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Membership

*I once heard someone describing the value of Freemasonry to a potential member as “teaching you public speaking.” That always stuck with me because Freemasonry does *not* teach public speaking. At no point has Freemasonry taught public speaking. That’s what a Toastmasters Club is for, where they literally do teach the art and craft of public speaking (and having gone through a Toastmaster’s Speechcraft program, it is well worth the time).*

I am not making light of the statement that Freemasonry teaches public speaking. Quite the reverse. While Freemasonry does not instruct men in the fundamentals of public speaking, the fraternity does encourage a member to develop and master his own abilities to inform, persuade, motivate, debate, and speak on either a formal or impromptu basis.



Leadership isn’t necessarily presiding over a meeting. It can be stepping up to replace the sidewalk in front of the Lodge, as the Brethren from Bellevue Lodge #325 are doing.

That’s the true value of Freemasonry. It doesn’t build character; Freemasonry reveals character. Men come to the fraternity unaware of the latent skills they possess, and may have never had an opportunity to develop. Men who are active in their Lodge or Masonic bodies find themselves developing an action-oriented approach to leadership. These skills include mastering collaboration and effective communication with other men with vastly different abilities and backgrounds, and often completely opposite views points. The men who become successful Masons (whatever

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plan on it! a RiteCare vision for the future

Those who study philanthropy and giving have noted an interesting dichotomy for 2022.

While the United States gross domestic product (GDP) grew in the third quarter of the year, consumer confidence - signaling how Americans feel about the discretionary money they have available to give to charity - remains low. Rising interest rates have raised fears that the country may enter a recession.

But from my own perspective, 2022 was one of the stronger fundraising years we have had in a while. The Walk for RiteCare in Hastings raised more than \$6,000 for speech therapy for kids in central

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Orient Calendar

- Jan 16..... Installation of 2023 Officers (O)
- Jan 4, 11, 18, 25 Wednesday Lunches (H)
- Jan 27..... Scotch Tasting (O)
- Jan 28..... Robert Burns Celebration (L)
- Jan 4, 11, 18, 25 Hastings Valley Lunch (H)
- Feb 2-4 Annual Communication (Kearney, NE)
- Feb 1, 8, 15, 22..... Wednesday Lunches (H)
- Mar 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Wednesday Lunches (H)
- Apr 20, 21, 22 Omaha Spring Reunion (O)
- May 17..... Spring Outing at Papillion Gun Club (O)
- May 26-27..... Alliance Spring Reunion (A)

**Please check with your
Valley for most current updates
to Scottish Rite events**

Lodge of Perfection meetings:

Alliance, 4th Friday of each month

Jan 27, Feb 24, Mar 24, Apr 28, May 26, June 23, July 28

Hastings, 1st Tuesday of each month

Jan 3, Feb 7, Mar 7, Apr 4, May 2, June 6, July TBD

Lincoln, 3rd Wednesday of each month

Jan 18, Feb 15, Mar 22, Apr 19, May 17, June 21, July 19

Omaha, 3rd Monday of each month

Jan 16, Feb 20, Mar 20, Apr 17, May 15, June 19, July 17

**For more information,
contact the General Secretary in your Valley**

- Alliance Valley (308) 762-4324
- Phil Odom (Hastings) (402) 462-5813
- Bruce Wood (Lincoln) (402) 435-2144
- John Maxell (Omaha)..... (402) 342-1300

THE NEXT STEP IN ALLIANCE

After 14 years at the helm of the Valley of Alliance, Gene Gatti, 33° announced his retirement as General Secretary at the end of December, 2022.



He was appointed General Secretary by Ill. Brother Charles V. Sederstrom, Jr., 33° in August, 2008. His first big project for the Valley was removing the old steam boiler in the basement. He oversaw the replacement of the aging and inefficient cold water cooling system with energy-efficient heat pumps, dramatically reducing utility bills. Under Gene’s leadership, the Valley installed new LED sign for the building, replaced the worn Lodge carpet with a checkerboard style reminiscent of King Solomon’s Temple. He also oversaw installation of new carpeting downstairs, refinishing the dining room floor, purchasing new tables and chairs, and replacing the roof.

In 2018, Gene invited Alliance Community Table to use the Scottish Rite dining room. With USDA-approved kitchen and dining room facilities, Community Table continues to provide free meals to anyone needing it.

“ I appreciate Gene’s efforts to maintain the relevance of Scottish Rite Masonry in western Nebraska and wish him the best in retirement.

~Dan Wellendorf, 33°

Gene was born in Erie County, Pennsylvania and served in the U.S. Navy from 1961 through 1965. He attended the Electronic Tech School, Army Signal Corp, and served in London, England and Asmara, Ethiopia. After a career in law enforcement, Gene came to Alliance, Nebraska. He was raised in Alliance Lodge #183 in June, 2006 and has served as Lodge Secretary since October, 2006. He joined the Alliance Valley Scottish Rite, receiving his 32° in November, 2006. He was invested a Knight Commander of the Court of Honour in October, 2011, and Coroneted a 33° Inspector General Honorary in October, 2015.

Gene has provided efficient leadership for the Valley, and his work organizing Reunions, Scottish Rite meetings around western Nebraska, and overseeing building repairs will be truly missed.

Dan Wellendorf, 33°, Deputy to the Supreme Council, is working with the leadership in the Alliance Valley to determine Gene’s successor.



Hastings Valley Celebrates Feast of Tishri

The Hastings Valley Scottish Rite celebrated their annual Feast of Tishri on Tuesday, November 15, 2022. Thirty four Scottish Rite Masons and their guests attended.

Venerable Master Daniel Deffenbaugh, 32° KCCH opened the Lodge of Perfection and, after the opening prayer, Master of Ceremonies, George White, 33° welcomed guests, as the young ladies of Bethel #8 Job's Daughters served an extraordinary dinner of prime rib. Our dinner was prepared by Chef Monte Malouf, 33°. As always, his dinners are not one to miss!

After the meal, Eminent Commander Randal Jones, 33° opened the Hastings Council of Kadosh to begin the Feast. George White read an explanation of the Jewish celebration, with Brother Dan Deffenbaugh reading the Hebrew prayers. Members gave the traditional toasts, and guests were offered the opportunity to propose their own toasts. Several members rose to toast the members of the Armed Services, our Masonic ladies' organizations, our educators, our farmers who feed the world, and those members who have come before us.

Our guest speaker was the Reverend Andy Springer, Hospice Chaplin and Pastor at the First United Congregational Church in Grand Island. Rev. Spring presented a program on working with hospice patients. He gave several examples of how his work affected him personally and professionally. The theme of his remarks touched on our search for freedom. We strive for freedom, he said. But most people are beholden to the things they must do, like our jobs or our responsibilities, which hinder us from the path toward freedom. What gives us true freedom, he said, is not a life marked by fear or regret, but in our relationship with others. This includes acknowledging our faults, forgiving others, offering gratitude, and giving unconditional love. This gives us the true freedom from the burdens that hang upon us throughout life.

After some parting words from Dan Wellendorf, 33°, Deputy to the Supreme Council, the evening closed with a standing ovation recognizing Chef Monte, the ladies of Bethel #8, and the volunteers who made the 2022 Feast of Tishri a successful evening.



The Hastings Valley welcomed four new 32° members at the Reunion on October 15, 2022.

(left to right) Greg Seiler, 32° KCCH, Dan Wellendorf, 33°, Corby Fiagle, 32°, Byron Jensen, 32°, Ryan Hall, 32°, Jackson Osborn, 32°, and Richard Johnson, 32° KCCH



Scottish Rite Joins Downtown Hastings Halloween

Phil Odom, 33°, Monte Malouf, 33°, Ron Nielsen, 32° KCCH, Randy Jones, 33°, and Mike Small, 33° participated in the Downtown Hastings Trick or Treat on October 31st. All ghouls and goblins were invited to trick or treat at area businesses, including the Hastings Masonic Center. General Secretary Phil Odom estimated that they gave 400 pieces of Halloween candy to children during the course of the evening. The Scottish Rite and Tehama Shrine participated in this year's event. Many children posed for pictures with the Big Shriner, George Washington and the three Kings.



LINCOLN SCOTTISH RITE HOSTS 2ND TRUNK OR TREAT HALLOWEEN

The Valley of Lincoln hosted the second annual Trunk or Treat Halloween event for RiteCare kids on Sunday, October 16th at the Lincoln Scottish Rite.

In 2021, the Scottish Rite welcomed about 20 families for a socially-distanced Trunk or Treat. This year, however, more than 150 families came, with children trick-or-treating among more than twenty cars decorated for Halloween. Different themes included Rapunzel's castle, a gumball machine, a farm, Harry Potter, and the Order of DeMolay. Organizations decorating trunks represented the RiteCare Clinicians, RiteCare alumni families, Down Syndrome Association for Families, Autism Services of Lincoln, and ARC of Lincoln, as well as the Nebraska Student Speech-Language-Hearing Association (NSSLHA). The NSSLHA students also picked the best costume and the best-decorated trunk.

"The Trunk or Treat was a great example of how RiteCare welcomes Lincoln families of all abilities and fosters an inclusive and fun environment for the kids to enjoy. Families were so appreciative that their children were able to participate in their own way. We even brought adapted trick or treat tags and bracelets with AAC (augmentative alternative communication) symbols on them so that children who have difficulty communicating, 'trick or treat,' 'candy,' or 'thank you' would have the option to do so," said RiteCare Clinician Holly Schlautman. "And of course, the kids loved getting buckets full of candy."

"It's a great experience," Bruce Wood, 33°, General Secretary, said. "The Scottish Rite Masons love seeing all the kids in their costumes, seeing all the kids feel included, and feel special."

Photos: Top left, Car decorated as a farm; Top right, RiteCare Clinician Holly Schlautman as Rapunzel; Bottom left, Ed Bennett, 32° KCCH and Nick Hanson, 32°; Bottom right, Dennis Hecht, 32°



Top: Jeffrey Axelson, 32° leading a toast; Bottom: Julie and Russ Reno, 32° KCCH

Lincoln Valley Celebrates the Feast of Tishri

Thirty-five Scottish Rite Masons and their ladies attended the Feast of Tishri on Sunday, October 23rd at the Lincoln Scottish Rite.

Dennis Hecht, 32°, Eminent Commander for the Council of Kadosh, presided and planned the evening, and Ed Bennett, 32° served as Master of Ceremonies. Edward Bennett, 32° opened the Feast of Tishri, speaking about the meaning of the Feast. Members then gave the obligatory toasts, including to Dan Wellendorf, 33°, Deputy to the Supreme Council for Nebraska, the Grand Lodge of Nebraska, and the Supreme Council for the Scottish Rite.

Andy Seachord, Gary Olsen, and Nick Furchert prepared a fantastic dinner for members with roasted chicken, rice with a mango sauce, and followed by a baked apple with brown sugar, nuts, and caramel sauce. Members and guests enjoyed beautiful harp music throughout dinner, played by Kim Meyer.

After dinner, the Lincoln Scottish Rite welcomed our guest speaker, Rev. Leanne Master from the Southern Heights Presbyterian Church. Leann spoke about

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Tom Brummett, 33° and Ralph Joos, 33°



Knights of St. Andrew serving breakfast



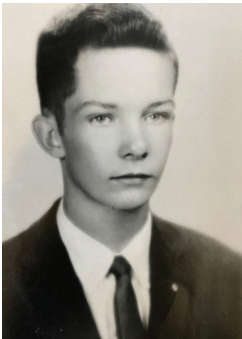
Danette Smith, Executive Director for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services joins 2022 Friend of RiteCare honoree Tony Green

Fall 2022 Reunion Honors Ralph V. Joos, Jr., 33°

Six new Brethren joined the Valley of Omaha at the Fall 2022 Reunion on November 17, 18, and 19th. Thirteen Scottish Rite Degrees were exemplified, and as always, the work was done very well. John Maxell, 33° commended the Wardrobe Crew, Sound and Lights crew, Culinary Masters, and Knights of St. Andrew for a Reunion that ran smoothly. “Our Valley is fortunate to have so many Brethren step up for two evenings and a long Saturday, donating their labor and their time to put on a Reunion that is one of the best in the Southern Jurisdiction,” John said.



The Supreme Council recently changed the By-Laws, removing restrictions on naming Reunions after Brethren still alive. The Valley leapt at the opportunity to recognize Ralph V. Joos, Jr., 33° for an astonishing 60 year commitment to Freemasonry. Ralph was no stranger to Freemasonry, being active in the Order of DeMolay as a boy. He was raised a Master Mason at age 21, joining Bee Hive Lodge #184, the Scottish Rite, and Tangier Shrine in 1962.



Ralph met his beloved wife Judy when he was Master Councilor of DeMolay in 1958, and Judy was the Chapter Sweetheart and a member of the Rainbow Girls. They were married in 1963 and had two daughters, Lori and Julie. Once the girls were grown, Ralph began getting truly involved in the Scottish Rite and Shrine. He was a charter member of Tangier’s Racer Unit since 1963, and served as Potentate of Tangier in 2008. He continues to be active at Tangier as Treasurer.

Ralph served as Venerable Master of Kadosh for the Omaha Consistory in 2011. He was invested as Knight Commander of the Court of Honour in 2007, and was Coroneted a 33° Inspector General Honorary in 2015. Ralph continues to be active in the Scottish Rite as a member of the Culinary Masters and will undertake projects around the building whenever he is needed.

Julie surprised Ralph, flying in from Salt Lake City, and with her sister Lori, presented Ralph his 60-year pin at the Banquet.

Ralph and Judy enjoyed 52 years together, camping and travelling. Since Judy passed in August, 2015, the Scottish Rite and Tangier Shrine has continued to be a haven and source of support for Ralph.

When asked his secret to being a 60-year Freemason, Ralph said “It’s easy. Join young and stay active until you’re old.” Nebraska Freemasons have been very fortunate to call Ralph ‘Brother,’ and the Scottish Rite and Tangier Shrine are proud to honor Ralph’s commitment to the fraternity for 60 years!

12th annual Friends of Rite-Care Dinner Raises \$30,000 for Speech Therapy

The Scottish Rite Foundation hosted the 12th annual Friends of RiteCare Dinner and Auction on Friday, October 28, 2022. 150 guests attended a great evening, enjoying a hosted wine tasting and scotch tasting, and a gourmet dinner catered by Ford Catering.

The Valley is indebted to the Nebraska State Speech-Hearing-Language Association (NSSLHA) students as well as the Knights of St. Andrew who volunteered throughout the evening, serving, bar tending, overseeing the auction, and cleaning afterward.

The Friends Dinner raised over \$30,000 this year, including \$12,900 for the Special Appeal - a record amount donated for speech therapy services. Our Master of Ceremonies was radio personality Tom Becka.

Auction items included a jersey autographed by Nebraska Husker Heisman Trophy winners, catered venison and a catered game bird dinners, donated by Gary Unger, 33°, fine wines, golf packages, and overnight hotel stay getaway packages.

The Friend of RiteCare honoree was Tony Green, Director for the Division of Developmental Disabilities for DHHS, who has been an advocate for Nebraskans with developmental disabilities for more than 30 years.

Lauren Faist, 33° Endows New Scottish Rite Scholarship

The Valley of Omaha is proud to recognize Lauren Faist, 33° who recently endowed a University of Nebraska at Omaha scholarship. This scholarship, to be named after Lauren G. Faist, will be awarded annually to a UNO student.

Fourteen \$2,000 scholarships are awarded each year to UNO students. Lauren joins 7 Brethren who have named scholarships through the Omaha Foundation.

Merit Based Scholarships

- William B. Webster Merit Scholarship
- Robert A. Falk Merit Scholarship
- F. Jerome Given Scholarship for Speech Pathology
- Sohm Family Scholarship

Distinguished Scholar Scholarships

- David K. Karnes Distinguished Scholar Scholarship
- Charles V. Sederstrom, Jr. Distinguished Scholar Scholarship
- Del D. Webster Distinguished Scholar Scholarship

Lauren Faist graduated from Scribner High School in 1953. Lauren had a long career in the financial services industry, beginning in 1957 when he joined the Trust Department at U.S. National Bank. After ten years, Lauren entered the investment industry and later went on to join Kirkpatrick Pettis in 1978. When they were acquired by Smith Hayes in 2002, and Smith Hayes acquired by D.A. Davidson, Lauren remained with D.A. Davidson until his retirement at the end of 2015.

Lauren is a member of George W. Lininger Lodge #268, raised in 1966. He served as Worshipful Master of Lininger Lodge in 1975, and was recognized with the Masonic Achievement Award by Lininger Lodge in 2009. Lauren served as Captain of the Tangier Shrine Band from 2003-2005. He joined the Omaha Valley Scottish Rite in the Fall, 1977 Reunion. He has been active in the sound booth at Reunions and served for several years on the RiteCare Classic golf committee. He was invested a Knight Commander of the Court of Honour in 2007, and Coroneted a 33° Inspector General Honorary in 2017. He was a Trustee and Board member with the Omaha Home for Boys, serving from 1975 through 2015.

Lauren and his wife Jan have been retired in Arizona, but continues to support the Scottish Rite through required minimum distribution through his IRA.



Lauren Faist donated \$50,000 to endow a scholarship through the Scottish Rite Foundation of Omaha. This donation funds an annual \$2,000 scholarship in Lauren's name.

Any Brother or family interested in endowing a scholarship in their name can contact Micah Evans, Orient Development Director at micah@scottishriteomaha.org. Alternately, a donor can support local scholarships or RiteCare speech therapy and be recognized through the Supreme Council. Contact Gary Unger at gunger@scottishrite-omaha.org to learn how a donation through the Scottish Rite Foundation, S.J. can support philanthropy locally.



Gary Olsen, 32° offers a toast to the memory of Brethren who have passed in the preceding year

Lincoln Valley Celebrates the Feast of Tishri

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the Feast of Tishri as representative of thanksgiving and thankfulness. Thankfulness, she said, is something we don't do well; we say thanks as a sign of politeness or obligation. It is transactional, given in equal measure to the value of the service or gift received.

Instead, Rev. Leanne spoke about shifting our understanding of thankfulness to an attitude of grateful living, as opposed to giving thanks as an expected acknowledgment for something. Living a grateful life fulfills a more sacred calling, where we are builders of good in the world. It is an act of courageous joy and goodness, she said. By doing good, we truly fulfill Albert Pike's words, "... to do that which it is right to do, not because it will insure you success, or bring with it a reward, or gain the applause of men, or be 'the best policy,' more prudent or more advisable; but because it is right, and therefore ought to be done.'

MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS

Nebraska RiteCare Clinicians Attend National RiteCare Conference in St. Louis, Missouri

Nebraska's RiteCare Speech-Language Pathologists attended the national RiteCare Conference in St. Louis, Missouri in September.

The national RiteCare Conference, held in even-numbered years, brings together speech-language pathologists from RiteCare Clinics around the Southern Jurisdiction for a weekend of continuing education. Topics included Literacy and Dyslexia, Strategic Planning, Telehealth, and Interprofessional Collaboration. There was also a Professional Development and Leadership track, which covered fundraising strategies for the Clinics and for Scottish Rite Valleys.

Along with Scottish Rite Grand Commander James D. Cole, 33°, the keynote speaker was Dr. Tommie L. Robinson, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Division Chief at Children's National Hospital. He gave an entertaining address on Leadership



Nebraska RiteCare Clinicians (left to right): Suzie Budzinsky, Kris Althouse, Beth Hughes, Jessica Gormley, Amy Nordness, Korey Stading, and Leslie Van Winkle with Grand Commander James D. Cole, 33°

Lessons Found in the Broadway musical *Hamilton*. Nebraska Clinicians Korey Stading and Paul Laikko from the UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute led a breakout session on the use of visual cueing strategies in the treatment of severe speech and sound disorder.

Amy Nordness, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

was recently promoted to the Director of Clinical Services and Associate Director for the UNMC Munroe-Meyer Institute. With Jessica Gormley, Ph.D., CCC-SLP stepping into the role as the Interim RiteCare Director and Scottish Rite Professor of Speech-Language Pathology, the RiteCare Conference was an opportunity for her to work with Nebraska RiteCare Clinicians from Lincoln and Hastings.

Dan Wellendorf, John Maxell, and Gary Unger also joined the Clinicians. Omaha volunteered to host the RiteCare Conference in September 2024, and they got to see first-hand how the conference worked, and think about what worked well and what could be improved. Planning is already under way for the 2024 RiteCare Conference, and will include breakout sessions on how Scottish Rite Masons can engage with RiteCare Clinics and RiteCare families.

Membership, continued

definition that may hold) develop the ability to be resilient, learning from the challenges that pop-up in Masonic life as in professional life. There is an interesting passage in that most sublime of Scottish Rite Degrees, the 30° Knight of Kadosh. One of the Judges questions the Candidate, asking if he possesses the integrity, unsullied reputation, unimpeachable honesty and honor to receive the 30° of the Scottish Rite. "Many, my Brother, are called but few are chosen. Many faint on the way, and many wander from [Masonry] and are lost."

This is the point I find most interesting. Most every man possesses the latent abilities that Masons prize, and by being engaged and active, those skills are developed, honed, and refined. It comes down to those of us who have



Engaged and Active: the members of Lancaster #54 and Hickman #256 prepare stockings for the Masonic Home

been around a while to give the new Brethren the scope to cultivate their leadership abilities. Masons have a tendency to let the cadre of "old guys" who have run things for many years continue to run things without giving the newer members a place on the Board or the opportunity to lead, fail, learn, and grow.

I still stand by the premise that Masonry does not directly teach leadership. There are no courses that disseminate wisdom from thousands of past leaders. But the nature of Freemasonry of involvement, volunteering, taking a junior chair in Lodge and moving up to the Master's chair, all reveal the hidden strengths each man has and though we hate to admit it, hidden weaknesses.

The skills of leadership do not spring forth fully matured like the goddess Minerva from the head of Jupiter; they require hard work and engagement. And for the old timers to help these leaders reveal their own strengths, we need to identify the up-and-coming talent, offer mentoring and encouragement, and provide the leadership opportunities. We will be pleasantly surprised by the leadership potential in our Brethren.

Giving the Gift of VOICE

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Nebraska for RiteCare raised more than \$8,000 for speech therapy, and the RiteCare Classic Golf Benefit netted \$15,500 and the Friends of RiteCare Dinner and Auction also made a net profit of more than \$30,000 - one of the strongest years ever. In fact, the Century Club did well, as did the 101-Club/SGIG Circle fundraiser.

One of the primary means we have seen for donations has been through Quality Charitable Distributions, through Individual Retirement Accounts (IRA). This makes sense for a variety of reasons.

1. A donation of \$500 might actually cost you \$640. You would have to pay an estimated 22% tax on gross earnings to have a net donation of \$500.
2. A distribution from your IRA, however, for \$500 gives you a \$500 deduction on your taxes.

You need to be at least 70 1/2 and have money in an individual retirement account (IRA). Anyone who has received a statement saying you need to satisfied your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) by year's end is a candidate for this strategy. All you need to do is direct your account advisor or representative to make a direct donation to the Scottish Rite (or your favorite Masonic philanthropies).



Your donation reduces the amount you need to take to satisfy your Required Minimum Distribution. The amount donated will not be included in your Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), and therefore you are not taxed on this amount.

In addition to not paying income taxes on your distribution, your donation reduces your AGI, which is used to determine how much of your Social Security is taxed. It can even affect how much your Medicare premiums will be in the following year.

There are some limits to how good of a deal this can be. For example, you cannot give more than \$100,000 in any one year. You can, however, split your donation among several charities. Contact your attorney, CPA, or financial planner to see how this donation will affect your financial situation.

When you think about our Scottish Rite philanthropies at year-end, please think about the Required Minimum Distribution as a means to both maximize the value of your donation while maximizing your tax deductions.

SCOTTISH RITE JOURNAL
OF FREEMASONRY ♦ SOUTHERN JURISDICTION ♦ USA

“Your dues change the light bulbs.
Your donations change the world.”

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Micah I. Evans, 33°

Orient Development Director

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SGIG Circle Donors (\$300+) to the Scottish Rite Foundation of Nebraska: Sept. 1, 2022 - Sept. 30, 2023

Name	Valley
Charles Bukin.....	Lincoln
William Cook, Jr.....	Lincoln
Peter Hartwig.....	Lincoln
James Heinke.....	Lincoln
Gene Hokom.....	Hastings
Mel Morton.....	Omaha
Terry Nelson.....	Omaha
Robert Pelletier.....	Omaha
Michael Roe.....	Lincoln
Carl Simmons.....	Omaha
Ronald Stites.....	Omaha
Michael Stuhr.....	Omaha
William Workman.....	Lincoln

Thanks to the generosity of Scottish Rite Masons, RiteCare children receive all the speech therapy they need, without regard to a family's ability to pay. SGIG Circle donors have pledged \$300 or more toward speech therapy for the year. **Please consider a donation or pledge and make a significant impact on our ability to provide exceptional speech therapy for Nebraska children.**