

Northern Masonic Jurisdiction

SCOTTISH
RITE™

THE GRAND ALMONER'S FUND AT WORK

A PROMISE LIVED

HELP. AID. ASSIST.

SUMMER 2026

PROMISE LIVED

When the Grand Almoner's Fund was reinvigorated over 15 years ago, the reason was simple. It was a living embodiment of the commitment every Master Mason makes when he kneels at the altar and pledges to care for distressed Masons, their widows and orphans.

Over time, that commitment has translated into millions of dollars in support being raised and distributed to Masons facing unexpected hardship. But just as importantly, that care has also been extended to a vital part of the Masonic family: Masonic widows.

Behind the work of Freemasonry are women who play an essential role in the life of the Fraternity. When a Mason passes away, the community his wife helped build should not be lost along with him.

That's why the White Flower Society was formed as an extension of the Grand Almoner's Fund to support Masonic widows in need. I joined the White Flower Society because I believe in this mission and in caring for the women who have given so much to this Fraternity.

In this update, you will read about a widow whose Masonic family rallied around her after her husband's passing, ensuring she was not forgotten. You'll also learn about a group of Scottish Rite ladies fostering community and connection while raising financial support for the White Flower Society. And you will hear from supporters who believe in and sustain this important work.

Over the years, I've had the privilege of hearing from widows who have received life-changing gifts from the Scottish Rite when they had nowhere else to turn. I am proud to work for an organization that lives out its commitment so that no Masonic widow ever has to walk alone.

Thank you for making this work possible.



Bridget Steele

Bridget Steele

**SENIOR DIRECTOR
OF CHARITIES**

A PROMISE LIVED

THE GRAND ALMONER'S FUND AT WORK

Brian & Jenn Amato

Brian and Jenn Amato were a typical American family. He worked in HVAC, and she was a nurse. The two had known each other since high school, becoming friends as teenagers before building a life together in New York's Hudson Valley.

Jenn was the introvert, Brian the extrovert: a devoted "girl dad" who loved camping in the Catskills, singing as the lead vocalist in a local band, and helping others whenever he could.

**JENN DESCRIBES
HER HUSBAND AS A
BRIGHT FORCE. "HE
JUST LOVED LIFE.
HE REALLY DID,"
SHE SAID.**

Brian was first introduced to Freemasonry through a close friend. When he shared his interest, Jenn encouraged him to join. After becoming a member of Wappingers Lodge #0671, Brian jumped right in to lodge activities. In Freemasonry, he found more than fellowship. He found a Brotherhood that would one day carry his family through their hardest days.

WHEN EVERYTHING CHANGED

Around the time Brian turned 50, he began searching for answers to some persistent health issues. After multiple hospital stays and misdiagnoses, he learned the cause of his illness: stage four colon cancer.

“That was a shock. It really was,” Jenn said. “They told us that it was treatable, but it wasn’t curable. So that’s when the clock started.”

As Brian began aggressive treatment, Jen did her best to balance work, their daughters, and the demands of his care. Through it all, the Masonic Brotherhood was there.



“They would take him to appointments, or come and check on him, or even walk our dog. That was huge. He just constantly had that support,” Jenn said. The lodge also started a GoFundMe page to help take care of the family.

As the disease progressed, Jenn couldn’t bear the thought of taking care of terminally ill

patients at work while someone else was caring for Brian. So she made the decision to stop working and stay home with him.

“I don’t regret that. Because I would have never been able to get that time back,” she said. “It put a huge financial strain on us, but I just didn’t care. It was just about time, and time just started moving faster and faster.”

SAYING GOODBYE

By October of 2025, Jenn faced the reality of having to say goodbye to her husband. “He passed how he wanted it: home with his kids and his wife, and that was what we talked about for the longest time,” she shared.

Jenn said Brian had requested his service be held at the lodge because he wanted everyone to know how important the Masons were to him. And they continued to play an important role in his family’s lives after he was gone.

“The day of Brian’s passing, they were the first people here,” Jen recalled.

As the reality of the loss set in, the weight she felt was compounded by financial uncertainty. “I’m still grieving at that point, and I have all these bills,” she said. “I was walking around for days in a fog wondering, ‘What do I do next?’”

A LIVING OBLIGATION

That’s when a group of Scottish Rite Brothers arranged for the family to receive funding from the



Brian with his Masonic Brothers

Grand Almoner's Fund to help Jenn get back on her feet. The gift came as a complete surprise to her.

"I remember when they came to the house, I was just dumbfounded. I was blown away," she said.

"I just collapsed crying. It was such a relief, because I knew that it was one less thing that I had to worry about."

Jenn hopes that sharing Brian's story can help raise awareness about the importance of colon cancer screening. "I tell people all the time, please get a colonoscopy, because had he done the colonoscopy a year or two before, it might have been stage two or three."

AN ENDURING CONNECTION

For many, support fades after the initial loss of a family member. But Brian's Masonic Brothers continue to live out their obligation. "I still talk to quite a few of them, and they still reach out to me," Jenn said. "I think that's what really drove Brian to want to be a Mason. It was a matter

of helping people regardless of what you were going to get in return."

Ill. Brother Bob Siebold was one of the Scottish Rite members who delivered the Grand Almoner's Fund check to Jenn. He believes providing support like this, both financially and emotionally, is a reflection of what Freemasonry is meant to be.

"I truly believe what you put out, you get back," he said. "It's been an honor to for me to be able to be involved. We'll always have a connection."

Jenn has felt that connection every step of the way. "They still keep coming," she said. "There's still that friendly text message, 'Hey, how you doing? Are you okay?' and that means a lot."

In the end, her gratitude is simple but profound. "Thank you. I know they may just sound like words, but it's made the most difficult time in my entire life just a bit more bearable."

And in that, the promise of Brotherhood is not just spoken. It is lived.

LADIES OF THE RITE

WOMEN SUPPORTING WOMEN

The Ladies of the Rite began as an idea to fill a hole that felt very evident in the Masonic community in Michigan. Ladies events tied to Masonic gatherings existed, but it was difficult to get the word out and to stay connected outside of these structured meetings a few times a year.



“Ladies of the Rite was created to change that,” said founder Sarah Freeman, whose husband Travis Freeman is a Michigan Scottish Rite Mason. “The goal was to ensure that every lady – regardless of where she was from – felt invited, included, and part of something meaningful.”

What began as simple gatherings has grown into something more. The group now has its own logo, branded clothing and social media to help foster connection. Today they meet regularly, about once a month, and often independently from Masonic meetings.

“By giving these gatherings a name and identity, and by encouraging women to take an active role in

planning and communication, we began building a true sense of sisterhood,” Sarah shared.

Trish Marshbanks, wife of Michigan Deputy Tim Marshbanks, has seen firsthand how quickly the group has grown through simple, intentional outreach. “As new members come in, we collect emails and just keep expanding,” she said. “It can be as simple as just getting together.”

The connection goes beyond social to offering support when someone in the group is experiencing challenges. One member was battling cancer, and the group came together to send her a care package and show her that she had a community behind her.

“To be able to say, ‘You are not alone.’ Sometimes you just need to say it out loud,” Trish said.



In addition, the group has chosen the White Flower Society as the charity to benefit from their fundraising efforts, presenting the proceeds at recent Giving Tuesday events.

Scottish Rite First Lady Vickie Wheeler loves the connection that has come from Ladies of the Rite in her home state of Michigan and believes that the intergenerational makeup of the group is one of its greatest assets. “You have women who have been around a long time alongside those who are just getting started. It creates a really supportive environment,” she said.

A special effort is made to welcome the wives of new members to begin to build their connection to the Fraternity. “There are women who come in and say, ‘I don’t know anything about this,’ and that’s okay. It becomes a place where they can learn and feel included,” Vickie explained.

The group also includes widows of Scottish Rite members in their

events and outreach. “In the past, a husband would pass away, and you’d never see the wives again,” Vickie said. “To have no association with anyone anymore just because the husband’s gone? It shouldn’t be like that. So they’re invited and they’re coming.” Vickie would love to see the group continue to be replicated in other states.

“It’s so important to be available to each other. It can start small like this, and then pretty soon it can grow into something so much bigger.”

At its core, that growth is about more than numbers. It’s about ensuring that no woman – whether new to the Scottish Rite family or facing life after the loss of her husband – is left behind. Through friendship, outreach, and support, Ladies of the Rite is helping to ensure that connection endures.



First Lady Vickie Wheeler & Trish Marshbanks

WHY WE GIVE

“Having lost our darling mother Sandy at the end of May 2025 after a long and courageous battle against multiple cancers, my wife Emily and I were left with a huge hole in our lives. Losing a life partner is one of the few losses I can imagine being even more devastating.”



Shortly after graduating college in 2002, we lost my father Dave to a massive heart attack, making my mother a young widow with two headstrong young men to finish raising. I saw firsthand not only the devastation this kind of loss can bring on, but also the strength it codified in my mother and our family as a whole. There were many dark chapters, but ultimately his loss made me a better man and led me to the love of my life Emily.

My mother was a source of great light and love in this universe, not only for those close to her but to every soul she touched along the way. She would have wanted us to share in the White Flower Society's mission to

ensure that no Masonic widow ever feels that they are alone in their time of greatest need.

We donate to many charitable Masonic endeavors, but this one in particular spoke to me, and with the timing of her passing we immediately answered the call. She was referred to as Saint Sandy by many that knew and loved her, and while her physical presence is no longer on the earthly plain, we know that her spirit, soul and love live on through all the lives she touched.”

Emily & Jonathan Buck, 32°
VALLEY OF BOSTON



Of the six core values of the Scottish Rite, the one that most exemplifies outreach beyond personal beliefs and behavior is ‘Service to Humanity.’ The Scottish Rite Charities exist to guide us in doing just that. And the White Flower Society puts the focus on our ladies, especially our widowed sisters.

Having experienced a lengthy, unplanned separation during our military service, my wife Chris knows full well the value and comfort others can bring.

Indeed, our Brothers can feel somewhat at ease knowing that the White Flower Society is there to assist their wives during a most challenging time.

Our ladies stand with us throughout our lives, and this honored instrument allows us to stand by them. Please join Chris and me as we continue to support this important program with our material support and our lasting love.

60 YEARS OF WEDDED BLISS & COUNTING!

Chris and Thomas Moe, 33°
VALLEY OF COLUMBUS

Colonel Thomas Moe, 33°, is a retired U.S. Air Force pilot, Vietnam War veteran, and former prisoner of war who spent more than five years in captivity. A recipient of numerous military honors and a longtime Scottish Rite Mason, his life has been defined by courage, faith, and service to others.

THE WHITE FLOWER SOCIETY

The White Flower Society is dedicated to providing assistance for Masonic widows and their families in need, ensuring they are never forgotten. Membership in the White Flower Society reflects a donation or pledge of \$5,000 payable over 10 years.

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Your Gift

MEANS THE WORLD

As a thank-you for contributing
or pledging \$5,000 or more
to the White Flower Society,
members will receive a white
flower brooch and lapel pin to
remind them of the unbreakable
bond of support we share.



Learn More By Visiting
WHITEFLOWERSOCIETY.ORG

THE COMMANDER'S CIRCLE



The Commander's Circle is a special group of donors who have chosen to honor their commitment to the principles of our Fraternity through their generous support of the Grand Almoner's Fund. Their passion and their giving are a true and lasting expression of "Masons caring for Masons."



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