

We Serve

International President's Program 2006-2007





Jimmy M. Ross
International President 2006-2007



Dear Fellow Lions:

The small town of Quitaque, population 432, sits on the vast prairies of west Texas, where communities are close-knit and the distances between them are wide. There, in my hometown, it is plain to see how grassroots movements connect people for a common purpose.

Grassroots movements are those organized by networks of citizens who join together to influence the world around them. They represent ordinary people doing extraordinary work, typically at their own initiative.

Even though part of a global structure, Lions clubs are fundamentally grassroots movements. Our great international association, active in 197 countries, respected by governments and recognized worldwide as a humanitarian force, is at heart an association of grassroots clubs with individual contributions to make.

I am sure that even if it is very different from mine in Quitaque, your Lions club is grounded in a special culture of like-minded people sharing a common interest. Our organization has grown beyond expectation since the early days of Melvin Jones and the urban professional life of 1917 Chicago, but even today, as we take **pride** in being the world's largest organization of its kind, we serve primarily through local clubs.

As our association's name suggests, each club is a fundamental component in our global alliance to serve. Clubs are the vital essence of our association. When they grow and thrive, our association grows and thrives.

For these reasons, we need to do everything we can to promote the motivation, growth, strength, and vitality of our clubs. Our duty as leaders of Lions Clubs International, from club presidents to district governors to international officers, is to encourage and support the service of our clubs. As leaders, this is how we serve. I ask you to work with me in helping each Lions club fulfill its dream of being the very best service club it can be.

We Serve WITH A NEW LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

The world is changing and so is Lions Clubs International.

People are adapting to a world where a wide range of influences, from demographic shifts to electronic entertainment and communications, increasingly set the tone of daily life.

It is no wonder that the modern Lions club is very different from the one that existed just a couple of short decades ago. Today, Lions increasingly comprise diverse groups of service-minded men and women who focus on results and effective use of time.

So how are we new?

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As part of its renewal, Lions Clubs International is targeting four main “markets” of prospective members:

Urban populations: The new Urban Market Development Program is designed to start new city clubs, often connected to an ethnic neighborhood, a lifestyle or even a special interest.

“Baby boomers”: For the influential generation born immediately after World War II, Lions club membership can offer a varied and fulfilling volunteer experience, making a difference in others’ lives as well as theirs.

Younger generations: For educated and techno-savvy younger generations such young individuals, New Century Lions clubs can provide a format ideally suited to men and women up to the age of 35.

Special interest groups: Lions clubs can provide groups focused on a specific need – nursing, law enforcement, children’s service projects – with an established structure and network to help accomplish their goals.



Lions in Shenzhen, China, held a Sight for Kids screening for elementary school students.

We Serve ... BY SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS AND CLUBS

One of the most important duties of Lion leaders is to remember whom we serve. In a sense, everything we do should answer the question, “How does this action respond to the needs and expectations of the membership?” How we respond to the membership will measure our achievements as leaders.

My job as an international president is to serve you. When I do a good job and make the association more successful in what it does, the association and I will be successful.

The job of a district governor is to be a *motivator*: to help the clubs in the district be more **successful** in what they do. When the clubs succeed, he or she will succeed. But a district governor will **not** succeed (nor will the clubs), if he or she tries to make the clubs do what he or she wants them to do, anymore than I would succeed if I tried to make the association meet my needs.

For some districts, this approach may represent a new attitude, but Melvin Jones said it simply and said it best: “You will never get very far until you start doing something for somebody else”. As leaders, we should never forget that our members are our customers, and not our employees! Let’s serve them!



A Lion ophthalmologist in Bosnia Herzegovina performs a vision screening during Lions World Sight Day.

We Serve ... THROUGH CLUB RENEWAL AND DEVELOPMENT

I am encouraged that our international board in 2006 - 2007 has committed itself to a comprehensive membership and club development plan that will go well beyond annual membership targets and programs. It is a plan that will be adaptable to the customs and preferences of Lions in different parts of the world.

Many studies have shown that people are eager to join an organization when it is doing things *they* consider serious and important. If we concentrate on service that means something to the community and meets the needs of our members, current and prospective, I believe our membership growth will surprise even the most optimistic among us.

Let us not forget that, even while our **mission** is service, Lions clubs by definition are membership organizations. If clubs are our “business,” members are our “customers.” When we say we need to bring in more members, what we may really be saying is we need more customers! I know of no business that can afford to take its customers for granted, at least not for very long. Do you?

Does your club make the most of the talents of its members and impress its community with ambitious and innovative service projects?

How does your club serve its “customers”? Are they satisfied customers?

Club Renewal

This year, 2006-2007, will be a Year of Club Renewal. Lions clubs are moving away from the old rituals and replacing them with new modes of participation and interaction. We will *reinvent* our clubs through new

ways of thinking and organizing. We will *revitalize* by moving away from *old* assumptions and attitudes that do not work to *new* ideas and approaches that succeed. And we will *re-establish* the mission of service and achievement that has invigorated our association for the past 90 years.

To start the year, I will challenge each Lions club, at its first full meeting, to examine in three simple steps everything it does: meetings, projects, recruitment, image, member relations, in short, *anything* that affects the strength of your club. Does the club meet the needs of your current members? Is it meeting the needs of *prospective* members?

In three steps, each club should identify:

1. Highly successful activities/practices that should be **continued and expanded**.
2. Less successful activities/practices that should be **changed and improved**.
3. Unsuccessful activities/practices that should be **replaced by something brand new**.

As your club ends outdated activities and practices, take the opportunity to re-establish your club's mission. For the “old” things that are no longer working, determine “new” actions your club will take to renovate its thinking and operations.

Every club's renewal must be a positive process, to *build up and not tear down* as our Code of Ethics reminds us, and never an occasion to direct blame or criticism against anyone. Get every member involved in an open and *constructive* discussion.

Your club may list many things or just a few. But it will be the members, as a club, who will be the ones to decide. The final list will represent your club's unique blueprint for a positive future.

Mount Prospect, Illinois, USA, Lions delivered two trucks' full of supplies to four Lions clubs along the Gulf Coast of Mississippi, USA, for distribution to victims of Hurricane Katrina.





Left: In a local mall in Kuala Lumpur Central, Malaysia, Lions held a blood drive.

Right: Lions sort and clean collected eyeglasses for the Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center.



After your club has resolved to move forward with its renovations, report your plan on the Club Renewal Form (available at www.lionsclubs.org or by request from International Activities and Program Planning Division). On the Web site you will find a link to an easy-to-submit report that will automatically register your club's actions and provide an update to the district governor.

Each club completing the report will receive from me a special token of congratulations and appreciation to welcome the club as part of the new Lions Clubs International. We will highlight the new ideas that will be taking root in clubs around the world. At the end of the year, we will do a survey to measure results.

***We Serve* ... BY ORGANIZING NEW CLUBS AND BUILDING MEMBERSHIP**

The First Purpose of our association is "To organize, charter and supervise service clubs to be known as Lions clubs." The formation of new clubs is essential to the Lions mission, as it brings to the organization new groups of talented leaders with fresh energy and innovative approaches to community service.

The only reason for a Lions club to exist is to serve. And the only reason to start a new Lions club is to provide services where they are needed but are not being fully addressed.

To support this purpose, I have committed myself as International President to form 15 new Lions clubs in 2006-2007 in areas where there is a need for service. I am also challenging each district to set its own goal for chartering new Lions clubs and expanding Lions services this year. Some districts may exceed my goal of 15, but each district should aim to complete 2006-2007 with new clubs, a reasonable goal not only for this year, but also for each year to come.

"Service is the rent we pay for the space we occupy."

Each district will have the support of selected Lion mentors to advise and encourage them in new club formation. Additionally, district governors and other Lions who achieve their district's targets will receive special recognition from me for their accomplishments.

Involving new members and clubs in our work to help others is an integral part of why we serve. But we cannot neglect strengthening the service of existing clubs. Every club is important and deserves the attention and support of its district and international association.

I am challenging all district governors and other leaders of their districts including MERL Teams to set goals for expanding Lions club service. Can we welcome 50,000 service-minded women members into our Lions clubs this year? Can we achieve service growth in our existing clubs through our club renewal challenge? I am most certain that we can and will.

***We Serve* ... BY DEVELOPING LEADERS**

"Leadership should be born out of the understanding of the needs of those who would be affected by it."
- Marian Anderson

If clubs are the foundation of Lions Clubs International, **leadership** training is a means by which to fortify that foundation. Active leadership development positively influences membership growth, as strong clubs with quality leadership, clear direction and a relevant focus will attract and retain more members.





A new member is inducted into the Burr Ridge-Hinsdale-Oak Brook, Illinois, USA, Lions Club.

This year, we will offer new, innovative Faculty Development Institutes designed specifically to support and enhance local training efforts. In addition, materials will be available online to assist leadership development locally.

To further **support** the leadership strength of our clubs and members, Lions Clubs International has taken a leap into the state-of-the-art technology of *electronic learning*. Accessed through the association's Web site, the **Lions Learning Center** offers all Lions a cost-effective way to sharpen their knowledge of Lions Clubs International fundamentals and enhance their leadership skills through interactive online courses. Lions around the world are encouraged to take advantage of this exciting leadership development tool.



Leos in Ghana gather for the District 63 Convention.

We Serve BY WORKING TOGETHER FOR A BETTER WORLD

Charles Dickens wrote, "No one is useless in this world who lightens the burdens of it to any one else." Every club has a special mission to lighten the burden of someone in need, a mission of service in which every Lion can take pride.

Your Lions club is probably the best judge of what activities it should conduct to accomplish its mission. There are any number of needs and causes in your communities and the world that deserve the time and talents of your fellow Lions. Whatever services your club chooses, let me suggest examples of programs I believe represent who Lions are and what we do well.

Lions Eyeglass Recycling provides literally millions of needed eyeglasses each year for people otherwise unable to afford them. Collecting and recycling eyeglasses is an easy, highly visible, hands-on project that provides a needed service.

During recent disasters like the terrible Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005, in the Gulf Coast of the USA, and other catastrophes, Lions were quick to mobilize and provide vital emergency services. To expand and support such efforts, I will call upon the board to develop guidelines to make Lions' emergency management even more effective the next time a disaster strikes.

Our Leo Club Program, originated in 1957 by a Pennsylvania, USA, Lions club, has given hundreds of thousands of young people throughout the world an opportunity to mature as leaders while learning the value of service. Sponsoring a Leo club may be the best way we have to involve younger generations in the service mission of Lions clubs. Information on starting a Leo club in your local school or community is readily available by writing to leo@lionsclubs.org or logging on to www.lionsclubs.org. I hope your club, if it has not done so already, will consider sponsoring a new Leo club this year.

Lions Quest, now active in 25 countries, has been one of our most acclaimed youth programs since 1984. Supporting one or more of three curricula - *Skills for Growing* (elementary school grades), *Skills for Adolescence* (middle school grades) and *Skills for Action* (high school grades) - can be an excellent way for a Lions club or district to help today's young people develop strong character traits and social skills. Contact the Lions Quest Department at International Headquarters or log on to www.lions-quest.org to learn how to get involved.

One of our newest programs, *Lions Services for Children*, was started in 2003 to improve the lives of children and young adolescents in adverse circumstances through health and education services, locally and internationally. By contacting children@lionsclubs.org or the International Activities and Program Planning Division, you can learn of ways to participate.

During the year, Lions Clubs International will be developing online databases of successful Lions fundraisers and hands-on service projects. Lions will be able to share their best practices for raising money and conducting activities that other clubs can adapt for their communities.

For more ideas, the association's Adopted Programs offer a menu of worthy options that can fulfill your club's mission. Many clubs will conduct sight activities, help prevent and treat diabetes, assist the hearing-impaired, clean the environment, support the arts, and promote international understanding. Be sure, however, that what *your* club chooses to do fulfills both *your* dreams and *your community's* priorities.



***We Serve* ... BY PROMOTING OUR ACTIVITIES**

I often hear it said that Lions clubs never get media coverage. That is not true. In any given week, there are dozens of articles in local newspapers around the globe featuring Lions clubs. Media in smaller markets are continuously searching for stories of local impact. What is true is that it is increasingly difficult to place a story with the major, international media.

We will be taking a "new" approach, placing more tools and resources in the hands of local Lions in order to support more vibrant public relations programs at the club and district levels.

I encourage every Lions club and district to reach out to local newspapers, radio and television stations. Let your local media know that your club/district stands for service; that Lions Clubs International believes in the value of volunteering and giving back to the community. Above all, invite your local media to visit a service project to see first-hand the impact Lions are making. Use your local media to show the public that Lions are making a difference.

LCIF...TAKING "*We Serve*" TO A GLOBAL LEVEL

It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.
- Kahlil Gibran

All Lions clubs will want to do their best to meet and exceed the goals of our Campaign SightFirst II. The campaign will be in full swing in 2006-2007 as clubs begin intensive fund-raising efforts.

The goal of the campaign is to raise US\$150 million with a challenge goal of US\$200 million. The campaign will allow LCIF and Lions to continue and expand the successful work of SightFirst, which has restored sight or prevented serious vision loss for 24 million people through Campaign SightFirst I. Campaign SightFirst II is necessary because millions more are threatened with blindness and the funds originally raised for SightFirst are nearly exhausted.

Disaster relief remains a primary humanitarian mission of LCIF. The foundation will continue to mobilize the generosity and volunteer spirit of Lions to **help** serve victims of disasters, whether tsunamis, hurricanes, earthquakes or other calamities. Working with LCIF, local Lions are able to identify the most pressing needs of their communities and to find the most efficient ways to meet those needs.



Lions in Nigeria conduct an eye screening on an infant.

We Serve

The theme I have chosen for my presidential year is the motto of our international association and its member clubs: "We Serve." If you are a club or district leader, I urge you to do the same.

Our motto was adopted at the 1954 International Convention in New York as the winning entry of a two-year contest. "We Serve" was chosen by the International Board of Directors after a long and difficult process of judging more than 6,000 suggestions from around the world.

The motto was proposed by eight Lions in the United States, two in Canada and one in Hawaii, with the prize given to the entry with the earliest postmark. In his acceptance message, winner Lion D.A. Stevenson of Canada wrote: "I wish to emphasize that the credit goes, first, to our splendid, little, Fonthill, Ontario, Lions Club, whose inspiring example of devoted, selfless service to its community gave me the motto 'We Serve,' practically automatically. And secondly, to those same worldwide service activities of our great body, Lions International."

Our motto is rooted in everything we do and stand for, whether in Quitaque, Texas, USA, or Quito, Ecuador. It is the perfect expression of why people become Lions club members. It inspires each Lion to take pride in club membership and motivates each club to perform works of charity and **compassion** freely and willingly. Our grassroots link and unite us. Let us nourish and cultivate our grassroots of service and watch our association grow to unprecedented heights!

There is one other reason why I have chosen "We Serve" as the theme for my year in office. This year is not about me. It is about all of us Lions: we service-minded men and women, young and old, who work together voluntarily for the betterment of society, in our hometowns and around the world.

This is *our* theme. Let it be *our* year.

Jimmy M. Ross

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During a mission to Mexico, thousands of people were provided with eyeglasses collected by Lions all over the world.



Bay Waveland North Elementary School in Waveland, Mississippi, USA, thank Lions for re-stocking their library shelves after the destruction of Hurricane Katrina.