

New area Shriners Club attracts 100 to first meeting

North America's Shriners, 800,000 strong at last count, have opened a club serving Milton, Halton Hills and surrounding areas.

The Credit Valley Shrine Club, the 36th chapter launched by the Toronto-based Rameses Temple, had approximately 100 people attend its June inaugural meeting at Georgetown's Masonic Temple.

As club president Alfie Hutchins acknowledges, Shriners are generally viewed as high-profile Masons. Where the Masons tend to do their community work behind the scenes, the Shriners are out there giving the public a fun-loving goose for a good cause.

The Shriner is the one dressed like Aladdin, wearing the tassled fez and curly-toed shoes, buzzing around in community parades astride a go-kart. Or he might show up dressed as a

circus clown or launch into some weird repertoire as a member of an "Oriental" band.

But the Shriners are as serious as you can get about raising money for good causes, and their good causes are among the best.

Shriners hospitals have been putting lives back together since the 1920s. In recent times the main focus has been treating young burn victims — more than 2,000 a year. Orillia fire victim Joey Philion is among those who have a new lease on life thanks to Shriner efforts.

The youngster had to travel to Boston for treatment in a Shriner hospital; now, a burn unit is being established at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, thanks largely to a \$1.5 million contribution from the Shriners.

With a total annual budget topping \$300 million, 22 Shriners' hospitals, including those in

Fort Erie and Montreal, save young lives every day. They also train professionals and conduct research to be able to do it better all the time.

And where does the money come from? Mostly the travelling Shrine Circus and magic show, but in their own ways, the clowns, Oriental bands and go-karts do their bit too. Asking for a donation in return for their parade appearances, club members give up most summer weekends to make the rounds of communities in their motorized units.

"The whole time we're out there having fun, there's a lot of money being raised," Mr. Hutchins said in an interview.

Mr. Hutchins and first vice-president Ron Lovegrove both worked hard to get the Credit Valley club going, contacting "nobles" in the area — Shriners who are members of Rameses

Temple though they don't necessarily belong to any one club — and finding the requisite 50 inaugural members who, like them, are 32nd degree Masons, part of the Scottish or York Rite brotherhood.

At the inaugural, 55 members were inducted into the new club along with nine social members — those awaiting higher initiation within the lodge. Credit Valley Shriners meet the fourth Tuesday of each month at the Masonic Temple.

Along with Mr. Hutchins and Mr. Lovegrove, the club's executive includes second vice-president Al Irving, secretary Bill Tindall, treasurer Bill McDonald, directors Ernest Anderson, Irwin Noble and Gordon Ross and auditors Keith Wellstead and Ross Dryden.

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