

Nebraska Mason – Fall 2017

Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children
Ron Giesselmann, Executive Director

Residential Care Trend

On August 27, 2017, the Sunday World-Herald printed an article titled “Renowned Care Model No Longer Main Focus”. The article talks about Boys Town decreasing the size of its out-of-home placements (also known as residential care) and increasing the size of its in-home family consulting. It also explains how Boys Town is closing residential care homes in states that don’t favor residential care, such as Texas and California, but plan to build residential care homes in Florida, which is a “pro-residential” state. Current leaders of Boys Town explain their downsizing decisions, while former leaders complain about the downsizing.

As the Executive Director of the Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children, I have stayed silent concerning the current trend to downsize residential care, because trends and fads come and go like clothing styles and I did not want to inadvertently insult the families that we work with, while giving my opinion. The topic has reached a point that I feel compelled to explain my view of the aforementioned article, because it reflects on a major Nebraska Masonic philanthropy. I will do this in the hope of not offending anyone.

Here’s the bottom line – there will always be a need for residential care. The practice at the Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children is to make sure that inquiring families have exhausted their community resources before a child moves in. We have numerous inquiries every day and we usually have no vacancies. Thus the reason for constructing a new cottage.

Where does the State of Nebraska stand on residential care? This shouldn’t concern the Children’s Home because we don’t take any money from the State of Nebraska for residential child care, but it does concern us, because we are licensed through the State of Nebraska. It seems like the State is trying to create the best, most affordable plan possible for families in crisis. For many years, communities in Nebraska have had a significant problem with methamphetamine and opiate abuse. The problem has not been resolved and seems to be growing. Residential care gives drug abusing parents time to find help for themselves, while their children have a safe place to live.

What keeps the Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children relevant? There are numerous reasons, but the most important is the huge need for residential care. Second - we are the last Masonic children’s home west of the Mississippi. Most of the children living here are from Nebraska, but we have had up to 5 children from other states living on campus at one time. Third - we feel obligated to serve as many children from Masonic families as possible. About one-fourth of the children have Masonic ties. Fourth – we keep things the same, but different. We keep activities up-to-date, so it is a fun/learning environment. The decades old 4-H program is a good example. We not only have beef, cooking, and sewing projects, but we have added wind generation, electrical, welding, robotics, and woodworking.

This may have been more information than you ever wanted to know about the Children’s Home, but I figured I owed the Masons of Nebraska an explanation to an article that was found on the front page of the largest newspaper in Nebraska.

The Masonic-Eastern Star Home for Children has been around for over 100 years and plans to be around for another 100 years.