

Who We Are

Mission Statement

To empower volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, encourage peace and promote international understanding through Lions clubs.

Vision Statement

To be the global leader in community and humanitarian service.

History

In 1917, [Melvin Jones](#), a 38-year-old Chicago business leader, told members of his local business club they should reach beyond business issues and address the betterment of their communities and the world. Jones' group, the Business Circle of Chicago, agreed.

After contacting similar groups around the United States, an organizational meeting was held on June 7, 1917, in Chicago, Illinois, USA. The new group took the name of one of the invited groups, the "Association of Lions Clubs," and a national convention was held in Dallas, Texas, USA in October of that year. A constitution, by-laws, objects and a code of ethics were approved.

Within three years, Lions became an international organization. Since then, we've earned high marks for both integrity and transparency. We're a well-run organization with a steady vision, a clear mission, and a long – and proud – history.

Beginning in 1917

Melvin Jones asked a simple and world-changing question – what if people put their talents to work improving their communities? Almost 100 years later, Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization, with 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs and countless stories of Lions acting on the same simple idea: let's improve our communities.

1920: Going International

Just three years after our founding, Lions became international when we established the first club in Canada. Mexico followed in 1927. In the 1950s and 1960s international growth accelerated, with new clubs in Europe, Asia and Africa. The first Lions Clubs in Georgia was organized in 1920.

1925: Eradicating Blindness

[Helen Keller](#) addressed the Lions Clubs International Convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, USA, and challenged Lions to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness." Since then, we have worked tirelessly to aid the [blind and visually impaired](#).

1945: Uniting Nations

The ideal of an international organization is exemplified by our enduring relationship with the United Nations. We were one of the first nongovernmental organizations invited to assist in the drafting of the United Nations Charter and have supported the work of the UN ever since.

1957: Organizing Youth Programs

In the late 1950s, we created the [Leo Program](#) to provide the youth of the world with an opportunity for personal development through volunteering. There are approximately 144,000 Leos and 5,700 Leo clubs in more than 140 countries worldwide.

1968: Establishing Our Foundation

Lions Clubs International Foundation assists Lions with global and large-scale local humanitarian projects. Through our Foundation, Lions meet the needs of their local and global communities.

1990: Launching SightFirst

Through SightFirst, Lions are restoring sight and preventing blindness on a global scale. Launched in 1990, Lions have raised more than \$346 million for this initiative. SightFirst targets the major causes of blindness: cataract, trachoma, river blindness, childhood blindness, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma.

Today: Extending Our Reach

Lions Clubs International extends our mission of service every day – in local communities, in all corners of the globe. The needs are great and our services broad, including sight, health, youth, elderly, the environment and disaster relief. Our international network has grown to include [over 200 countries and geographic areas](#).

Purpose and Ethics

Lions Clubs International Purpose

- **To Organize**, charter and supervise service clubs to be known as Lions clubs.
- **To Coordinate** the activities and standardize the administration of Lions clubs.
- **To Create** and foster a spirit of understanding among the peoples of the world.
- **To Promote** the principles of good government and good citizenship.
- **To Take** an active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of the community.
- **To Unite** the clubs in the bonds of friendship, good fellowship and mutual understanding.
- **To Provide** a forum for the open discussion of all matters of public interest; provided, however, that partisan politics and sectarian religion shall not be debated by club members.

- **To Encourage** service-minded people to serve their community without personal financial reward, and to encourage efficiency and promote high ethical standards in commerce, industry, professions, public works and private endeavors.

Lions Clubs Code of Ethics

- **To Show** my faith in the worthiness of my vocation by industrious application to the end that I may merit a reputation for quality of service.
- **To Seek** success and to demand all fair remuneration or profit as my just due, but to accept no profit or success at the price of my own self-respect lost because of unfair advantage taken or because of questionable acts on my part.
- **To Remember** that in building up my business it is not necessary to tear down another's; to be loyal to my clients or customers and true to myself.
- **Whenever** a doubt arises as to the right or ethics of my position or action towards others, to resolve such doubt against myself.
- **To Hold** friendship as an end and not a means. To hold that true friendship exists not on account of the service performed by one to another, but that true friendship demands nothing but accepts service in the spirit in which it is given.
- **Always** to bear in mind my obligations as a citizen to my nation, my state, and my community, and to give them my unswerving loyalty in word, act, and deed. To give them freely of my time, labor and means.
- **To Aid** others by giving my sympathy to those in distress, my aid to the weak, and my substance to the needy.
- **To Be Careful** with my criticism and liberal with my praise; to build up and not destroy.

Melvin Jones Biography



Melvin Jones was born on January 13, 1879 in Fort Thomas, Arizona, the son of a United States Army captain who commanded a troop of scouts. Later, his father was transferred and the family moved east. As a young man, Melvin Jones made his home in Chicago, Illinois, became associated with an insurance firm and in 1913 formed his own agency.

He soon joined the Business Circle, a businessmen's luncheon group, and was shortly elected secretary. This group was one of many at that time devoted solely to promoting the financial interests of their membership. Because of their limited appeal, they were destined to disappear. Melvin Jones, then a 38-year-old Chicago business leader, had other plans.

"What if these men," Melvin Jones asked, "who are successful because of their drive, intelligence and ambition, were to put their talents to work improving their communities?" Thus, at his invitation, delegates from men's clubs met in Chicago to lay the groundwork for such an organization and on June 7, 1917, Lions Clubs International was born.

Melvin Jones eventually abandoned his insurance agency to devote himself full time to Lions at International Headquarters in Chicago. It was under his dynamic leadership that Lions clubs earned the prestige necessary to attract civic-minded members.

The association's founder was also recognized as a leader by those outside the association. One of his greatest honors was in 1945 when he represented Lions Clubs International as a consultant in San Francisco, California, at the organization of the United Nations.

Melvin Jones, the man whose personal code – "You can't get very far until you start doing something for somebody else" – became a guiding principle for public-spirited people the world over, died June 1, 1961 at 82 years of age.

Helen Keller



Born in Tuscumbia, Alabama, USA, in 1880, Helen Keller developed a fever at 18 months of age that left her blind and deaf.

With the help of an exceptional teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan of the Perkins School for the Blind, Helen Keller learned sign language and braille. A few years later, she learned to speak. As an adult she became a tireless advocate for people with disabilities. And in 1925, she attended the Lions Clubs International Convention and challenged Lions to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness."

The Lions accepted her challenge and our work ever since has included [sight programs](#) aimed at preventable blindness.

Helen Keller Day

In 1971, the Board of Directors of Lions Clubs International declared that June 1 would be remembered as Helen Keller Day. Lions around the world implement sight-related service projects on Helen Keller Day.

Helen Keller's Speech at 1925 International Convention Cedar Point, Ohio, USA June 30, 1925

Transcript

Dear Lions and Ladies:

I suppose you have heard the legend that represents opportunity as a capricious lady, who knocks at every door but once, and if the door isn't opened quickly, she passes on, never to return. And that is as it should be. Lovely, desirable ladies won't wait. You have to go out and grab 'em.

I am your opportunity. I am knocking at your door. I want to be adopted. The legend doesn't say what you are to do when several beautiful opportunities present themselves at the same door. I guess you have to choose the one you love best. I hope you will adopt me. I am the youngest here, and what I offer you is full of splendid opportunities for service.

The American Foundation for the Blind is only four years old. It grew out of the imperative needs of the blind, and was called into existence by the sightless themselves. It is national and international in scope and in importance. It represents the best and most enlightened thought on our subject that has been reached so far. Its object is to make the lives of the blind more worthwhile everywhere by increasing their economic value and giving them the joy of normal activity.

Try to imagine how you would feel if you were suddenly stricken blind today. Picture yourself stumbling and groping at noonday as in the night; your work, your independence, gone. In that dark world wouldn't you be glad if a friend took you by the hand and said, "Come with me and I will teach you how to do some of the things you used to do when you could see?" That is just the kind of friend the American Foundation is going to be to all the blind in this country if seeing people will give it the support it must have.

You have heard how through a little word dropped from the fingers of another, a ray of light from another soul touched the darkness of my mind and I found myself, found the world, found God. It is because my teacher learned about me and broke through the dark, silent imprisonment which held me that I am able to work for myself and for others. It is the caring we want more than money. The gift without the sympathy and interest of the giver is empty. If you care, if we can make the people of this great country care, the blind will indeed triumph over blindness.

The opportunity I bring to you, Lions, is this: To foster and sponsor the work of the American Foundation for the Blind. Will you not help me hasten the day when there shall be no preventable blindness; no little deaf, blind child untaught; no blind man or woman unaided? I appeal to you Lions, you who have your sight, your hearing, you who are strong and brave and kind. Will you not constitute yourselves Knights of the Blind in this crusade against darkness?

I thank you.

Member Benefits

Volunteer Benefits

Becoming a Lions club member gives you the opportunity to volunteer locally, or internationally. Make new friends and professional connections. Lead projects that make your community a better place to live. Have fun doing it!

Below is a sample of what Lions club members from around the world have to say about volunteer benefits.

Community Service

"You see the joy in people's hearts and they say thank you, and the smile of a child. It's all those things that make you realize you've done something for your community."

Viv Grater, South Africa

“For the mere satisfaction that I get in my heart and for the service we’re providing the less fortunate people, I’m really proud to be a Lion.”

David Mutayisa, Uganda

Fun and Friendship

"We are not just Lions, we are not just friends, we are family."

Karen Piper-Taylor, Trinidad

"Helping people is fun. And, anytime you can get together with more than one person it makes it even more fun."

Jeff Gans, USA

Leadership Skills

“The personal development opportunities are endless. I get to use and develop my talents in public relations, but I also learn how to interact in a board meeting.”

Brindisi Chan, USA

“Given the opportunity to be a leader in the Lions club has motivated me to become more organized. It’s like leading your own business.”

Keith Gaydosh, USA

Networking

"We bring together people of different backgrounds, so that we can work together on one single project. And by doing that, we are serving our community, and we serve the world."

Gary Wong, USA

“We have doctors to schoolteachers to construction workers. It’s a wide range of people that helps our club grow and do many different things.”

Jennifer Mahnic, USA

International Service

“It gives us a great opportunity to work together as two nations, sharing the same projects.”

Greg Edgelow, USA

“What attracted me to Lions instead of another group is that it’s worldwide. It’s proven and that’s what I’m looking for.”

John Thomas King, USA

Family Friendly

“Lions can be the whole family. It can be everyone, because that’s really what community is – it’s everyone.”

Denise Lum, USA

“We clean the parks, we paint the benches, we make sure that the park is beautified for the residents in the community. My daughters absolutely love that.”

Ty'East Alleyen-Bunn, USA

Opportunities for Young People

“Our campus club is very rewarding and it’s exciting because it’s a very unique organization. We have both an international focus and also a local focus.”

Kjerstin Owren Myre, Norway

“Our main goal as Lions is to get the kids involved in the community through the Peace Poster Contest. Their voices are important.”

Kerry Fletcher, USA

Types of Membership

Choose the Membership That's Right for You

Lions clubs are composed of diverse people in communities in nearly every corner of the world. That's why we offer you several ways to become a Lion – and serve. Lions clubs offer volunteer programs for college students, kids, adults and families.

- **Regular Membership:** Are you interested in volunteer programs, community service and making our world a better place? Lions Clubs International (LCI) offers community members the opportunity to volunteer locally together as a group. Members are expected to meet membership requirements such as dues set by the club and LCI. Take the first step toward membership today – contact a [local club](#) and ask to be invited to a meeting.
- **Family Membership:** Looking for special volunteer programs and activities you can do with your family? [Family membership](#) allows relatives to volunteer together at a reduced dues rate. Family members must meet membership requirements, live in the same household and belong to the same club. Children cannot become members, but can participate in the [Cub Program](#), which allows children under age 12 the opportunity to build a lifelong dedication to helping others. If more than one member of your family is joining a club, tell them you want to join as a family unit.
- **Student Membership:** Our student volunteer programs allow you to make new friends – and help others in your community at the same time. With a student membership, your dues are reduced. If you are enrolled in an educational institution and between the age of legal majority

and 30, tell the club you are joining that you would like to take advantage of the Student Member Program dues discount.

- [Leo to Lion Membership](#). If you are a current or former Leo club member between the age of legal majority and through age 30, take the opportunity to receive a dues discount and continue doing volunteer work with Lions Clubs International ... as a Lion!

Learn More About Our Volunteer Programs

For more membership information, contact our [Membership and New Club Programs Department](#).