



What is the Shrine, Who are the Shriners? (Excerpted from Shriners International Speakers Kit)

Shriners of North America is a fraternity of approximately 375 thousand men, all with a common love of fun and fellowship. Helping kids is a part of that fun. Shriners are the driving force behind Shriners Hospitals for Children, a one-of-a-kind international health care system. The 22 hospitals provide pediatric specialty care for orthopaedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries, and cleft lip and palate, all at no charge to patients or their families.



In 1870, several thousand of the 900 thousand residents of Manhattan belonged to the fraternity of Freemasonry, and many of these Masons frequently lunched at a local restaurant known as Knickerbocker Cottage. At a special table on the second floor, 13 Masons, who were noted for their good humor and wit, often discussed forming a new fraternity. This new fraternity, they imagined, would be founded on the Masonic principles of "brotherly love," "truth" and "relief," but it would stress fun and fellowship more than ritual.

Two of the table's regulars – Dr. Walter M. Fleming and actor William J. "Billy" Florence – took the idea seriously enough to do something about it. While plans for founding the new fraternity were underway, Florence attended a party hosted by an Arabian diplomat in France.



He thought the Near Eastern theme of this party, with its vivid colors and pageantry, would be the perfect backdrop for the new fraternity. Dr.

Fleming used Florence’s ideas and converted them into what would become the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine – known today as “Shriners of North America.”

In 1872, with the help of other Knickerbocker Cottage regulars, Fleming drafted the ritual and designed the emblem and costumes. He decided the fraternity’s salutation would be “Es Selamu Aleikum!”, which means “Peace be with you!” Fleming also declared that all members would wear a fez: the red headpiece with a long black tassel.



One-hundred and thirty-six years later, the fraternity has grown from the 13 original Shriners to approximately 375 thousand. What was once a single chapter – or “temple” in New York City, has expanded to 191 temples in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and the Republic of Panama.

Shriners of North America was founded with fun and fellowship as its focus, and it certainly succeeded at that, as the fraternity flourished through the early 1900s. But around 1920,

members expressed the desire to establish an official charity. Most temples had individual philanthropies, and the fraternity often gave aid to victims of natural disasters and other catastrophes. But the Shriners wanted to do more.

At the Shriners' 1920 annual international convention – known as the “Imperial Council Session” – Freeland Kendrick from Philadelphia proposed establishing a hospital to treat kids suffering from orthopaedic problems that had resulted from polio, which was rampant at that time. Some conservative Shriners expressed doubts about assuming this kind of responsibility. But then Forrest Adair from Yaarab Shriners in Atlanta spoke. He said, “While we have spent money for songs and spent money for bands, it’s time for the Shrine to spend money for humanity.” After Adair’s speech, the tone of the session changed, and the resolution was passed unanimously. A committee was chosen to determine the site and personnel for the Shriners Hospital. But after months of work, research and debate, the committee concluded there should not just be one hospital, but a system of hospitals throughout North America. The proposal passed at the 1921 Imperial Council Session.

In September 1922, the first Shriners Hospital opened in Shreveport, Louisiana. By the end of the 1920s, the Shriners had opened 13 more hospitals across North America, including one in Hawaii and one in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Today, there are 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children: 20 in the U.S., and one each in Canada and Mexico.



From 1950 to 1960, the fraternity’s funds were increasing rapidly, but the number of new patients waiting for admission to Shriners Hospitals began to shrink, due to the polio vaccine and new antibiotics. Shriners found themselves able to provide additional services, so leaders began to look for other ways to help children. After careful study, Shriners found that there

was very limited treatment available for seriously burned children. So, in the early 1960s, the Shriners decided to provide treatment for kids with severe burns.



The first Shriners burn center opened in 1963 at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. This interim center was used until the first Shriners Hospital specializing in burns was built in Galveston, Texas, in 1966. Shortly after, Shriners Hospitals opened in Boston and Cincinnati to treat burn injuries. The Northern California hospital, built in 1997, also specializes

in providing this type of care.

A couple decades later, Shriners Hospitals again responded to an unmet medical need. In 1980, the Shriners Hospital in Philadelphia opened the first pediatric spinal cord injury rehabilitation unit in the country. The Philadelphia program was followed by similar efforts at the Shriners Hospitals in Chicago and San Francisco, which opened in 1984. When the San Francisco hospital was replaced by the Northern California Shriners Hospital in Sacramento, the facility was equipped and staffed to treat patients with orthopaedic conditions, burn injuries and spinal cord injuries.





Wanting to do still more, Shriners Hospitals noticed a lack of complete, comprehensive, long-term care available for children with craniofacial deformities. In 2005, Shriners Hospitals added a fourth

care specialty to its list of treatments: cleft lip and palate.

For the last 86 years, Shriners Hospitals for Children, a one-of-a-kind international health care system, has provided pediatric specialty care to more than 865,000 kids – and all at no charge.

Who is eligible for care at a Shriners Hospital? First, the child must be under age 18. And second, there must be a reasonable possibility the child's condition can be improved by the specialty care provided by Shriners Hospitals. Eligibility is not dependent on financial need or relationship to a Shriner.



Shriners Hospitals are not just dedicated to providing expert pediatric treatment. The health care system is also committed to excellence in research. In the early 1960s, Shriners Hospitals aggressively entered the structured research field and began earmarking funds for research projects. The

initial annual research budget in the 1960s was 12 thousand dollars.

Forty-four million dollars was budgeted to fund research programs at Shriners Hospitals in 2008. To date, Shriners Hospitals for Children has invested more than 500 million dollars in research. The innovative research being conducted at Shriners Hospitals not only benefits our patients – it increases the total body of medical knowledge for the care and treatment of people of all ages.



Shriners Hospitals researchers have played key roles in research breakthroughs, such as developing a cultured skin-substitute and a nutritional formula that reduces infection and improves healing for pediatric burn patients; being a partner in discovering the genetic cause of juvenile Paget's disease; and collaborating in the discovery of the genetic causes for 10 inheritable bone diseases – just to name a few.

Beyond the commitment to providing expert medical care and conducting innovative research, Shriners Hospitals are also dedicated to providing outstanding teaching opportunities. In the past 20 years, more than 8 thousand physicians have received residency education or postgraduate fellowships at Shriners Hospitals. By maintaining relationships with more than 60 medical teaching facilities worldwide, Shriners Hospitals fosters an academic environment committed to providing high-quality medical care to all patients.



In 2008, it cost Shriners Hospitals 2.263 million dollars every day – or 26.19 dollars every second – to provide the best specialty care available to children. This is made possible by the generosity of Shriners and the general



public. But Shriners don't only support their hospitals financially – they also give much of their time. The Shriners fraternity and Shriners Hospitals for Children are separate but inseparable. Shriners volunteer at the hospitals to help out in a variety of capacities, such as guiding tours and assisting

maintenance and administrative staff. Shriners groups visit the hospitals and entertain the kids. Clowns drop in and perform skits, bands play music, and other groups throw pizza and ice cream parties to keep up the patients' spirits while they're in the hospital. Shriners even assist medical professionals by organizing local screening clinics, where kids who don't live near a Shriners Hospital can be evaluated for admission.



Shriners drivers (Hospital Dads) – transport kids to and from the hospital when needed. In fact, since 1985, Shriners have driven over 200 million miles, and temples have spent more than 207 million dollars, transporting kids who need the expert medical care provided at Shriners Hospitals.

As you can see, Shriners of North America and Shriners Hospitals for Children both have long, rich histories filled with fun, friendship, caring and compassion. More information about both organizations can be found at www.shrinershq.org.

Shriners Hospitals for Children's Web pages also have more information about its care specialties, how to refer a patient and ways to support the organization. You can also call 1-800-241-GIFT to make a contribution to Shriners Hospitals.

If you know a child Shriners Hospitals may be able to help, please call 1-800-237-5055 in the United States, or 1-800-361-7256 in Canada.

If you're interested in joining Shriners of North America, please visit the JOIN US section of the Web site.