

## LODGE SUCCESS STORY

Bro. Walter Kyllonen, PGJW, Grand Lodge of Maine and a member of St. Aspinquid Lodge sent the MIC a copy of his article on the success story of a lodge turnaround. We share this story with you.

### *The Right Thing to Do*

St. Aspinquid Lodge (York, ME) is a busy lodge doing outreach within and without the community. I often get asked why we do the things we do to help those in need. The most common answer I give is because it's "The right thing to do." There are many other reasons of course why we are so active in our community. We formed a Square and Compasses Club in 1998 because we had conducted a poll of our newest members to determine why they were not returning to lodge following their degree journey. The poll suggested Masons were looking to give back to their communities. Prior to 1998 there was not much happening in the way of activities in lodge other than meetings and a few scattered degree nights. The activities of the Square and Compasses Club created a paradigm.

A paradigm is a breakthrough with tradition and with old ways of thinking. The interesting aspect of the paradigm shift at St. Aspinquid was that we never stopped to think about breakthroughs in tradition or of changing old ways of thinking. We were trying to save a "sinking ship" by offering activities of interest to our newest members. The paradigm evolved as we became active in doing what our Masons were seeking—to fulfill their Masonic needs. It was only after a few years of success when we looked back to analyze the results of our plan for outreach that we realized a paradigm had occurred. The most significant thing we did to turn our lodge around was to change our attitude. We used to wait for things to happen but today we make things happen. We used to defeat ideas readily but today we brainstorm ways to make ideas work. We used to conduct most of our business within the four walls of the lodge but today we freely demonstrate our Masonry outside the four walls of the lodge. We used to consider the good work of the lodge to be our delivery of ritual but today we consider the good work of our lodge the demonstration of our tenets learned from our ritual.

What have been the results of the paradigm shift in St. Aspinquid Lodge? Well, for starters our Square and Compasses Club is now called a Couples Club. It turns out our ladies are just as interested in doing good things as we are. The latest outreach activity was to put on a benefit fundraiser for a family in a neighboring community whose home was destroyed by fire. The family members were total strangers to us but they were in need so the men and women of our Couples Club planned an all day event including; breakfast, a bake sale, a quilt raffle, a 50-50 raffle, and a supper.

The second thing that resulted from the fundraising effort for the family whose home was destroyed by fire was a stronger appreciation by members of the community for the value of our Lodge. Many of the donations were made by non-Masons who expressed gratitude for our willingness to help.

We average about two outreach activities per month and still hold around forty lodge meetings per year. The combination of formal lodge meetings and outreach activities has worked well for St. Aspinquid Lodge. In the past decade 124 new members have signed our by-laws. This includes newly raised Masons and Affiliates. Affiliates are joining in record numbers because they like what we do. Younger men are joining because they seek the opportunity to do worthwhile things. Since 1999 we have raised no less than 10 Master Masons per year. We are now enjoying the fruits of practicing "The Right Thing to Do." Outreach is clearly a function of our success.