



GRAND LODGE OF MASSACHUSETTS

Membership Recommendations

Compiled by:

2013-2015 Membership Commission

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Mission and Purpose of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts

When asked what the Order Sons of Italy in America is about (and specifically what the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts does and stands for), we encourage everyone to emphasize these points:

The Order Sons of Italy in America is the oldest, largest, and most geographically represented organization of Americans of Italian descent in the United States. We represent over 100 years of Italian culture, social unity, and philanthropic efforts as part of the positive contributions made by Italians to American society. The mission of our organization is to:

- Promote and preserve Italian heritage and culture,
- Raise funds and awareness for local, state, and national charitable endeavors,
- Engage community members at the local, state, and national level by organizing and participating in various civic efforts and events,
- Create and promote programs for social justice, such as those that combat discrimination

The above points are meant to be a standard starting point to make sure we all represent the Order consistently and accurately. If your Lodge supports specific causes or successful events, always mention those as well.

OSIA in the 21st Century

The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts has a rich, 100-year history. While we look upon this history with reverence and respect, we must also make sure that our organization stays relevant in the 21st century. While the members of yesterday joined in the face of overwhelming discrimination, looking for assistance with assimilating into American life, and requiring the social group that the Sons of Italy provided, today's prospective members are third and fourth generation Italian-Americans. They were born and raised in America, they face a much less severe atmosphere of discrimination, and their social networks are formed elsewhere (school, work, family connections). Society is not segregated along ethnic lines in the same ways it was 50, 75, or 100 years ago.

In the face of these facts, the Grand Lodge is evaluating what their role, and the role of the Order Sons of Italy in America is in 2014 and beyond, and we encourage all Filial Lodges to do the same.

Some suggestions for your Lodge to consider include:

- Finding ways to make your monthly meetings informal and welcoming (even while honoring our rituals). Bring issues to your Council meetings for discussion first, so that you may efficiently bring recommendations and decisions to your membership during regular meetings. This ensures people feel their time is being spent wisely, and also allows for shorter businesses meetings with time to host a guest speaker, event, or otherwise spend time together outside the traditional meeting structure.
- Go to where your prospective members are, don't wait for them to come to you.
 - o Engage young professionals by hosting a networking event for Italian-American professionals and companies.
 - o Contact Italian-American organizations at colleges and universities in your area and find ways to work with them on events or fundraising.
- Consider updating events that have traditionally been on your calendar but aren't as successful as they used to be, or don't attract new or younger members.

Recruitment AND Retention

It's not enough to do one or the other – Lodges must make a conscious effort to both entice people to join, as well as give them a reason to stay.

These reasons will be diverse – some members join for the social aspect, others for the charitable work, and still others to participate in activities at a lodge home. It's important to involve all of these kinds of members in a Lodge, so offer as many options as possible.

The Commission recently conducted a survey of 500 cancelled members. They were asked questions regarding why they became members, and why they eventually resigned. Members joined Lodges for a variety of reasons, including family ties, and the desire to be more involved in the community. The majority of those surveyed were members for a year or more before being cancelled, indicating some investment in the Lodge.

Members cancelled their membership for a variety of reasons. In analyzing and discussing these reasons, we can offer these recommendations:

1. When a member cancels their membership, follow up with them to find out what their reasons were. Sometimes the reasons will be personal (such as time or financial constraints), but this exit surveying can uncover issues that the Lodge was not aware about and can work to fix. Ask if there is anything your Lodge can do to welcome them back as a member.

On the opposite side, survey a member when they join the Lodge. Ask what their expectations are, how they would like to be involved, and make sure they know who the leadership is. Set them up with a mentor, a more established member of the Lodge, who can answer their questions and can personally make them feel welcome in the Lodge.

2. Members vary in the lengths of time and the financial contributions that they are able to give. Make sure there is something for everyone, from those who only want to be involved in regular meetings, to those who can spend money on trips and fundraising, to those who can only attend an event or two, and for Lodges that have buildings, those who come to be part of the club atmosphere. All these different types of members contribute to the success of the Lodge.
3. Make sure members are educated about things that are often misunderstood, such as the rituals of the Order, or the need and use of the Lodge's dues. People are more willing to contribute when they know why they are doing so and how their contribution is being used.

Community Engagement

One of the best ways to advertise your Lodge, and to make an impact in your community, is to make sure you are involved with other social, civic, educational, and communal organizations in your home town and the surrounding areas.

The best events are those held in conjunction with other organizations – this brings double the resources, double the audience, and double the chances of a successful event to the table. All organizations are having participation and financial struggles, but working together can alleviate some of these burdens and accomplish a common goal.

Examples of organizations your Lodge should consider working with include:

- School PACs and other parent groups or booster clubs
- Local Police and Fire stations and member groups
- Other civic and social organizations, such as the Knights of Columbus or the Rotary Club
- Town officials (to recognize events like Columbus Day or Italian Heritage Month)

Media and Advertising in Your Community

The best way to get the attention of people in your community is to make sure they are aware first, that there is a Lodge in their town, and second, of what the Lodge does. The way to accomplish this is to be visible in the local media and advertise in local publications and stores.

Make sure to:

- Submit stories about your events to your local newspaper (see the Sample Press Release included in this packet as an example of what to send to your local editors!). Most towns have a local and/or regional newspaper, as well as online publications run by the Patch (patch.com) and Wicked Local (wickedlocal.com).

These publications often have community or event sections where you can place information about specific events that your Lodge is hosting, most of the time at no charge.

- Consider inexpensive ways to reach many people at once, such as:
 - one-time purchase of a permanent sign for your town (ala the Lions or the Rotary signs that advertise meeting times and locations)
 - Take advantage of unique opportunities – place an ad that runs on the printed placemats used at restaurants, participate in local town fairs and Italian festivals
 - Approach local Italian restaurants or businesses and ask if they will display a flyer with information about the Lodge, or put out membership brochures for patrons to take

Online Engagement

The internet is the most valuable tool available to any Lodge. Many of the options for engaging with people and for advertising your events are absolutely free. These tools improve your communication with new members, as well as making it easier for prospective members to contact you.

Organizations now create their first impressions on the web. When groups don't have a website or Facebook page, they are immediately delegitimized, and whoever was trying to get in touch with you will likely move on to a different organization.

Executive Assistant Adriana Guida has volunteered some of her time to help teach Lodges and get their online presence off the ground. Any interested Lodges should contact her at 617-489-5234 or by email at aguida@osiama.org.

Email

Creating a Lodge email address or having your Lodge officers utilize their own is the single most important overall tool that every Lodge can use. Using email to keep members apprised of events, send them Lodge documents, or to distribute newsletters not only breaks through many of the limits of more traditional methods of communication (like mail or phone) but can also save your Lodge money.

Choose a free provider like Gmail or Yahoo and sign up for an account. Include your email address in correspondence, advertisements, and flyers to give members, prospective members, and supporters an easy way to keep in touch. Collect email addresses from non-members who you encounter at events or in your community and create a monthly email that tells them about upcoming events and opportunities they may be interested in participating in.

Website

The most important informational tool for every Lodge is a website. The web is now the first place people look to for information, including things like meeting times, contact information, and to find out more about what the Lodge does.

Websites do not have to be complicated or cost a lot of money. A page or two is enough to display the basic information that should be available to the general public. Web design experience is also not required – many providers will have templates available for you to use. The most basic websites can be done for free, or your Lodge can purchase things like a domain name (for example, yourlodgename.org).

Facebook

Facebook is the # 1 tool for engagement – getting people involved with your Lodge updates, interested in your events, and interacting with items like photos or requests for feedback. You can also use Facebook for targeted advertising – for example, you can advertise your Lodge to people in a specific age group, geographic location, or other demographic (such as, Italian-Americans).

Whoever will be overseeing your Facebook Page needs an account to do so, however, do not create an account for your Lodge! There is a special feature for businesses and organizations called “Pages” that you will use instead.

From your account home page, click the down arrow at the upper right-hand corner of the page, and select “Create Page”. From there, follow the prompts, and your Lodge will have its very own Facebook page! Remember to post things like photos, events, Lodge news, and reminders (such as for your next Lodge meeting).

SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Press Contact
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Massachusetts Sons of Italy Honors Public Servants and Scholarship Winners *Grand Lodge of Massachusetts will host the Massachusetts Education and Law Awards on May 4.*

Belmont, MA - April 15, 2014 – The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, part of the national Order Sons of Italy in America, is honoring several leaders in the Italian-American community, as well as graduating high school seniors at a combined event, the Massachusetts Education and Law Awards, on Sunday, May 4, 2014. This is a continuation of a 30-year tradition of the Grand Lodge's commitment to social justice, previously known as the Law and Justice Awards, which has honored leaders like Former Boston Mayor Thomas Menino and House Speaker Robert DeLeo. Similarly, the scholarship program has annually awarded at least \$30,000 to high school seniors for nearly 60 years.

This year, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts will award scholarships to 29 deserving students, who are continuing their education in subjects like engineering, biology, medicine, education, and the arts. Each student is at the top of their class and is immersed in extracurricular activities and volunteer work.

The event will also honor seven outstanding public servants. The Honorable Peter C. DiGangi, of the Lawrence Probate Court, will receive the Justice Award, Medford Police Chief Leo A. Sacco Jr. will receive the Law Award, and former Wilmington Town Manager Michael A. Caira will receive the Public Service Award. Each of these public servants has dedicated years to the betterment of the people of Massachusetts.

Additionally, Special Recognition Awards will be bestowed upon Watertown Police Sergeant Jeffrey J. Pugliese and Patrolman Timothy Menton, and Watertown Firefighters Patrick Menton and James Caruso, in recognition of their extraordinary efforts during the apprehension of the Boston Marathon bombing suspects in Watertown on April 2013. Sergeant Pugliese risked his life to engage directly with the suspects, and Timothy Menton, Patrick Menton, and James Caruso are credited with helping to save the life of MTBA Officer Richard Donahue.

“Our hope is to connect these exemplary and accomplished professionals at the height of their careers to the promising students that are just beginning their journey into adulthood,” noted the State President of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts Carmelita Bello.

This awards ceremony is particularly special for the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, as it is celebrating its 100th year as part of the Order Sons of Italy in America.

Tickets for the Massachusetts Education and Law Awards are available by contacting the Grand Lodge office at 617-489-5234, or by visiting www.osiama.org.

The **Grand Lodge of Massachusetts** is one of the many state chapters of the national Order Sons of Italy in America, which is the oldest, largest, and most geographically represented organization of Italian-Americans in the country. The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was chartered in 1914 and encompasses Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

The purpose of our organization is to promote and preserve Italian heritage, raise funds for charitable endeavors, engage in local community efforts and events, and participate in social justice efforts, such as combating discrimination in the Italian-American community. For more information, visit www.osiama.org.

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The Membership Commission
is ready and available to assist your Lodge.

Please feel free to contact
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