

## LIONS HISTORY

The International Association of Lions Clubs, or Lions Clubs International started as the dream of a Chicago insurance man Melvin Jones to reach beyond business issues and address the betterment of the communities and the world. This initiative gave birth to Lions Club in June, 1917. The 12 men who gathered there overcame a natural sense of loyalty to their parent clubs, voted the "Association of Lions Clubs" into existence, and issued a call for a national convention to be held in Dallas, Texas, USA in October of the same year. Thirty-six delegates representing 22 clubs from nine states heeded the call, approved the "Lions Clubs" designation, and elected Dr. William P. Woods of Indiana as their first president. Guiding force and founder Melvin Jones was named acting secretary. Thus began an association with Lionism that only ended with his death in 1961.

Community leaders soon began to organize clubs throughout the United States, and the association became "international" with the formation of the Windsor, Ontario, Canada Lions Club in 1920. Clubs were later organized in China, Mexico, and Cuba. By 1927, membership stood at 60 000 in 1 183 clubs and expansion continued. The International Association of Lions Clubs is today the largest service organization in the world with over 1.4 million members in more than 48,000 clubs covering more than 200 countries and geographic areas. Lions Clubs are not social clubs, although there are social benefits to membership. Lions Club members give their time, skills and resources to raise funds for charitable giving both in their communities and internationally.

With the motto of "We Serve", the Lions service programmes are vision conservation, diabetes awareness, alleviating hunger, environment awareness, childhood cancer and many more. Lions took up sight conservation as their major goal after a speech given by Helen Keller at the Lions International Convention held at Cedar Point, Ohio, in 1925. At that time, Helen Keller challenged the Lions to become "Knights of the Blind", a challenge that has become a rallying cry for Lions projects around the world. Lions work in the area of sight conservation is carried out at many levels. Individual Clubs sponsor free eye screening programs using mobile eye clinics. In many countries, Clubs sponsor eye surgery camps where cataract surgeries are performed at no charge for those that can't afford this medical care. Many clubs collect old eye glasses for distribution to the needy in other countries.

The International Association of Lions Clubs is the largest non-governmental organization associated with the United Nations and was called upon by the United Nations and the World Health Organization to raise funds for an international program of sight conservation.

The Lions International Headquarters is in Oak Brook, Illinois, USA. You can contact Lions Clubs International as follows:

Lions Clubs International  
300 22nd Street  
Oak Brook, IL USA. 60521-8842  
Telephone: (630) 571-5466  
Fax: (630) 571-8890  
Email: [lions@lionsclubs.org](mailto:lions@lionsclubs.org)  
Website: [www.lionsclubs.org](http://www.lionsclubs.org)