker is available from the National Masonic Foundation at nominal cost.

≅ "Masonic Model" Training Video--Available from the Foundation at nominal cost, shows a "Masonic Model" trained team in action. Also available is a 5-minute "Message to the Brethren" from Brother Ernie Borgnine, useful for initiating a Lodge discussion of the problem of drug and alcohol abuse.

≅ Prepare and distribute literature and audio visual materials to Brethren, friends, and the community--American Canadian Grand Lodge has an active information-distribution campaign which includes incorporating drug and alcohol education into Masonic Youth programs; distributing four pamphlets--"Just Between You and Me, Brother", "For the Good of the Order", "Three Dangerous Words", and "Thought You'd Like To Know"--which contain discussions of the effects of alcoholism on adolescents and others, recognizing and preventing substance abuse in the family, and where to get help.  
(Sample copies of these pamphlets are available from the National Masonic Foundation.)

Grand Lodge of Utah distributed a tape, "How to Talk to Your Kids About Growing Up Without Drugs and Alcohol" and has sponsored, in cooperation with U.S. West Telephone, in-school talks by Ken Muhle, a recovering substance abuser who is a U.S. West employee.

≅ Tap the talents of the Brethren to provide a focus for a substance abuse prevention message--"Rob the Drummer", a Connecticut Brother who interweaves his considerable drumming skills with an anti-drug message for school children, has been the centerpiece of programs in schools.

In-school programs of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts feature a mascot--"Little No! No!"--which is featured on T-shirts and buttons distributed to elementary school children.

≅ Sponsor road races, walkathons, or similar athletic events--The

Rhode Island Grand Lodge holds an annual 5-mile "Race for Drug-Free Youth". Blue Lodges provide a wide range of support--fruit and juice for the runners, a public address system, first aid stations, sign painting, attendants to park cars, clowns for entertainment, messengers, T-shirt designs, race brochures, etc.

≅ Support existing programs in your community--Grand Lodge of Montana supports the "Center for Adolescent Development" with funds, use of lodge halls for meetings and workshops, assistance and leadership with community fund drives, and volunteer work by Brethren trained to be Community Coordinators. It also supports the Montana Teen Institute and Teens in Partnership with scholarships for high school students to attend their summer camps.

Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania provides financial support for the Maternal Addiction Project at the St. Francis Medical Center in Pittsburgh and the Gateway Rehabilitation Center, and numerous "Masonic Model" training sessions for Pennsylvania educators.

Grand Lodges of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maine, and others support DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), a nation-wide program featuring school presentations by specially trained police officers.

New York Grand Lodge worked with State officials to create a complete Drug-Free School Zones program.

≅ Dinners, shows~rder of Eastern Star of Michigan kicked off its "Because We Care" campaign with a Dinner Show featuring professional magic and comedy acts. Funds from this and the Annual "Family Christmas Session" were contributed to South Central Michigan Substance Abuse and to the National Foundation.

≅ Organize or participate in a parade highlighting Blue Lodge involvement in Drug and Alcohol Abuse Prevention--Warren G. Harding Lodge #260 in the State of Washington paraded its message before 30,000 spectaors in a "Viking Fest Parade". The National Masonic Foundation has copies of an excelent Blue Lodge report from Warren G. Harding #260 describing the role such an individual can play in making an effective plan to go on.

For a set of publications describing these and other Masonic programs that are fighting the drug abuse battle, contact the National Masonic Foundation.

If you have, or have an idea for, a program, let us know at the National Masonic Foundation, 1629 K St., NW, Suite 606, Washington, DC 20006.