

Commandery of the Sierras Newsletter

August 2019

Commander's Letter

BJ Sullivan, Commander of the Commandery of the Sierras



The Commandery of the Sierras has been busy, even though we have only 20 members! Our commandery endeavors to get together once a month. Our meetings include dinner and wine and they are held at different members' homes on a rotating basis.

A check for \$10,000 was presented to Victory Ranch at the Reno Rodeo. About half of our commandery went to the rodeo with the owners of Victory Ranch, Doug and Pat Hutton. Victory Ranch began in 2006 in San Jose to serve disadvantaged youth and veterans through equine programs, but in 2018 moved to Reno. Their goal is to achieve "victory" over the baggage some people carry.

A check for \$10,000 will be presented this month to JUSTin HOPE Foundation which provides a place for autistic children and their parents to gather with other families with the same malady.

Our Reno City Lights Committee is on fire! I believe this will be one of our best Reno City Lights events to date. Renee Verrier is the chair of the event and she and her committee are doing a fantastic job! The event will be held Friday, November 22, 2019 at The Grove in Reno.

We have two applicants being processed for aspirants and we continue to look for new members.

From the Commandery of the Sierras, have a joyful summer!

B.J. Sullivan
Commander

Reno City Lights to Benefit Eddy House and iCelerate

Knights and dames of the Commandery of the Sierras will kick off the holiday season in grand style this year with their biannual fundraiser Reno City Lights at The Grove in Reno on November 22 from 5:30 to 8:30 PM.

With glasses of sparkling welcome champagne or wine in hand, guests can catch up with old friends and meet new acquaintances while noshing on yummy appetizers and exquisite desserts. They can also dance the night away to the nostalgic 50s-70s music provided by the Baker Street Band. Adrian Baker, founder of the band, hails from London and has performed with the Beach Boys, Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons over his long career as an entertainer. Holiday or cocktail attire is requested.

Beneficiary charities this year are the Eddy House and iCelerate (formerly High Sierra Industries). Founded in 2011, Eddy House is the central intake and assessment facility for homeless youths 12-14 years old in northern Nevada. The facility provides counseling, skills classes and showers along with a 50-bed sleeping dorm which is scheduled to open this year. iCelerate supports and empowers people with disabilities through four main programs: Fun and Engaging Days, Shared Living, Workforce and Fulfillment and Training and Development.

Past beneficiary charities for RCL have been the Assistance League, Children's Advocacy Center, Children's Cabinet, Crisis Call Center, HSI/WARC, Renown Ronald McDonald Pediatric Family Room and Veterans Guest House.



BJ Sullivan formally accepts the sword as Commander of the Commandery of the Sierras. Officiating at Trinity Episcopal Cathedral were, left to right, Rev. Rick Millsap, Canon for Pastoral Care; Prior Brian Rauschhuber, Prior of the Western United States; HE Bailiff Brooks Mancini and Dame Diane Mancini, outgoing commander.

Commandery of the Sierras Helps Kids and Vets Also Reaches out to Families Affected by Autism

Hundreds of disadvantaged kids and homeless vets will take part in equine-related programs at Victory Ranch this next year, assisted in part by a recent gift of \$10,000 to them from the Commandery of the Sierras. After 13 years of service in the San Jose area, ranch owners and founders Doug and Pat Hutten relocated their operation to a 10.5-acre parcel of land northeast of Reno in 2018. “The money will be used either to build a hay storage shed, install AC power to the barn/classroom or help with funding a covered arena,” Doug says.

Programs offered by the ranch include equine-assisted psychotherapy, homeless vet visits, horse art and organized team building. Bonding with horses through care, riding and art expression allows participants to leave Victory Ranch with a renewed sense of hope and self-esteem as they continue their journey through life.

The check presentation appropriately took place at the 100-year anniversary of the Reno Rodeo in June with Prior Brian Rauschhuber, Commander BJ Sullivan and Chevalier Don Witt, sponsor of the ranch, in attendance, along with many other knights and dames of the Commandery of the Sierras.

JUSTin HOPE Foundation

Named for Justin Hope, a boy diagnosed with a neuro-development disorder at a young age, the JUSTin HOPE Foundation is dedicated to helping other individuals and families who are also affected by these types of disorders. By offering peer support, financial aid, respite services, support groups and access to resources, the foundation helps families and individuals to live their lives to the fullest potential. Knights and dames of the Commandery of the Sierras will be awarding the foundation \$10,000 at a check presentation next month.



Members of the commandery enjoy the excitement of the Reno Rodeo with the owner of Victory Ranch. Pictured, left to right, Prior Brian Rauschhuber, Doug Hutton, Chevalier Don Witt and Chevalier BJ Sullivan

Vamos a Mexico!

Although knights and dames of the Commandery of the Sierras take growth and recruitment very seriously, the relatively small size of the group still makes it possible for members to socialize frequently. As they take turns hosting the regular monthly commandery meetings in their homes or at local restaurants, members have come up with enticing menus and themes for these get togethers.

Easily the most exotic and elaborate was the February meeting when a contingency of knights and dames traveled to Puerto Vallarta, MX, where they were hosted by Dame Myrlen Ann Knafelc and Chevalier Wendell Norris. In addition to the business meeting held at Myrlen Ann's penthouse, over the week the group was entertained by a variety of activities that included dinner at La Iguana (Elizabeth Taylor's former villa), Puerto Vallarta's Mardi Gras and brunch at La Palapa. An especially memorable evening featured Cirque du Soleil-type performers at John Huston's former estate followed by the Rhythms of the Night amphitheater extravaganza.

Other meetings this past year have included gourmet dinners at the Grill restaurant, hosted by Commander BJ Sullivan; a cioppino feed hosted by Dames Jeanne Walpole and Linda Nichole and Chevaliers James Peterson and Allen Kennedy; and a barbeque in their stunning rose garden, hosted by Chevalier Richard Harris and his wife, Ann Marie.

With a background in professional catering, Linda and Allen have shared their expertise at a number of commandery events. They are looking forward to orchestrating upcoming dinners hosted by Chevaliers John Kadlic and Don Witt and Dame Renee Verrier. In addition to their commitment to charity, members of the commandery put a high value on the camaraderie that flourishes in the group.



Nothing like a festive dinner at La Iguana to make everyone smile



A commandery meeting with pizzazz, hosted by Dame Myrlen Ann Knafelc and Chevalier Wendell Norris, pictured with Steven Murdock, center

Rauschhuber, Sullivan, Pezonella and Witt Receive Promotions

Four members of the Commandery of the Sierras received promotions at the recent investiture of the Priors of the Western United States and the San Francisco Area. Brian J. Rauschhuber, KJSJ, was installed as Prior of the Western United States and BJ Sullivan, KJSJ, was installed as the new commander of the Commandery of the Sierras. Not in attendance, but also receiving promotions were Ray Pezonella, KSJ, and Don Witt, KSJ, who were both elevated to the rank of Knight of Grace.

Presided over by HMEH Grand Master Bailiff William Stein, the colorful investiture service took place in historic Grace Cathedral atop Nob Hill in San Francisco. Also taking part in the ceremony were HE Conventual Bailiff Grand Commander Ian Reid, HE Conventual Bailiff Grand Conservator Joe Rude III, HE Grand Prior of the United States and Central America Bailiff Suzanne Turner, HE Prior of the Western United States Bailiff Colleen Wilcox and Prior of the San Francisco Area William Buchanan.

Festivities included a Friday night welcome reception at the St. Francis Yacht Club, a breakfast for aspirants Saturday morning and a post investiture gala dinner and dance at the Mark Hopkins Hotel.

In addition to Sullivan and Rauschhuber, those attending from the Commandery of the Sierras were HE Bailiff Brooks Mancini, Commander Diane Mancini, Renee Verrier DSJ, Julee Rauschhuber and Frank Fado.



**Chevalier BJ Sullivan, Dame Rene Verrier and
Prior Brian Rauschhauber, left to right, at
Grace Cathedral in San Francisco**

Calendar of Upcoming Events

**August 19 Commandery Meeting
Hosted by Renee Verrier**

**September 7 Garden Party
A Knight in Provence Hosted by St. Joseph Commandery**

**September 16 Commandery Meeting
Hosted by Don Witt in Roseville, CA**

**October 11-12
Commandery of Cleveland Investiture**

**October 14 Commandery Meeting
Hosted by Ray Pezonella**

**October 18-19
Victoria Commandery Investiture**

**November 8-9
Commandery of the Palm Beaches Investiture**

November 11 Commandery Meeting

November 22 Reno City Lights

Officers of the Commandery of the Sierras

Commander--BJ Sullivan

Vice Commander--Ray Pezonella

Secretary--Renee Verrier

Receiver General--Richard Harris

Almoner--John Kadlic

Herald--Jeanne Walpole

Marshal--Don Witt

Caregiver--Laurie Acton