

LCI ORIENTATION SUMMARY

August 2009

Lions Clubs International began as the dream of Chicago insurance executive Melvin Jones. He believed that local business clubs should expand their horizons from purely professional concerns to the betterment of their communities and the world at large. Jones' own service group, the Business Circle of Chicago, agreed.

After contacting similar groups around the country, an organizational meeting was held on June 7, 1917, at the LaSalle Hotel in Chicago. The new group took the name of one of the groups invited, the "International Association of Lions Clubs".

A national convention was held in Dallas, Texas, in October of that year. Thirty-six delegates representing 22 clubs from nine states were in attendance. The convention began to define what the association was to become.

A constitution, by-laws, objects and code of ethics were approved. Among the official objects adopted in these early years was one which read, "No club shall hold out the financial betterment of its members" as its object. The object has remained one of the association's main tenets ever since.

Dr. W. P. Woods, of Evansville, Indiana, USA was elected as the first president. Guiding force and founder Jones was named acting secretary, thus beginning his relationship with Lions that ended only with his death in 1961

The royal colors of purple and gold were selected as the official colors when the association was organized in 1917. Purple stands for loyalty to friends and for integrity of mind and heart. Gold symbolizes sincerity of purpose, liberality in judgment, purity in life and generosity in mind, heart and purse to those with need. Today LCI often uses a dark blue in place of purple.

At the 1919 convention the official Lions symbol was adopted after a move to change it was opposed by a young attorney from Denver, Colorado. His name was Halsted Ritter. "The name Lions stands not only for fraternity, good fellowship, strength of character and purpose, but above all, its combination of L-I-O-N-S heralds to the country the true meaning of citizenship: LIBERTY, INTELLIGENCE, OUR NATION'S SAFETY."

At the same 1919 Convention the official Lions emblem was adopted. It consists of a gold letter "L" on a circular purple (or blue) field. Bordering this is a circular gold area with two Lion profiles facing away from the center. The word "Lions" appears at the top and

“International” at the bottom. The Lions face both past and future – showing both pride of heritage and confidence in the future.

Just three years after its formation, the organization became international when the first club in Windsor, Ontario, Canada was established in 1920. Clubs were later organized in Mexico, China and Cuba. By 1927, membership stood at 60,000 in 1,183 clubs.

In 1935, Panama became home to the first Central American club; the first club in South America was reorganized in Colombia the following year. Sweden, then France, brought Europe into the association in 1948.

Japan had clubs by 1952, and the so-called “Eastern Bloc” was unblocked in 1989 with the formation of clubs in Hungary, Poland and Estonia. In 1990, a club was chartered in Moscow and today over 100 Lions clubs are demonstrating the value of service in countries once closed to voluntary action.

Perhaps the single event having the greatest impact on the association’s service commitment occurred in 1925 when Helen Keller addressed the Lions at the international convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, USA. It was there that she challenged Lions to become “knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness.”

Broadening its international role, Lions Clubs International helped the United Nations form the Non-Governmental Organizations sections in 1945 and continues to hold consultative status with the U.N.

Each year, during the Lions Day with the United Nations ceremonies, an award is presented to the grand prizewinner of the Lions International Peace Poster Contest.

In 1954 Lions Clubs International adopted their official motto, ‘We Serve’.

In 1957 the first Leo Club was chartered at Abingdon High School in Pennsylvania and Leo Clubs became an official Lions project in 1966.

In 1968 Lions Clubs International created the Lions Clubs International Fund the charitable arm of lionism. From 1968 thru 2008 LCIF approved over 7000 grants for over \$640 million dollars to support its philanthropic causes of: a.) Preserving sight, b.) Combating disability, c.) Promoting health, d.) Serving youth, e.) Providing disaster relief. Currently there are 6 types of LCIF grants available; 1.) Sightfirst, 2.) Standard, 3.) Core 4, 4.) International Assistance, 5.) Emergency, 6.) Major Catastrophic.

In 1987 Lions Clubs International was the first service club to invite women into full membership.

In 1988 Lions International Peace Poster Contest is introduced.

In 1990 Lions launched their most aggressive sight preservation effort to date, SightFirst. The more than US\$140 million-plus program strives to rid the world of preventable and reversible blindness by closing the gap between existing health care services and those that remain desperately needed. The unprecedented program joins Lions volunteers with blindness prevention experts and organizations and governments.

With Sightfirst I funds LCIF from 1990-2008:

- Awarded 922 grants in 90 countries for a total of \$231 million. Which...
- Restored sight to 7.5 million people through cataract surgeries
- Prevented serious vision loss for 30 million thru vitamin K treatments
- Improved eye-care services for hundreds of millions
- Provided over 114 million treatments for river blindness
- Built or expanded over 300 eye hospitals/clinics/wards
- Upgraded more than 372 eye centers with equipment
- Trained 345,000 ophthalmologists, ophthalmic nurses, other professional eye care workers and village health workers
- Launched world's first-ever initiative to combat child blindness in partnership with World Health Organization
- Established or strengthened 30 pediatric eye-care centers that have impacted the lives of 74 million children

Campaign Sightfirst II (2005-08) givers pledged over \$200 million, of which \$160 million has been collected thru June 2009. In a 3 pronged attack using Sightfirst Grants over the next 15 years, the first \$150 million collected will be used to treat; 1.) Chronic eye diseases - Cataracts, River blindness, Vitamin deficiencies, 2.) Emerging threats, 3.) All the funds collected above \$150 million are to be used for research on eye diseases of modern societies - Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, and Macular degeneration.

During the 2007-08 Lions Year it is estimated that the Lions of the world:

- donated over \$600 million to charitable organizations.
- performed over 33 million hours of Community Service.
- provided 600,000 free professional glaucoma screenings and make 26,000 corneal transplants possible each year
- established and support a majority of the world's eye banks and hundreds of clinics, hospitals and eye research centers worldwide

- collected an estimated 20 million pairs of used eyeglasses annually and send approximately 6 million pairs to Lions Eyeglass Recycling Centers for recycling and distribution at no cost to those in need in developing countries
- offered screenings, eyeglasses and sports goggles to athletes through the Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes Program-- more than 100,000 athletes have been screened
- provided free quality eye care, eyeglasses, Braille-writers, white canes and other assistive devices for thousands of people

Lions Clubs International has grown to include 1.3 million men and women in approximately 45,000 clubs, 743 districts located in 206 countries and geographic areas. The organization is governed by an International Constitution and By-laws amended by vote of club delegates at each International Convention.

There is also an International Policy manual amended by the International directors at the 4 board meetings they convene each year.

There are currently (2008) 44 members on the International board:

- Four executive officers; 2nd & 1st International Vice Presidents, International President, and Immediate Past International President who make up the Executive Committee. They serve one year in each position.
- Thirty four International directors elected from throughout the 7 Constitutional Areas of lionism. They serve an elected two year term.
- Six Board members are appointed for a one year term by the International President. They have no Board voting privilege.

The International Board issues a standard form Club, District, and Multi-District Constitution and By-laws for use by those Lion's entities who have not enacted an individual one for themselves.

The Mission of Lions Clubs International is: To create and foster a spirit of understanding among all people for humanitarian needs by providing voluntary service through community involvement and international cooperation.