

The Grand Almoner's Fund in Action

A photograph of two men in hospital beds, both wearing blue surgical caps and white hospital gowns. They are smiling and holding hands across a central chair. The background shows a hospital room with medical equipment, including a monitor and IV stands. A large, stylized yellow and green graphic is overlaid on the bottom half of the image.

A LIVING Gift
A LASTING Bond

Never Alone: The Power of the Grand Almoner's Fund

One of the proudest moments in my Masonic journey came not from an installation or honor, but in a quiet act of compassion.

Several years ago, a young Mason passed away unexpectedly in a tragic accident, leaving behind his wife and three children, with a fourth on the way. This widow lost her husband just days before welcoming that young life into the world. She was left in unimaginable grief and uncertainty.

Our Sovereign Grand Commander at the time made a simple but powerful decision: **she would not face that burden alone.** Through the Grand Almoner's Fund, critical support was extended to help ensure she and her children could remain in their home, bringing stability during their profound loss. That moment left an enduring mark on me. It reminded me what it truly means to be a Mason.



Ill. Walter F.
Wheeler, 33°

Sovereign Grand
Commander, Supreme
Council, 33° AASR,
NMJ, USA

Today, the Grand Almoner's Fund continues to answer the call when tragedy strikes or hardship threatens a Brother or his family. In this update, you'll read about some of these extraordinary acts of relief — including a Brother who made the ultimate personal sacrifice to save another. You'll hear from donors who give generously to ensure our mission of relief endures.

To each of you who contributes to this sacred work: **thank you.** Your generosity is more than charity — it's a living expression of our Masonic values. And it ensures that no Brother or family member ever walks alone.

A stylized, handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Walt Wheeler". The signature is fluid and cursive, set against a light gray, brush-stroke-like background that tapers off to the left and right.



A *LIVING* Gift A *LASTING* Bond

Scottish Rite Brother Blaine Goldner has always been a man of action. “I thought I was a good man until I became a Mason,” he said. “But Masonry taught me how to be a great one.” Over his many years of service, Blaine has helped feed thousands of people through food drives, raised funds for local families, and lent a hand wherever it was needed. He never imagined the day would come when he would be the one in need.



Blaine with his wife, Stacy (right)
& daughter, Bri (left)

When routine lab work came back with troubling results, Blaine's doctor ordered further tests. They showed his kidneys were functioning at around 40%, and he was diagnosed with focal segmental glomerulosclerosis (FSGS), a disease where scar tissue develops on the kidneys, eventually leading to kidney failure.

Over the next few years, Blaine began a grueling journey of biopsies, medications, and appointments. He lost over 60 pounds and significant muscle mass as his health declined. "It's one of those things where your body turns against you," he shared. "There's no cure. And we watched my kidney function drop from 40% to 30%, then 20%."

Stacy, Blaine's wife of 24 years, was by his side through it all. "I'm a fixer," she explained. "I needed to do something." When it became clear that Blaine was in need of a kidney

transplant, Stacy launched a full-scale search. She created flyers, posted online, organized awareness campaigns and partnered with an organ donation organization to help find a living donor. "I asked everyone. I wasn't going to give up," Stacy recalled. One of her flyers even appeared in a Wisconsin Masonic newsletter.

Then came Jan. A longtime friend and fellow Scottish Rite Mason, Brother Jan Talaga had quietly begun the testing process to become a living kidney donor. He didn't tell Blaine, not wanting to add to the heartbreak if he wasn't a match. "You guys had so many disappointments," Jan later told them. "I didn't want to be another one."

As the months went by, the Goldners continued to search for a donor. Then one day Jan asked Blaine to meet him for lunch. Blaine tried to push the luncheon to another time, he had a long-awaited



*THEN
CAME
JAN...*

appointment with the transplant team.
Jan's response stopped him cold:

"If it were me, I'd cancel. You already have a donor."

"I just stood there, stunned," Blaine recalled. "I said, 'How would you know I have a donor?' And then it hit me. He was the donor."

The transplant was scheduled for December 20. Blaine and Jan, along with their wives, went to the hospital together. "We told the staff, we're family. We do everything together," Blaine said. "This was Brotherhood in action."

During the pre-op exam, the transplant surgeon entered the room, noticing the Masonic shirt Jan wore and Blaine's Scottish Rite hat. "How do you two know each other?" he asked. "We're Masonic Brothers," Blaine replied.

That's when they learned their surgeon was also a Mason. The connection was immediate. "It went from 'doctor' to 'Brother Steve,'" Blaine remembered.

"There was no more formality. Just love. Just care. We were on the same level."

Jan's surgery went smoothly. Blaine's was more complicated. But throughout his recovery, he was never alone. The surgeon visited Blaine every single day—something the nurses told him

"It went from 'doctor' to 'Brother Steve.'"



Masonic Brothers Dr. Stephen Bartlett, Blaine Goldner & Jan Talaga

was almost unheard of. "They said, 'He never visits patients after surgery. But he's been here every day.'"

That deep Masonic care didn't end at the hospital. As medical bills mounted, Blaine couldn't work for several months, and the family had to find a way to pay for out-of-state

lodging throughout the transplant process, help arrived once again. A Brother called to tell them that support from the Grand Almoner's Fund was already on the way.

"I never asked for anything," Blaine shared.

"I didn't even think to

call the Grand Almoner's Fund. You hear about it in the context of disasters, fires, accidents. It never occurred to me it could be for this."

“I’m alive because of my Brother,” he said. “I’m healing because of Freemasonry.”

“Knowing someone had our back like that?” Stacy said, pausing to wipe away tears. “It gave us room to breath. It gave Blaine room to heal.”

For Blaine, the experience redefined what it means to be a Mason. “You take an obligation to help your Brothers,” he said. “But you never think it will be you.

You never think you’ll be the one who needs help.”

Blaine’s fight isn’t over. One of his medications doubles the risk of skin cancer, and he was recently diagnosed. But he remains grounded by the Brotherhood that lifted him. “I’m alive because of my Brother,” he said. “I’m healing because of Freemasonry.”

The bonds forged in Freemasonry are often described in symbolic terms—

Brotherly love, relief, and truth. But for Blaine and Jan, those bonds are made of something even stronger: flesh and blood.

“It gave us room to breathe. It gave Blaine room to heal.”

“Our daughter jokes now,” Stacy said with a smile. “She says Blaine’s part Jewish, Jan’s part Christian. They each have a little piece of the other. That’s how deep this goes.”

To those who give to the Grand Almoner’s Fund, Blaine has just one message:

“Thank you. You didn’t just help us financially. You reminded us of what Brotherhood truly means. You gave us the strength to keep going, and the faith that we were never alone.”



Blaine & Stacy Goldner with Amy & Jan Talaga

Built By Brotherhood



Joe & Ann Rogers

In the fall of 2024, Scottish Rite Brother Joe Rogers left Delaware for a weekend camping trip to Ithaca, NY with his wife Ann and their dog. It was a familiar escape – peaceful, routine, the kind of trip they had taken many times before. But what happened next would change their lives forever.

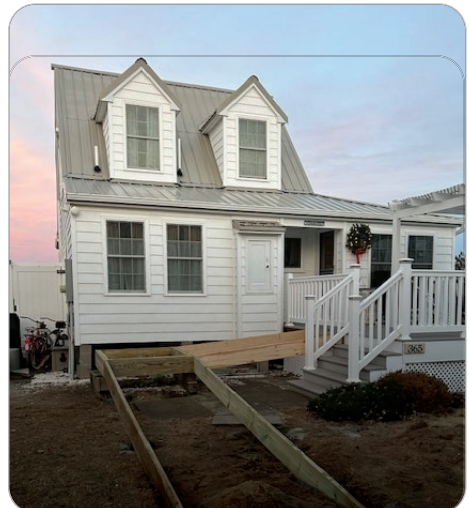
The road ahead was daunting. But the Rogers didn't walk it alone. Joe, a dedicated Mason since 2013, was just weeks away from being installed as Grand Chaplain for the Grand Lodge of Delaware. When news of his condition reached his Masonic family, Brothers from across the Jurisdiction sprang into action.

After stepping outside their tent one evening, Joe returned acting strangely. Concerned, Ann asked, "Joe, you're not yourself. Are you feeling okay?" She decided to call for medical assistance. Her instincts were right. Joe had suffered a stroke and was rushed to a local hospital, where he would spend the next two weeks. When he was finally stable enough to return to Delaware, he faced more than 100 days in rehabilitation, and the life-altering reality that he would no longer be able to walk.

The Rogers quickly had to adapt to a new normal. They sold both of their vehicles to afford a wheelchair-accessible van. But that was only the beginning. Simply getting Joe out of their home and into the van became a seemingly impossible challenge.

Ann recalled through tears, *"Once the Masons started, they never stopped. I will forever be grateful to them."*

Members of the Valley of Lower Delaware reached out to Stephen McCarthy, 33°, and Illustrious Ricky





Swalm, 33°. Moved by Joe's situation, Ill. Brother Swalm secured a gift from the Grand Almoner's Fund to help with the family's plight.

Within days, a custom ramp was designed, materials were purchased, and volunteers from the Valley showed up — tools in hand, hearts full. They built the ramp that gave Joe his independence back.

"I am beholden to everyone that made this happen," Joe said. "I don't know what I would have done without my Brothers."

Though the stroke changed a lot, it could not shake Joe's devotion to the Craft. He was later installed as Grand



Valley members pitching in to build the ramp

Chaplain in a private ceremony and was honored by his Valley with the Meritorious Service Award. While his mobility limits his attendance at some events, he continues to serve wherever he can.

Reflecting on the experience, both Joe and Ann agree:

"It's heartwarming to know that Masons took care of everything when we were still trying to figure out our new normal. We can't thank them enough."

Joe and Ann are forever grateful for the support they received from the Grand Almoner's Fund.

"The Scottish Rite Grand Almoner's Fund is the heart of what we do. Without it, I wouldn't have been able to get out of my house. Every time I see what it's helped me do, I think of all the Brothers who made it possible through their time and gifts. Thank you all."

Why I Give

Steven Moon, 32°

Valley of Wilmington, DE



III. Ricky Swalm presenting Steven Moon
with his Gold Commander's Circle lapel pin.

Brother Steven Moon, 32°, joined the Scottish Rite in the spring of 2021 and immediately felt the value of his membership.

From day one, he immersed himself in the Brotherhood through programs like Thursday Night at the Rite, gaining not only knowledge but a sense of deeper connection with Masons across the country. That spring, moved by what he experienced, he made his first gift to the Membership Education Fund to help sustain the program that had already given him so much.

As a small business owner, Steve's schedule doesn't always allow him to attend every Valley event or reunion. Still, he finds meaningful ways to stay engaged. Recently, one of his employees also became a Scottish Rite Mason. Though time may limit their attendance, they now share the tradition of watching Thursday

“Giving back to the Scottish Rite has simply become part of my routine. I’m not striving for a level or doing it for the recognition, it just feels right.”

Night at the Rite together—bonding over their shared values and experiences.

In his work, Steve helps families with their heating and air conditioning needs. He’s seen firsthand the distress of a furnace breaking during a bitter winter or an old air conditioner causing unaffordable utility bills in the summer. It’s that same empathy—the desire to help when someone is struggling—that led him to support the Grand Almoner’s Fund.

“I give to the Grand Almoner’s Fund because it goes directly to the hands of Masons in need, when they need it most,” Steve shares. “I come from a family of Masons. It’s how I was raised. It’s who we are.”

Steve began his journey of giving to the Grand Almoner’s Fund with a Commander’s Circle Silver Level pledge. After fulfilling that commitment, he continued to give with the same steady heart. In June of this year, Steve reached the Commander’s Circle Gold Level, and was recently presented with his pin

by Brother Ricky Swalm, 33°, Deputy for Delaware. The recognition is a reminder of the many lives touched by his generosity—and of the power of collective Masonic compassion.

“I continue to be blessed in business,” Steve reflects. “Giving back to the Scottish Rite has simply become part of my routine. I’m not striving for a level or doing it for the recognition—it just feels right. And I’ll continue to support the Grand Almoner’s Fund and my Brothers as long as I can.”

As he looks ahead to retirement, Steve hopes to have more time to attend Valley events and connect in person. His advice to fellow Brothers is heartfelt and simple:

“I’m proud to give back. We all live busy lives, and sometimes time isn’t what we can offer. But we can all give something—whenever and however we can. You never know the difference it might make.”

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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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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TO BE A FRATERNITY
THAT FULFILLS OUR
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TO CARE FOR OUR
MEMBERS.***

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