

## General Grand Chapter Community Service Projects

### “Get Involved, Work Together and Make a Difference”

How many times have you been asked “What is the Order of the Eastern Star and what do they do?” We need to let the people in our communities know that we are a charitable organization, financially assisting local organizations, serving and supporting all age groups within our communities as well as giving support to our state and international projects.

Community Service translates to Community Involvement. Our Committee is encouraging our members to go beyond the doors of our chapter rooms to make a difference in our communities. We realize a General Grand Chapter Committee cannot choose one project for all chapters to complete. The chapter size, number of members, rural or small town communities, or urban settings dictate the project chosen.

There are many phrases throughout our Ritual to give us guidance as we plan our projects. “Charity” and “charitable” can be found many times, as well as “faithful to our obligations”, “faithful to the demands of honor and justice”, “voice of duty”, “aid to victims of poverty” and “to love one another”. Perhaps you could translate “widow and orphan” to our “senior population and children”. You do not need to look far from home to find a need.

Many of our Chapters are already doing fantastic projects within their communities and we encourage you to continue them. Our committee would like for each chapter to choose one project, which we are calling the “Stars on the March” projects, to emphasize our charitable efforts during this Triennium. We are not asking for your money. If your project raises money, 100% is to stay within your community. We are asking for your time and energy to help your communities and to plant a positive image of our beautiful Order.

Most of us have witnessed the initiation ceremony many times over the years. There is one phrase in the Worthy Matron’s opening remarks to the candidates where I smile and look around the room. It reminds me of the greatest benefit I receive as a member of our Order and that is “cheerful companionship and social enjoyment”, which we can use to plan, implement and complete our projects while our communities observe our efforts.

Many of our members are unable to attend our meetings. We should prioritize our commitment to extend to these members, and others in our community, our time and thoughtful deeds. We encourage the chapter and **all members** to send cards, not only to members, but also to family members, friends and neighbors. Whether it is a card of Sympathy, Celebration, Congratulations or Thinking of You, we are letting the recipient know we care.

The other project is already getting a lot of attention. We are being encouraged to march during this Triennium. We encourage all chapters and members, along with their families, friends and neighbors to become involved in our “March of the Monarchs” project. Many of our communities no longer enjoy the beauty of the monarch butterflies appearing each year.

The story of the Monarch butterfly is fascinating. They migrate to the southern coast of California, the high elevation of the fir forest in central Mexico and the southern part of Florida in the winter. Each

spring, they begin their over 3000 mile migration north through the States and into Canada. Along the way, the females lay their eggs **only** on the underneath side of the milkweed leaf. It takes four to five weeks for the egg to transform through the various stages of the life cycle to finally become an adult butterfly.

Experts have estimated the number of Monarchs reaching the eastern part of the United States and Canada has diminished by 90% over the past twenty years. A decline in the milkweed plant in much of the United States is likely a major factor. It is estimated over a million acres of the habitat of the Monarch in the United States alone is lost each year.

The Departments of Natural Resources in many states are encouraging individuals to plant a plot of milkweeds on their properties along with the native plants that are prime nectar sources for adult Monarchs. Our Committee's goal is to see the pictures of hundreds of Monarch Butterfly Gardens throughout our Grand Jurisdictions during this Triennium.

Our "March of the Monarch" project is great as it fills many objectives of our Community Service Committee's goals. We need all members to participate in our projects and this is an excellent project for our male members to become involved. Let's get our families involved, children and grandchildren along with your next door neighbor who comes over to see what you are doing. Share your seeds with them, and also plant the seed that they too can become a part of our organization whose goal is to serve humanity.

Many cities and small communities have public areas. With permission, plant a Butterfly Garden and make sure you put up a sign acknowledging the Order of the Eastern Star. And don't forget the property around your Masonic buildings. If you do not have a yard, put a pot on your porch with one of the plants that are a prime nectar source for the Monarchs.

There are many websites that will tell the Monarch story and also have reliable resources for what you need to complete your own Monarch Garden. **One seed can make a difference. We just need for you to plant it.**

Check out the OES Journal's website and the General Grand Chapter's website for updated information about our projects.

**When "Stars are on the March", we will "MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND MAKE IT HAPPEN"**