

Truth, Charity and Loving Kindness - The Order of the Eastern Star

There is one long standing organization in The Pas working on knitting, crocheting, sewing, and distributing hundreds of handmade items such as mitts, toques, headbands, slippers, shawls, and lap blankets for those in our Northern Region who are less fortunate. These talented members collect wool and donations to continue to create items that will be useful to those in need or for those in hospital or sick at home. They fundraise and collect aluminum cans and aluminum tabs which are donated to the Shriners Hospital Transportation Fund which is earmarked to assist sick children living in the North while being treated at the Shriners Hospital. The Order of the Eastern Star (OES) members are very intricately connected with the Freemasons and Shriners. The OES has been present in our community since June 4, 1930 offering 90 years of service to The Pas. The original founders of The Pas Chapter are recognized in the Charter that is proudly displayed on the walls of the Masonic Hall. Designated as a Fraternal organization, not a service club, they do not issue charitable tax receipts, but contribute much goodwill and charitable work. They have weathered 9 decades of service, supporting bursaries to the high school, awards to the local Music Festival and donating hand crafted, book and toy packages, and personal hygiene care packages to the hospitals, homeless shelters, Fischer Place, women's shelters, and schools within The Pas, Flin Flon, Swan River, Thompson and Churchill communities.

The Order of the Eastern Star members are the wives, daughters, mothers, sisters, and grandmothers of a Master Mason. It seemed complicated at first, but once I researched deeper, it all came together. To belong to the Eastern Star, you must have a Masonic relationship. The Freemasons organization is one of the largest and most widely known fraternities in the world. The Pas Chapter of the Masons has been operating longer, serving our community for 106 years. The basic purpose of the Freemasons is to "make good men better". They try to place emphasis on the individual by strengthening character and improving moral and spiritual outlook while broadening mental horizons. When a member has completed the third and the final degree, he becomes a Master Mason and is then eligible to become a Shriner. All Shriners are Masons, but not all Masons are Shriners. Shriners are a spin off from Freemasonry. Shriners encourage the spirit of Fun and camaraderie which you see in the color and fun in their costumes and their tiny cars. They want to bring a smile to the face of all children, both healthy and sick.

Jobs Daughters (for daughters of Masons) and DeMolay (for sons of Masons) are the children of Master Masons, children aging from 12 to 17 years. At 18 years, children age out and are encouraged to join the Order of the Eastern Star or the Masons or both. The Order of the Eastern Star is the only fraternal organization in the world that accepts both men and women members. Joanne Wain, Past Worthy Matron, commented that "We are called the Masonic Family as we all work together very closely. It is unique in The Pas as the Order of the Eastern Star members support the work of Masons and Shriners and vice versa".

The Order of the Eastern Star is linked to the bible, but it is not a religious organization. They expect each member to express a belief and a trust in a Supreme Being. Although the order is based on some teachings from the Bible, they operate as a brotherhood/sisterhood with common ties in pursuit of betterment of the member and community which overflows into other parts of life. The work of the Order of the Eastern star includes memorizing the work of the women in the bible. The five pointed star with each point inspiring character building lessons by 5 biblical women figures: Adah, virtue of

obedience to the will of God; Ruth, shares the lesson of Honor and Justice; Martha, virtue of loyalty to Family and Friends; Esther, shares the lesson of Faith and Trust in God and Everlasting Life and Electra, shares the lesson of Charity and Hospitality.

It is not a secret where this group meets in The Pas. The Masonic Hall is right downtown, 214 Edwards avenue, identified with the Masonic symbol in the window. It is here that the Masonic family meets on a regular basis. This is the home of the Masons, Shriners, and the Order of the Eastern Star.

Joanne Wain is one local member who has been involved for 48 years. She started as a child within Jobs Daughters as her grandfather was a Mason. She and her family values the Shriners Hospital first hand. Her father suffered from polio when he was 2 years old and spent 4 years of his childhood living with the support of an iron lung. Her father was treated and survived thanks to the Shriners Hospital, which at the time operated at a much smaller and different location. She grew up appreciating the value and lifesaving work of the Shriners Hospital.

Although there are only 3 Shriners left in The Pas, they continue to collect aluminum cans and aluminum tabs which hold value and create revenue which is donated to the Shriners Hospital Transportation Fund. One member of the Shriners recently developed his own can crusher. Arnold Johnson, one of the three remaining Shriners in this area, designed a mechanical devise to automate the aluminum can crushing. The group take the cans to Winnipeg and donate all the funds collected to the transportation fund. This fund supports sick children from The Pas, Flin Flon and Snow Lake covering costs associated with accommodation, meals, and transportation while at the hospital from this fundraising. It is specifically tagged for sick children under the age of 18 years who require assistance during their illness while being a patient at the Shriners Hospital.

When Joanne Wain turned 18, she joined the Order of the Eastern Star. Today, she is an officer in the local Chapter with an intention to continue to contribute to the work of the OES as long as she can. Although membership is dwindling throughout the province, The Pas Chapter continues to operate. The dedication of members is incredibly unique. Members come from Flin Flon and Thompson once a month to ensure that the monthly meeting can be conducted legally. In order to conduct a legitimate meeting 18 members must be in attendance. Members drive from Flin Flon and Thompson and stay overnight in The Pas to ensure that The Pas Chapter can continue to conduct their work. This is a true spirit of dedication.

Carol Girling, one Eastern Star member who worked many years with The Pas Chapter was chosen as Manitoba's own appointed Worthy Grand Electa to the OES General Grand Chapter serving from 2018 to 2021. It is an incredible honor to be selected into the Grand Chapter family. Carol is gathering memories that will last a lifetime, travelling across Canada and United States at an international level and enjoying the work and friendships made within the OES.

The oldest member in this area is Jeanne Fell who lives in Flin Flon. Last year Jeanne knit and donated over 500 pairs of mittens. The Eastern Star members put together various care packages containing mittens, toques, headbands, children's books, and various soap, shampoo, personal hygiene items, warm socks, basically care packages to distribute to those in need. Mittens and winter toques were donated this winter to Kelsey Elementary School, Opasquia School and to the older children at Mary Duncan School. Members also knit shawls and lap blankets for those who are sick or struggling with disease or cancer. The comfort of a warm shawl or lap blanket helps to keep those who are sick warm.

The members have also created gift bags for kids which include a toy and a book. They have donated to the Hospital, Fischer Place, Aurora House, Oscars Place, Flin Flon Friendship Center, and the Flin Flon Women's Shelter. Their Outreach extends to Flin Flon, Swan River, Thompson, and Churchill, sending items to these communities to distribute to those in need. They accept wool to continue to knit items that will be used and deeply appreciated by their recipients. People donate as they know that the wool will be used for a good cause.

The Eastern Star supports Oscars Place by providing warm mitts and socks to Lorraine Packo Ballantyne who ensures that these items reach those who need them. They also work with Lorraine to provide lunch for the homeless and will continue to do this once again as the restrictions are lifted.

OES is always looking for ways to fundraise and recently held their Christmas Hamper Draw and 50/50 Christmas Cash Draw.

Not so long ago over 100 chapters of The Order of the Eastern Star existed in Manitoba. This is not the case today. As with so many organizations, membership is dwindling. There are only 7 chapters left in Manitoba with a Chapter in The Pas. Joanne Wain is just one of many OES members that has made a life of contributing to the community in many ways that may go unnoticed. She has genuinely enjoyed the work and plans to continue to be involved as long as she is able. Young people do not seem to want to join this type of organization, but there are many ways that they/you can contribute. Little things go a long way. Donate your aluminum cans, aluminum tabs from the cans, donate wool, purchase a draw ticket, or make a cash donation. OES members give a part of their time to many projects that benefit our community and support those in a time of need when down and out or sick. If you know of someone who is at home and needs the support of a shawl or lap blanket, please contact one of the members of the OES. They are there to help.

Thank you to the members of The Order of the Eastern Star for 90 years of service and contributions to the tri community. Your work is valuable and acknowledged, dedicated to truth, charity, and loving kindness. Continue to Make Shift Happen

Submitted by Denise Duncan – Make Shift Happen