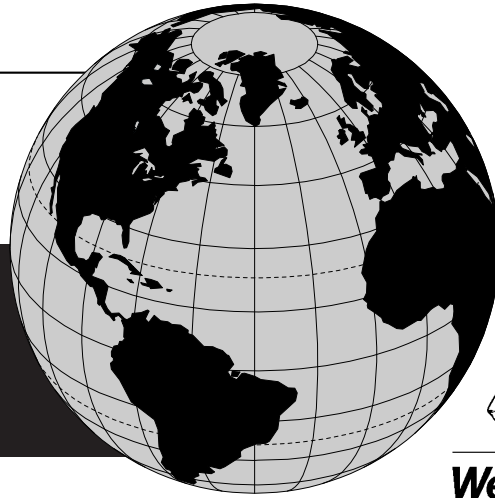


LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

History



We Serve

The International Association of Lions Clubs began as the dream of Chicago businessman 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 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 "Association of Lions Clubs," and a national convention was held in Dallas in October of that year. A constitution, by-laws, objects and code of ethics were approved.

Among the official objects adopted in those early years was one which read, "No club shall hold out the financial betterment of its members as its object." This object has remained one of the association's main tenets ever since.

Just three years after its formation, the organization became international when the first club in Canada was established in 1920. Major international expansion continued as clubs were established, particularly throughout Europe, Asia and Africa during the 1950s and 60s.

Perhaps the single event having the greatest impact on the association's service commitment occurred in 1925 when Helen Keller addressed the Lions at their 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."

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.

Broadening its role in international understanding, the association helped the United Nations form the Non-Governmental Organizations sections in 1945, and continues to hold consultative status today. Each year, during The Lions Day With The United Nations ceremonies, an award is presented to the grand prize winner of the Lions International Peace Poster Contest.

Since those first years, the association has grown to include 1.4 million men and women in more than 43,000 clubs located in approximately 185 countries and geographical areas.

