

**Grand Lodge of New Hampshire**  
**Kenneth R. Dassau**  
**Grand Master 176**

**April 1, 2024 Report**

*How I Spent My Year as the 176<sup>th</sup> Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of NH.*

Greetings Brothers and Sisters of Our Friendly Order,

It is an understatement to simply say "It's been a busy year." Not just for me - for all of us. Because when I say "I attended ..." - I'm with so many of you who also attended with me many of the same meetings and events. Some highlights:

After April's session in May I attended the GL Executive Board; the Grand Encampment session; visited Osgood and Wecohamet lodges; attended the Presidential Oaks Board meeting as an ex-officio member. All the while preparing for the Joint Reception for RA President Vicki Benner and me in June. Simply said - our Joint reception was a lot of fun. For proof of that - check out the photos on the GL of NH webpage at [www.nhioof.org](http://www.nhioof.org). My heartfelt thanks to the reception committee for their work. And it was a lot of work beautifully done! Gary Benner, David and Betty Lent, Kevin Taylor, Tom Cassar, and Jennifer Dassau.

In June, I was invited to the Scholarship Dinner hosted by Bristol's Cardigan Lodge. Also in attendance were RA President Vicki Benner, and Grand Chaplain Tom Cassar. Cardigan Secretary Nancy Aldrich competently acted as emcee. In addition to the scholarship award, several members were presented with years of service awards.

Also in June, my wife and I attended an Award Dinner hosted by the members of Lebanon's Mascoma Lodge No 20. During the dinner I was presented with the first donation to the Granite State Children's Alliance Alicia Fund (GSCA). My gratitude to PGM Walter "Sonny" George, PG Martha George, and all Mascoma lodge members for lighting my project's fuse.

I attended the Atlantic Northeast Department Council meeting. As GM I was given the Honors of the Order by having to walk under the Council members "arch of swords." Admittedly, I was a little nervous to stand up straight going through.

July. Odd Fellows Claremont's Sullivan lodge members Mike Huse and Gary Ward held a photo op and presented their generous GSCA donation check to Megan Oliviero from the GSCA and me.

August. During the Eaton Park Family Weekend, a dunk tank was put up as a fundraiser for my project. My thanks to all the Eaton Park Board members and Incorporators for their work in maintaining the site.

At the Presidential Oaks Odd Fellows Incorporators meeting in September an Odd Fellows Museum committee was proposed by Board President Michael Huse. Who then appointed me as committee chair. The committee has settled on a museum location adjacent to the Grand Lodge/Secretary Office currently used by the Rebekah Assembly. To date we have met with

several consultants. We are now waiting for a proposal with their recommendation on how to proceed to make the space presentable for a public display. I will keep you informed of our plans on how to proceed as information comes in and decisions are made.

The December 2<sup>nd</sup> Blue Grass Christmas Concert with Southern Rail was sponsored by Chocorua # 51 Lodge, the Mt. Lebanon Masonic Lodge, and the First Congregational Society in Gilmanton. It was proposed and organized by our Past Grand Chaplain George Roberts. All proceeds went to the Grand Master's project - the Granite State Children's Alliance - Alicia fund. In addition to Chocorua's own lodge donation. It was a great event with the weather cooperating. A big thank you to George and all the Chocorua members for initiating and organizing the event. And thanks to all of you who sold and bought tickets.

The Annual Heidelberg Christmas Auction raised over five -thousand dollars for four local charities.

December 31, 2023, Sunday. I attended the Grafton-Orange-Sullivan Association and the West Lebanon Congregational Church, UCC's ordination of Daniel Robert Louis Adam into the Christian Ministry. Dan is a Past Grand Chaplain. Congratulations to the Reverend Dan Robert Louis Adam.

January 15<sup>th</sup> is Thomas Wildey Day. The founder of our order was born on this day in 1782. 242 years ago. This year, on that day, I was admitted into Wildey No. 1 Canton.

January 24<sup>th</sup>, a public hearing was held in the State House for Legislation SB 586. This legislation proposed a relative tax-exempt status for Odd Fellow Lodges. The bill was requested by our PGM Patrick Doughty. If the Senate passes the bill, then it goes to the House, where it sits as of this writing.

January 27<sup>th</sup> the second annual IOOF New Hampshire Bowling Tournament took place at Boutswell Lanes in Concord. Our thanks to DGM David Kilian for again organizing the event. All proceeds went to the Grand Master's project. Mark your calendar for next year's tournament.

February: Three Encampment Degrees took place; Penacook Encampment No 3, in Concord hosted the first two degrees - Patriarchal and Golden Rule. The Royal Purple degree was hosted in March by Nashnoonan Encampment in Derry.

School of Instruction with held at White Mountain Lodge. It was well attended by past and current lodge officers. Grand Instructor Brian McGuire led an informal step by step question and answer discussion from the opening to the closing of a lodge meeting.

GM Project update. I am beyond grateful for all the support the Grand Master's Project has received. As of this writing we have raised over thirty thousand dollars for the Granite State Children's Alliance - Alicia Fund.

Membership. Congratulations to the lodges who took in new members. My program recommended that we strive to strengthen our ties within the community to attract membership.

An explanation for the national decline in civic engagement is described in the book by Robert Putnam, 2000, Bowling Alone. I heard of the book on the Three Links Odd Cast with Rebecca and Pete Davis talking about their film “Join or Die.” The TL Odd Cast is available wherever you access your streaming podcasts. The film features the work of Robert Putnam and his data accounting on the rise and then decline in fraternal and community organizations over the last 100+ years. Putnam shows the benefits of joining a club and building what he termed “social capital.” Social capital contributes to our personal health and the health of our organization and overall democracy. The best part of my year has been my growing friendship with so many members who I did not know or maybe only casually knew, and I now consider friends thereby increasing each of our “social capital.”

I need to thank all of the officers of the Grand Lodge, all who stepped up to accept positions on my team, my Forest Lodge no. 69 in Marlow; Riverside Rebekah Lodge No 22 in Kearsarge, Penacook Encampment No 3 in Concord; and the Wildey Canton No. 1 in Concord.

Lastly – my thanks to our Dean of Past Grand Masters Tom Johnson Jr who revitalized my lodge, Forest Lodge in the late 1980s and initiated me into our order. And Kevin Taylor and Pat Doughty who gave me the opportunity to join the Grand Lodge of New Hampshire leading to my election as Grand Master 176, and the opportunity to wear a white dinner jacket for the first time in my life. And my thanks and appreciation to my supportive guide, James Lawrence, PGM 142, who continues to assist me in the navigation of the rough road.

Blessings in Friendship, Love, and Truth+,

*Ken*