



Shriners International

Shriners International: A Fraternity Based on Fun and Philanthropy

Shriners International, a fraternity based on fun, fellowship and the Masonic principles of brotherly love, relief and truth, founded Shriners Hospitals for Children® as its official philanthropy in 1922. The organization, which began as one hospital, is now a world-renowned health care system with 22 locations in three countries. The fraternity, which has nearly 200 temples in several countries and thousands of clubs around the world, continues to operate and support this unique health care system.

The basic organizational unit of the fraternity is the temple, which is governed by an elected board, known as the Divan. The Divan is headed by a Potentate, who is the presiding officer of the temple.

All temples are subordinate to Shriners International Headquarters. The Imperial Divan, the fraternity's governing board, is headed by the Imperial Potentate and consists of 13 elected officers. A new officer is elected to the Imperial Divan each year. Every officer, except the Imperial Treasurer and Imperial Recorder, moves up the "line" each year, eventually becoming Imperial Potentate. The Imperial Treasurer and Imperial Recorder may be re-elected.

Within each temple, there are also clubs and units for members with various interests and hobbies. The fraternity may be best known for its colorful parades, circuses and clowns – but there are also many other opportunities for members. From leadership development and public speaking to networking and special interests – there truly is something for everyone.

A Little History

Shriners International's best-known symbol is the distinctive red fez worn by Shriners at official functions. The fez derives its name from the city of Fez, Morocco, and was chosen as part of Shriners' Near East theme. This theme was developed in the 1870s by Walter M. Fleming, a prominent New York physician, and William J. "Billy" Florence, a popular actor.

Legend has it that Florence discovered the Near East theme when he attended a party in Marseilles, France, hosted by an Arabian diplomat. When he returned to the U.S., he explained the theme to Fleming, and the two men began laying the foundation for the Shriners fraternity, which was officially named the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, and informally known as

Shriners of North America. Today the fraternity's name is Shriners International. The first Shriners temple, Mecca Shriners, was organized in New York City in 1872.

As membership in the Shriners fraternity grew in the early 1900s, so did the call for establishing an official charity. In 1919, the Imperial Potentate-elect proposed establishing a hospital to provide free care for children with orthopaedic problems. A committee explored the idea and concluded there should not be just one hospital; there should be a health care system throughout North America that provides pediatric orthopaedic medical care regardless of the families' ability to pay. The first hospital opened in Shreveport, La., in 1922.

Our Philanthropy

Today, there are 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children; the majority specialize in pediatric orthopaedics, providing medical and rehabilitative services to children with congenital deformities and conditions, problems resulting from orthopaedic injuries, and diseases of the neuromusculoskeletal system.

Shriners Hospitals for Children entered the field of burn care in the 1960s after recognizing a lack of medical expertise in the field. The health care system provides critical, surgical and rehabilitative care for children with varying degrees of pediatric burn injuries.

In the early 1980s, Shriners Hospitals for Children opened the nation's first spinal cord injury rehabilitation centers specifically designed for kids. There, patients receive long-term rehabilitation and intensive physical, occupational and recreation therapies.

Cleft lip and palate is the health care system's newest official service line. This program provides surgeries, orthodontic work, audiological, speech and psychological therapies for children with this condition.

Shriners Hospitals for Children relies on the generous donations of Shriners and the general public to continue its mission of improving the lives of children.

Prospective members are encouraged to visit beashrinernow.com for more information about Shriners International. Additional information about the fraternity and hospitals is available at shrinersinternational.org, and shrinershospitalsforchildren.org or by calling Shriners International Headquarters at 813-281-0300.