

# LION

WINTER 2026 LIONMAGAZINE.ORG

## THE FLYIN' LION

As Lori Bennett's  
vision fades, her  
confidence soars.



Lions International

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- 3 **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**
- 4 **BIG PICTURE**
- 6 **IN THE NEWS**
- 15 **MISSION 1.5 MOMENT**
- 44 **SERVICE AROUND THE WORLD**
- 48 **LCIF IMPACT**
- 56 **PARTING SHOT**



## WE SERVE

### LIONS INTERNATIONAL MISSION

To empower Lions clubs, volunteers and partners to improve health and well-being, strengthen communities, and support those in need through humanitarian service and grants that impact lives globally, and encourage peace and international understanding.

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30

### THE FLYIN' LION

Vision loss narrowed Lori Bennet's world, but Lions gave her the confidence to live fully again.

10

### UNITED FOR LIFE

French Lions' legacy endures in Benin's new maternity ward.

16

### THE SCIENCE OF SERVICE

Volunteering is good for the body and mind.

22

### THE HEART OF SERVICE BEATS ON

A young leader's spark helps restore a town's proud Lions tradition.

28

### BORN TO BE KIND

A Lion reflects on how family has shaped a lifetime of service.

38

### DRIVEN TO SERVE

Love and loss turns an auto shop into the heart of its community.

50

### LIONS IN THE MOVIES

See the award-winning movies where Lions made a surprise cameo.



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### YOUR PLACE TO SHINE

Dear Lion,

We each bring something unique to our service. And when our skills, passions and experiences come together, something extraordinary happens. Our clubs don't just give us opportunities to serve — they help bring out the very best in us. They're places where we can grow, connect and truly make a difference. In this issue, you'll see that spirit come to life in the stories we share.

Being a Lion is about belonging. It's about finding a community where who you are matters and where every contribution — big or small — makes an impact. Through our *MISSION 1.5* efforts, we're inviting more people to discover what it means to be part of something bigger. Every new Lion is a light that beckons to those in need and a welcomed member of our global family. Each one brings new friendships, fresh perspectives and even more reasons to keep serving.

Our Weeks of Service initiative is a prime opportunity to shine in communities around the world. This year's final dedicated week of service, focused on the environment, will take place April 18-26. Now is the perfect time to start planning your projects and inviting prospective Lions to join you in serving and celebrating the world we share.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable journey. Keep bringing your best. Keep lifting others. And keep shining.

Together we serve,

**A.P. Singh**  
International President  
Lions Clubs International



We Serve



## Feeding the Future

Members of the Camas Lions Club in Washington pack backpacks with nutritious food for local students. Their commitment to fighting hunger echoes the spirit of Lions everywhere who came together to nourish communities around the world this January for Hunger Week, one of this year's three dedicated Weeks of Service.

Learn more at [lionsclubs.org/weeks-of-service](https://lionsclubs.org/weeks-of-service).

## Celebrating Teamwork in Pasadena

Lions International rang in the new year at the 137th Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California.

This year's theme, "The Magic in Teamwork," beautifully captured the spirit of the world's largest service-based membership organization.

The Lions float, titled "In Harmony We Serve," featured four young Lions paddling in a canoe, representing what Lions can achieve when working together. The float included a log cabin flying the Lions flag, symbolizing resilience and the spirit of rebuilding communities after disasters. Lions Clubs International President A.P. Singh joined fellow Lions and Leos on the float to share this message of hope and invite parade viewers to join their local clubs.



In the days leading up to this globally televised New Year's Day tradition, nearly 1,000 volunteers logged an incredible 8,000 volunteer service hours.

## Service Makes the Starting Lineup at the Peach Bowl

On January 9 in Atlanta, Georgia, football fans gathered at the Chick-fil-A Peach Bowl FanFest, presented by Lions International, to gear up for one of college football's biggest games.



At the pre-game event, fans met local Lions and took part in a simple but meaningful service project — writing encouraging notes for residents of a nearby assisted-living community. It was an



easy way to serve while enjoying the energy of the day. That Lions International presence extended into the stadium, where branded signage appeared throughout as more than 75,000 fans watched the Indiana Hoosiers defeat the Oregon Ducks in the College Football Playoff semifinal.

## India Leo Club Wins Video Contest



Nearly 80 Leo clubs from more than 30 countries took part in the 2025 International Leo Day Video Contest.

Embracing the #HeartOfALeo theme, the Leos produced heartfelt videos highlighting what caring looks like in their communities.

The Leo Club of Thane North Star from India earned the grand prize for Through Their Eyes – Nazariya, a compelling video that shows how moments of care — from children crafting rakhis to senior citizens rediscovering joy — bring the Leo experience to life.

Watch the top videos at [lionsclubs.org/leo-video-contest](https://lionsclubs.org/leo-video-contest).

## Peace Poster Kits Now Available

Invite children to imagine a world where people of every culture and background live together in harmony by hosting the Peace Poster Contest in your area.

Using the theme, "Harmony in Humanity," we're asking young people ages 11 to 13 to creatively represent how celebrating differences and finding common ground can create lasting peace.

For nearly 40 years, this program has given young people a global platform to share their visions of peace while offering clubs a powerful way to connect with their communities and welcome new members.



Order your digital or physical kit at [lionsclubs.org/peaceposter](https://lionsclubs.org/peaceposter).

6:08



# OVERHEARD

on Social

"I was looking for friendship and a way to pay the community back. That was 15 years ago. Now fun, friendship and service are my savior after retirement."

—Lion Debbie J Owen



"Lion means love, friendship and happiness."

—Lion Rasmita Sahu

"Being a Lion has helped me be a leader, speak up and look for ways to help my community with their needs — both professionally and as a Lion."

—Lion Katrina Michele

"Being a Lion opened doors I never knew existed — locally and internationally. It gave me the opportunity for self-growth, friendship and service."

—Lion Shyana Jayalath

"Throughout years of being a police officer, I saw how Lions helped so many people that I just had to join — and talked several others into joining."

—Lion Sam Weist

"My Lions bestie is Lion Sharon Levy — my sponsor, my sounding board, my therapist, the BEST club secretary EVER, and of course, my wife! The best part of being a Lion is taking this journey together." →

—Lion Steven Levy

"No matter where you are — from the busiest cities to the most remote villages — you'll find Lions serving with compassion, dedication and unity."

—Lion Ishwar Singh Rathore

"Been a Lion for 55 years. Every day is another day to serve."

—Lion John Thomas

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# 1 million

Trees are being planted through the Lions Green Canopy Environment Project in Australia to help grow a greener country.

# 300

Pop-up food pantries were hosted by the Elkton Lions Club in Michigan, distributing millions of pounds of groceries to local families.

# 772



Cupcakes were donated and sold by the Alberton Lions Club in Gauteng, South Africa, raising money for children battling cancer through the Cupcakes of Hope fundraiser.

# BY THE NUMBERS

# 1,220

Pounds of trash were collected by the Shelter Island Lions Club in New York during their roadside and beach cleanup.

# 20,000

Books were put on sale by the Gore Pakeke Lions Club in New Zealand to raise funds for a second bus that will provide free skin cancer screenings across the country.

# 2,000

Pairs of eyeglasses are collected every four months by the Nashua Lions Club in New Hampshire to support the Recycle for Sight program.

# 750

Ornamental plants were donated by the Club de Leones de Milagro in Ecuador to help beautify the city's central park.

# United for Life

**A tribute to the French Lions  
whose spirit endures in the maternity  
ward they helped create.**

**By Laurence Mercadal**

2025-2026 Council of Governors Chairperson  
and District Governor of District 103 Sud-Est

**F**or several years, the Lions Club La Ciotat Lumières has been committed to a major humanitarian project: the construction of a maternity ward in the heart of rural Benin in West Africa.

This project holds profound meaning after the tragic loss of five Lions who were en route to inaugurate the clinic in October 2025. A dream shaped by friendship and boundless solidarity is now marked by deep emotion, and their memory will live on in every life saved.

*A project born from  
friendship and service*

It all began more than a decade ago with a meeting between Father Victorin Sagui, a Beninese priest dedicated to education and health in the villages of the Atacora region, and the Lions Club La Ciotat Lumières. With Father Sagui's help, the club supported the schooling of more than 300 children.

During their work in the region, the Lions learned about rural women traveling more than 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) on rough tracks to give birth — often at the risk of their own lives and those of their babies. From this reality came the determination to act: to build a modern and accessible

maternity ward at the center of the 14 villages of Kotopounga.

The project was financed by Lions Club La Ciotat Lumières, Lions Club Pays de la Sainte-Baume and the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF), and also received support from the Lions Club Natitingou Tata and Father Victorin, the future facility director.

Thanks to this tremendous collective effort, the foundation stone was laid February 22, 2025, followed by a moving moment of sharing with local villagers.



## *A work of international solidarity*

The humanitarian project to offer Beninese mothers a safe, dignified and humane place to give life illustrates the strength of the Lions network. This included 38 volunteers from Lions Club La Ciotat Lumières and support from Lions Club Pays de la Sainte-Baume and numerous donors.

With a 50% LCIF matching grant covering half of the total budget — more than US\$30,000 — and additional funding provided by the club, the maternity ward has become a powerful symbol of international cooperation and fellowship.



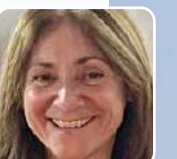
In Kotopounga, songs of life will rise within the Lions maternity ward. And those songs will carry far beyond borders, the memory and hope of those who believed in this project until their last breath.

## **A tribute to our departed Lions**

Our momentum of joy and hope is pierced by sorrow. The tragic bus accident in Togo struck our great Lions family with full force, taking five of our devoted friends — **Hélène Bernardi**, **Claude Allegrini**, **Philippe Courty** (Lions Club La Ciotat Lumières); **Sandra Corda** (Lions Club Pays de la Sainte-Baume); **Michel Hétoit** (Lions Club Valenciennes Athènes du Nord) — and injuring others. They embodied, through their mission, the noblest values of our movement: service, friendship and solidarity.

These Lions, who fell in the line of service, gave the very best of themselves for a more just and humane world. Their commitment will continue to live through every stone of this maternity ward, through every smile of a mother saved, through every child born in dignity.

Despite the sorrow, our determination remains unshaken. The project will continue, in memory of our friends, with even more heart and even more faith in humanity. Because serving means continuing where others had to stop. In Kotopounga, songs of life will rise within the Lions maternity ward. And those songs will carry, far beyond borders, the memory and hope of those who believed in this project until their last breath.



## *A message of gratitude*

I would like to express our immense gratitude to the global Lions family. Since the announcement of this tragedy, we have received an extraordinary wave of solidarity: countless messages of condolences, sympathy and support from our executive officers, our international bodies, and districts throughout France, Europe, Africa and the world. They are so numerous that it is impossible to name them all, but each one deeply touched and comforted us.

I would also like to share a special thought for our Lion friends in Togo, who surrounded our

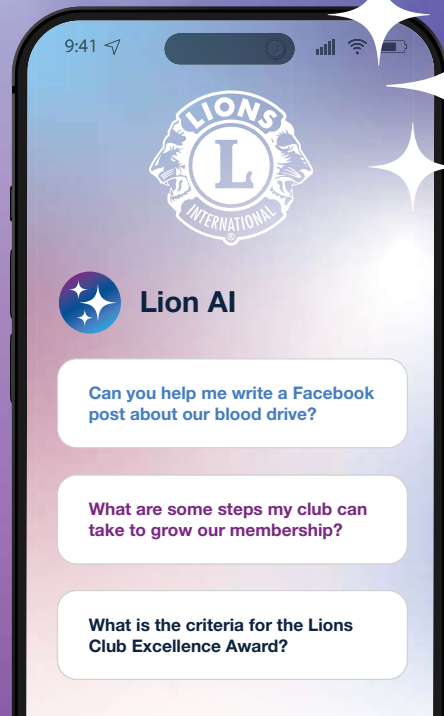
members with exemplary kindness. Their support and dignity in the midst of hardship stand as a powerful demonstration of the Lions spirit. In these painful times, your gestures and words remind us how meaningful our motto is: “We Serve” — with heart, in solidarity and fellowship.

On behalf of all Lions of France, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for this chain of friendship and support that unites Lions around the world more than ever.

*This article was originally published in LION Magazine France, and has been translated from French.*

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# MISSION MOMENT



**LIONS CLUB OF LAND O'LAKES**

### **THE MISSION:**

MISSION 1.5 is the drive to grow worldwide, so we can better meet the growing needs of our communities and serve more people than ever before.

### **CHALLENGE ACCEPTED BY:**

Lions Club of Land O'Lakes

### **SUMMARY:**

The Land O'Lakes Lions are on a mission to rebuild their 57-year-old club. With only seven members in 2013, the club knew it was time to step up its recruitment efforts. By 2020, they were up to 28 members and today, they are 78 Lions strong — and growing.

### **ABOUT THE CLUB:**

Chartered on January 22, 1969, the club was founded with a clear purpose: to bring neighbors together and strengthen community ties. Over the years, the small-town club has become so much more than a social hub. It's established itself as a response team, ready to serve when times are tough.

After two powerful storms tore through the town in 2022, the club offered a safe haven for community members. The Lions raised more than US\$200,000 to convert their clubhouse into an emergency shelter, providing warmth, Wi-Fi, drinking water and restrooms. The club continues to expand its Emergency Preparedness Plan so they can help keep their tight-knit community safe when the next disaster strikes.

The Land O'Lakes Lions also provide necessary services to a town lacking easy access to health care. They conduct vision and hearing screenings, collect eyeglass donations and raise funds to support the seeing eye dog program.

Though the club has expanded beyond its founding purpose, it remains the heart of community life. With weekly darts, bingo nights and a presence at summer farmers markets, the Land O'Lakes Lions bring the energy to their fun-loving community.

## THE CLUB'S FIVE TIPS FOR GROWTH

- 1 Do projects that matter.** Find ways to do meaningful service while bringing people together and having fun.
- 2 Celebrate your wins.** Share your achievements proudly. Your success stories can inspire others to join you.
- 3 Show the Lion experience.** Help your community see that being a Lion is so much more than volunteering.
- 4 Be welcoming.** Create an inclusive environment where everyone feels heard and valued.
- 5 Just ask!** A personal invitation is often all it takes to bring in a new member.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE MISSION** at [lionsclubs.org/mission1.5](https://lionsclubs.org/mission1.5).



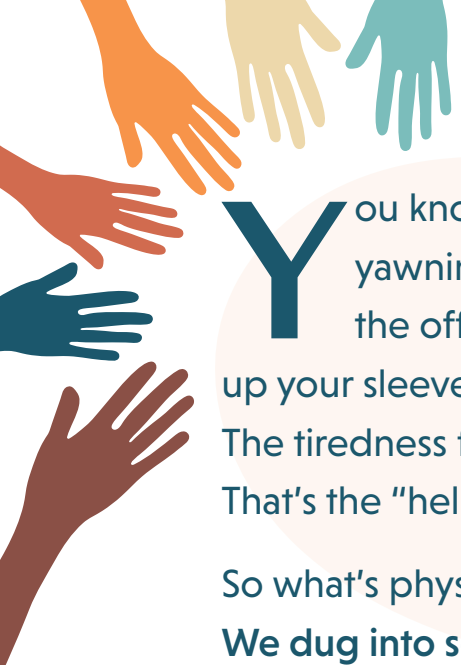
**MISSION 1.5**



# THE SCIENCE OF SERVICE

Volunteering is good  
for the body and mind.

BY JENNY MAXSE



**Y**ou know the feeling. You pull on your Lions gear, maybe still yawning from the night before or shaking off a long day at the office. But the moment you arrive at a service project, roll up your sleeves and start connecting with others, something shifts. The tiredness fades, your mood lifts and a surge of energy takes over. That's the "helper's high" at work.

So what's physically happening in your body when you help others? We dug into some research to learn more.

## THE BIOCHEMISTRY OF KINDNESS

When you act with kindness — through even the simplest gesture or thoughtful act — your brain releases a rush of "feel-good" chemicals: serotonin to calm, dopamine to delight and oxytocin to connect. So basically, kindness doesn't just brighten someone else's day — it lights up your brain, too.

These chemicals can also benefit your body in measurable ways. Researchers are uncovering how the body's natural responses to kindness influence stress, immunity and overall well-being.

A study led by Stephanie Brown, Ph.D., of Stony Brook University, suggests that when you help or care for others, your brain activates a natural caregiving system that releases oxytocin as well as progesterone.

Oxytocin helps you feel calm and connected while progesterone can help regulate inflammation and support immune function. Together, they help your body stay healthier and more resilient over time.

## HEART TO HEART

When you see how your service impacts someone, you may say it touches your heart. And guess what? It actually does. Science shows that kindness can give your heart health a boost.

"It can decrease blood pressure and cortisol, which directly impacts stress levels," explained Bhawani Ballamudi, M.D., of SSM Health. "Oxytocin releases nitric oxide. Nitric oxide dilates your blood vessels and thereby reduces your blood pressure and improves heart health."

Kindness also strengthens human connection, a key factor in cardiovascular health.

In 2023, the U.S. Surgeon General's report, *Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation*, called social connection a fundamental human need — as essential as food, water and shelter. And the American Heart Association references research that backs this up.

"Studies show people who are more socially connected can live longer. They are at reduced risk for earlier death from all causes, including cardiovascular disease. Other research shows having poor social relationships is associated with a 29% increased risk for coronary heart disease and a 32% increased risk for stroke."

The good news: small acts can make a big difference. An international study published in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* found that helping others can reduce loneliness, social isolation and social anxiety. The surgeon general's report describes this as a virtuous cycle.

"Those who are more connected to their communities are more likely to engage in service, and those who are engaged in service are more likely to feel connected to their communities and the individuals in it."



**Volunteering through an organization typically involves ongoing, regular participation rather than occasional, one-off acts. This consistency makes it more likely to produce lasting health benefits.**

-Dr. Sae Hwang Han  
*University of Texas at Austin*



“  
The sooner you begin volunteering,  
the greater the long-term rewards.”

-Dr. Sae Hwang Han  
University of Texas at Austin

## MIND MATTERS

A recent study from The University of Texas at Austin and the University of Massachusetts Boston found that frequent helping outside the home significantly slows cognitive decline — the gradual loss of thinking skills — in middle-aged and older adults.

Led by Sae Hwang Han, Ph.D., of UT Austin, the team analyzed 20 years of data from more than 30,000 U.S. adults. They found that those who regularly volunteered or offered informal help scored higher in cognitive function and experienced a 15%-20% slower rate of cognitive decline as they aged.

According to Dr. Han, the sooner you incorporate acts of service into your lifestyle, the better.

“Research shows that the benefits of volunteering build over time. Those who begin later in life still see meaningful gains, but the impact is smaller compared to people who start earlier. In other words, the sooner you begin volunteering, the greater the long-term rewards.”

## DOCTORS' ORDERS

Public health systems are recognizing the power of lifestyle in shaping well-being. In the 1990s, the U.K.'s National Health Service (NHS) introduced social prescribing — recommending activities like art, exercise and volunteering rather than relying solely on medication to address social and emotional needs. The approach has since spread to several other countries.

But you don't need a doctor's note to reap the benefits.

“Research shows that just two to four hours of volunteering each week is enough to produce measurable, meaningful improvements in health,” said Dr. Han.

As with any wellness habit — like exercise, good nutrition or quality sleep — the benefits are strongest when it becomes part of daily life. Dr. Han emphasized that consistency is key.

“Many researchers, myself included, view formal volunteering as more beneficial for health than informal helping,” he said. “The reason is structure. Volunteering through an organization typically involves ongoing, regular participation rather than occasional, one-off acts. This consistency makes it more likely to produce lasting health benefits.”

# IN BRIEF: THE KINDNESS CONNECTION

## “HELPER'S HIGH” IS REAL.

Acts of kindness trigger feel-good chemicals in the brain that lift mood, reduce stress and strengthen social bonds.

## SMALL ACTS = BIG IMPACT.

Doing simple good deeds for neighbors can reduce loneliness, social isolation and anxiety.

## HELPING KEEPS YOU SHARP.

People who frequently help others may experience a 15%-20% slower rate of cognitive decline with age.

## MORE KINDNESS. LESS STRESS.

Oxytocin helps release nitric oxide, which widens blood vessels, lowers blood pressure and reduces cortisol (the stress hormone).

## CONNECT TO PROTECT.

People with strong social ties have a 29% lower risk of heart disease and a 32% lower risk of stroke.

## THE SOONER THE BETTER.

Start volunteering earlier in life for greater long-term rewards.



# The *Heart* of **Service** *Beats On*

A young leader  
helps restore a  
Canadian town's  
proud Lions  
tradition.

By Madeleine Miller





Arshya Aggarwal was concluding her talk at the 2023 Lions District 5M13 convention when a voice called from the back of the room:

*“Why aren’t you already a Lion?”*

The young community leader laughed along with everyone else, but inside something shifted. “I stood there, holding the microphone and felt something click into place,” she said.

That one moment sparked what would become a movement to revive the Portage la Prairie Lions Club in Manitoba, Canada.



For decades, they were well known for donating money to worthy causes, organizing food drives, helping at senior homes and supporting community-building projects.



## A Community Cornerstone

For more than 87 years, the Portage la Prairie Lions Club has been a steadfast pillar of the community. Its name and spirit are woven into the town's fabric from the Lions Prairie View Elementary School to its sponsorship of local sports teams, vision-screening programs and events that bring residents together year after year.

“This club was one of two 85-plus year charters in our district,” said Past District Governor Cheryl McKittrick, a Lion for 48 years. “For decades, they were well known for donating money to worthy causes, organizing food drives, helping at senior homes and supporting community-building projects.”

While many communities rely on Lions clubs to provide these types of services, the need in Portage la Prairie is particularly great.

“Our city has a high poverty rate,” said Portage la Prairie Mayor Sharilyn Knox. “And the Lions focus on the needs of the citizens, such as ensuring food security with food drives and assisting seniors with shoveling snow and mowing lawns.”

Today, the club remains dedicated to carrying forward its proud legacy of service, but dwindling resources have taken their toll. By 2024, membership had fallen to six — four short of the 10 required to maintain a charter — placing the club’s future in jeopardy.



Historical photos courtesy of the Manitoba Historical Society and the Portage Collegiate Archive.



“  
We didn't  
want to lose  
87 years of  
community  
service. So  
we reached  
out to the  
district for  
help.”

## Along Comes Aggarwal

Aggarwal — a driven Canadian leader known for her civic engagement and community revitalization work — was honored by the Lions' invitation to speak at the 2023 District 5M13 convention. Though unfamiliar with the organization, the opportunity sparked her curiosity.

Her family had moved to Portage la Prairie when she was a child. Growing up, she witnessed the community's strong tradition of volunteerism, but didn't realize how much her local Lions club contributed to that spirit until she found herself surrounded by Lions at the convention.

When she learned the club was at risk of closure, it stirred something inside her. She couldn't stand by and watch decades of dedication and valuable service fade away. With unwavering determination, she pledged to inject new energy into the club and carry its legacy forward.

## A Fresh Start in Motion

Aggarwal's first step was to commit fully by joining the club. At just 21, she was inducted as the youngest member in District 5M13, a milestone that marked both personal pride and the start of a larger mission. From there, the club turned to their district's leadership team for guidance.

“We didn't want to lose 87 years of community service,” Club President Rob Martin explained. “So we reached out to the district for help.”



District leaders were quick to step in, exploring how they could best support the club.

“We discovered the Club Rebuild Program,” said District Governor Kevin Stebeleski. “It provides up to two years to recruit new members and restore club vitality without losing the original charter.”

The program bought the club time, but Aggarwal and the other Portage la Prairie Lions knew they needed to get to work — and fast.

The club's growth strategy was simple: show up where they were needed. By focusing on meaningful, visible service in their community, they hoped others who shared the same spirit of giving would see their work, recognize its impact and be inspired to join them. The more service they could do the more visible they'd become.

District leaders rolled up their sleeves and worked right alongside the club.

“We did a lot of promotions and campaigns to get new members,” said McKitrick. “I spoke at some events as well to encourage people to become Lions.”

## The Power of Ten

On October 14, 2025, the club hit its first major milestone in its revival efforts by welcoming its 10th member — Jack Charles — and securing its charter. Jack was a Lion many years ago but stepped away when life became busy. Seeing the club's renewed spirit inspired him to return.

“I'm proud to say they have grown to 10 active members and are once again serving their community with renewed energy and purpose,” said Stebeleski. “This effort demonstrates the power of teamwork within our district — when clubs face challenges, we step up, work together and help each other continue the Lion mission.”

But this is just the club's first major step in reviving the historic club. To continue their growth, they know they must find a way to be relevant today.

“Lions must evolve with the world,” Aggarwal said. “We asked ourselves simple but important questions: What does our community need right now? How can our Lions fill those gaps with compassion and practicality? Those needs will change — and we'll adapt.”

## Coming Home to Service

Over the past two years, the Portage la Prairie Lions have not only worked to rebuild their club — they've rediscovered who they are.

And for Aggarwal, that journey has been deeply personal. In becoming a Lion, she says she didn't simply join an organization; she came home to who she'd always been. 📍

— IN —  
**MY OWN**  
— WORDS —

# Born to Be Kind

By Lion Rafaela Torres Juárez

## I didn't step into service one day — I was born into it.

Some of my earliest memories are of standing beside my parents outside supermarkets, collecting food for families in need. My small hands held donation cans while their big hearts showed me what kindness looked like in action. I learned early that service isn't a hobby or an obligation — it's a way of life.

My parents, Rafael Torres Cabrera and Lydia Juárez Castro, have always been my greatest teachers. My father now serves as district governor for our region of Veracruz, Mexico, and my mother is actively involved with Lions. My three brothers are also members — making service not just a value in our family, but a way we stay connected. Our parents taught us that service multiplies when it's shared.



*I learned early that service isn't a hobby or an obligation — it's a way of life.*

In 2013, I officially joined the Lions family when I founded the Leo Club Veracruz A.C., now known as Leo Club Veracruz We Serve — a small group of young people determined to create change. We built partnerships, organized service projects and discovered our ability to lead. Seeing our enthusiasm grow into real impact showed me that when youth serve, the whole community wins. My husband was among the members who joined me in those early years. Our shared passion for service became the foundation of our life together.

In 2024, five years after becoming a Lion, I faced one of the most defining moments of my journey when a devastating forest fire struck our local mountains. My club, the Veracruz Nosotros Servimos Lions Club, mobilized to deliver food and medicine for families and animals, plant new saplings for reforestation and led environmental awareness training. The way our community came together in the face of loss was truly incredible. Our efforts were honored with an international Kindness Matters Service Award — a reminder that kindness means taking action when it's needed most.

Service has shaped every chapter of my life. And now, with our little cub — our daughter Celic — joining us on service days, we are passing the legacy on to her just as my parents passed it on to me. She's growing up surrounded by compassion and purpose, learning that kindness is strength and that service is joy. 🐾

# THE FLYIN', LION

Vision loss made Lori Bennet's life smaller.  
Becoming a Lion gave her courage to spread her wings.

By Jenny Maxse



**M**ost people fear falling. Lori Bennett paid for the privilege. Sitting in a small propeller plane at 14,000 feet, she watched — with the last sliver of her vision — as her friend vanished out the door. “Scariest thing I’ve ever seen,” she said. But there was no time for fear. Moments later, with her tandem instructor clipped in behind her, she shuffled to the edge. One leap, one scream, one minute of freefall at 125 miles per hour.

“They say if you’ve never done it, you can’t explain it — and if you have, you can’t stop doing it,” she laughed. “Best fun-fair ride ever.”

“  
*They say if you’ve never done it, you can’t explain it — and if you have, you can’t stop doing it. Best fun-fair ride ever.*  
”

 Watch Lori's skydiving journey





## SEEING DIFFERENTLY

Skydiving is an extraordinary rush for anyone. It's even more so for someone who can barely see the ground she's racing toward. Lori, a member of the Paris Lions Club in Illinois and a past district governor (2017–2018), is legally blind. She lives with retinitis pigmentosa, a genetic condition that slowly erases sight from the outside in.

“It's like a doughnut of blindness,” she explained. “It starts by taking your peripheral vision, creating tunnel vision, and eventually, you have no vision at all.”

Lori first noticed something was wrong at age five, when she couldn't see in the dark. By her forties, she had to give up her driver's license. She passed the vision test “by one point” but decided it wasn't worth the risk. That choice came with a cost. “When you lose your driver's license in east central Illinois, you lose your independence.”

An eye doctor once predicted her vision would be completely gone by the time she reached 50. But today, at 62, her vision is a grayscale shimmer. “What I see looks like glitter,” she said. “The edges sparkle because more photoreceptors are dying all the time. I can see just enough to think I know what I'm doing — but not enough to prove it.”

Still, Lori finds beauty in what remains. During a recent solar eclipse, she borrowed her husband's protective glasses but couldn't see anything. So, she took them off. “And there it was — the white

ring around the black moon. I saw it with my own eyes. And I thought, if staring at the sun is going to burn what's left, who cares? What am I really giving up?”

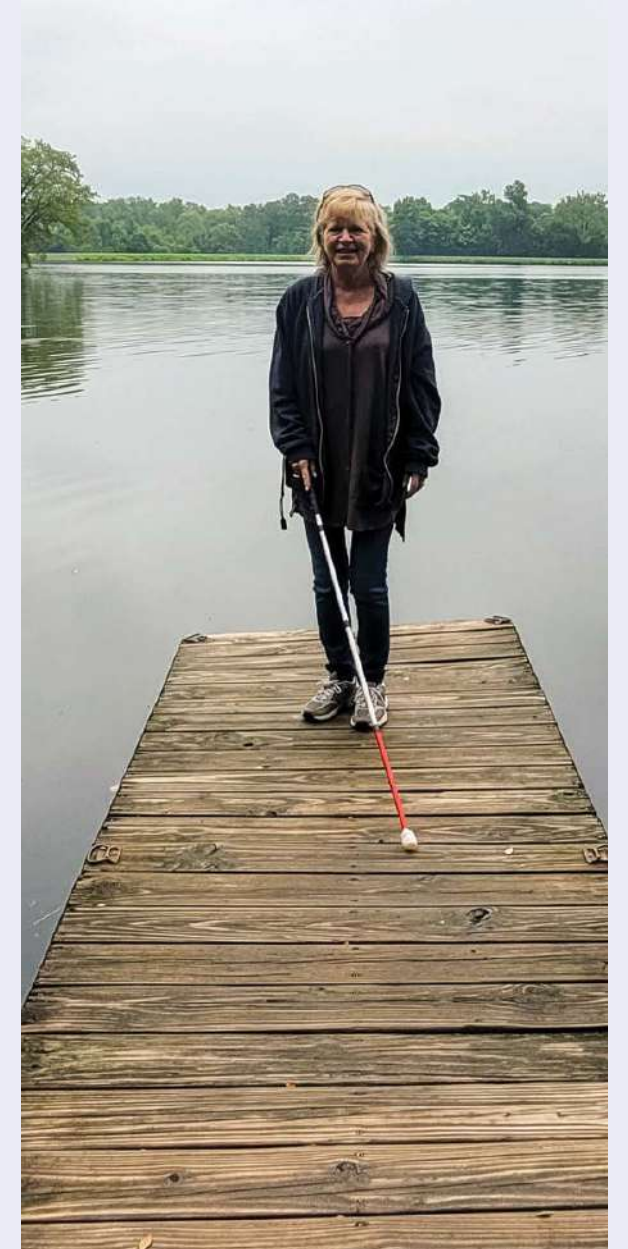
That moment sealed her philosophy: use what you have, while you have it.

## A LION'S CONFIDENCE

Lori's courage didn't start in the sky. It started at a Lions district convention. She wasn't yet a member, just there to support her father, the 2005–2006 district governor. But what she found changed her life.

“I met the nicest, most generous, most dedicated people in the world.” She joined the Paris Lions Club soon after.

Since then, her club has been her second family — and her lifeline. “It was a Lion who took me to get my first smartphone and taught me how to use its accessibility settings. A Lion who talked me into signing up for paratransit so I could go where I want, when I want. And a Lion who convinced me to get my white cane training.”



“  
**Being a Lion gave me 100% of my confidence back. When I'm with Lions, I realize I am never alone.**  
”

The people around Lori never saw limits; they saw potential. “Being a Lion gave me 100% of my confidence back,” she said. “When I’m with Lions, I realize I am never alone.”

Lori’s renewed confidence hasn’t just sent her skydiving — it’s inspired her to take on every challenge her club brings her way. She’s committed to saying yes, doing her best and asking for help when needed. Now serving as her district’s Global Leadership Team coordinator, she’s embracing the challenge with enthusiasm.

Her husband, Steve, is her biggest supporter — and her Lions club sponsor. “I’ll bet he had no idea that invitation would take us so far. In truth, I haven’t made it easy for him, and his dedication to each step of this journey has become one of the greatest acts of kindness I have ever known.”



## THE COURAGE TO STEP FORWARD

Ask Lori Bennett what fear feels like, and she’ll tell you it’s universal. “If you can’t see, there’s fear about putting one foot in front of the other. But fear’s not special — it’s just part of being alive. What’s special is what you do next.”

“People call me brave because I keep stepping even when I can’t see where my foot will land,” she said. “That’s not a metaphor for me — that’s my life.”

When asked what’s next, Lori said she’s not trying to check off a bucket list. “I’ve already been more places and done more things than I ever thought I would because of Lions.”

Lori may not see the world the way she once did, but she’s experiencing it more fully than ever before. She’s teaching everyone around her to recognize something even more powerful: when vision fades, everything else still works.

And sometimes, that’s all the reason you need to jump. 🗨️



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Mike and Bill Todd at Todd's Garage

# Driven to SERVE

**How love and loss turned an auto shop into the heart of community service.**

BY NATASHA DE LOERA

"I was a broken man," said Lion Bill Todd of Morro Bay, California.

His wife of 33 years, Jami, was in the final months of a relentless fight with cancer. Grief and caregiving consumed every ounce of him.

At his breaking point, Bill told his son and fellow Lion, Mike Todd, that he could no longer run Todd's Garage — the business he had built from the ground up — or sustain the Car Giveaway Program, Morro Bay Lions Club's signature service project.

"I don't mean to just throw all this in your lap," Bill recalled telling him. "But I can't do this anymore. I need to be with Mom."

Despite having his hands full raising two kids on his own, Mike

didn't hesitate. He looked at his grief-stricken father and said "yes."

It was a decision rooted in a lifetime of love. He'd grown up in that garage, learning the trade from the man he admired most, while Jami had been like a mother to him since he was 11. As she faced the fight of her life, he knew the greatest gift he could give was the chance for them to spend that time together.

For Bill, that commitment meant everything. "Mike never looked back once," he said.



Bill and his late wife, Jami



“  
**Service fills a void in your heart  
 that nothing else can.**  
 ”

— LION BILL TODD



## A Simple Gesture

The car giveaway program began in 2014 with one beat-up Jeep.

As a mechanic, Bill often picked up vehicles in need of repair. That year, he brought one of them, a 1994 Cherokee with exterior damage, to the body work class he was taking at the local community college. He fixed it up as part of a class project.

Rather than sell the repaired vehicle, he chose to give it to someone who needed a way to get around. He called a local resource center to ask if they knew of anyone.

The answer was yes — desperately.

The Jeep went to a man who had been taking his frail wife — walker in tow — on 14-mile bus rides to her doctor’s appointments. Bill worried the man might be disappointed by the patched-up car, but instead, he broke down sobbing with gratitude.

“It brought a tear to my eye, too,” Bill said. “I didn’t truly understand how important cars were until that moment.”

For Mike, those handovers were about more than just turning over a set of keys.

“The excitement it gives the recipients almost ages them in reverse,” he said. “They can finally relax a little instead of stressing about transportation.”

From that first Jeep, the program grew. Bill and Mike started fixing up and giving away cars every few months. The effort made such an impact on the community that the Morro Bay Lions honored Bill with a Melvin Jones Fellowship — even before the initiative became an official club activity.

In November 2017, the club formally adopted the program, and it has since become the financial engine driving their service projects.

The program runs on both compassion and practicality: cars are donated by the public or purchased by the Morro Bay Lions Foundation. After thorough safety inspections and repairs at Todd’s Garage, the most reliable vehicles are gifted to people in need. Cars too costly to repair or maintain are sold, with proceeds directed to their club’s foundation to fund other service projects. To date, the program has turned nearly 50 cars into lifelines for people in need.



Bill and Mike with Katie Tyndal

## Circles of Kindness

Years ago, when a stolen catalytic converter left Katie Tyndal stranded, she felt “in a lesser category compared to everybody else.” Without a car, she was dependent, diminished and stuck.

Then the Lions handed her the keys to a Toyota Camry.

“It immediately rises you up so many levels as far as how you feel about yourself,” she recalled. “I was so happy and so grateful, and I’m still grateful. It changed everything.”

Katie’s story carries another layer. She had been Jami’s closest friend for more than 30 years. When she began helping out at the garage, her support proved invaluable — especially as Jami’s health declined and the family needed an extra hand.

Today, Katie runs the office at Todd’s Garage and helps to run the car program. They helped her when she needed it most. Now she helps them help others.

“  
**They helped me  
 when I needed it  
 most. Now I get  
 to help them  
 help others.**

— KATIE TYNDAL

## Feeding a Town

Nowhere is the program's impact more visible than on Monday nights at the Morro Bay Veterans Memorial Building.

For the past 11 years, the Morro Bay Lions have never missed serving a weekly meal. Even when a winter storm flooded the town and knocked out power, dinner went on — by candlelight.

Each Monday evening, the hall transforms into a haven of community and care. The air fills with the comforting aroma of a hot meal, the sounds of feet and chairs shuffling, and an unmistakable sense of hope.

“The first question out of everybody's mouth is, ‘What are we having for dinner?’” said Club President Linda Winters with a laugh.

Thanks to the support generated by the Car Giveaway Program, the Lions offer much more than a meal. Guests can “shop” for free groceries — fresh vegetables, meats and pantry staples. They can pick out clean clothes and even get a free haircut from a local Lion barber.

Each week, 75 to 85 people attend: families stretching tight budgets, seniors on fixed incomes, people battling addiction, and others simply seeking warmth and company. “The biggest benefit is it takes people away from the isolation of being home alone,” Winters said.

Guests often ask what they owe. The Lions love answering, “Nothing.”



## Fueling the Mission

The Morro Bay Lions Car Giveaway Program has been so successful that applications for a free car have slowed as more needs are met. However, the program continues to raise funds for the Morro Bay Lions Foundation.

Since 2017, it has generated more than US\$100,000, funding about 90% of their community service projects, including those Monday night community events.

“I don't know what we would do without it,” Club Treasurer Chuck Stoll said quietly.

The car program doesn't just put people back on the road — it sustains an entire ecosystem of service. It allows the club to feed families, fund scholarships, support clothing drives and strengthen partner programs throughout the community.



## The Road Ahead

Bill admitted that in his retirement, he misses the garage — the tang of grease and exhaust, and the mechanical chorus that once scored his life's work. But he has gladly traded his tools for pride, watching Mike not only run the family business but also carry on the program that began as his own small act of service.

“I'm proud as a peacock,” Bill said. “He is my Lion hero, for sure.”

Through it all, Jami's presence endures — in the family's memories, in Katie's work and in the quiet truth Bill holds onto: “Service fills a void in your heart that nothing else can.” 📍

## From Wheels to Meals

The club's car giveaway program delivers real community impact.



To date, 49 cars have been given to individuals or families in need of transportation.



Over \$100,000+ has been raised by selling unrepairable cars for their parts.



Around 80 Morro Bay residents are served a hot meal each week.



Free groceries, clothing and haircuts are also provided.



“  
**The biggest benefit is it takes people away from the isolation of being home alone.**

— LION LINDA WINTERS



# SERVICE AROUND THE WORLD

Lions and Leos are serving their communities in nearly every country on earth.

Join us for a quick trip around the globe to check out some of their service.



## Fertile, Minnesota, USA

### *Fertile Lions Club*

Sixth graders from Fertile-Beltrami School joined forces with the Fertile Lions for the club's annual town cleanup event. Outfitted in safety vests and gloves, the students worked alongside the Lions to collect litter from the fairground, park and city entrances, all while learning lessons on community pride and teamwork. The day ended with pizza and ice cream — a simple reward for a new generation inspired to keep their town shining.



## Paulo Afonso, Brazil

### *Lions Club of Paulo Afonso*

At the Multiple District LA Council of Governors meeting in Aracaju, Brazil, the Paulo Afonso Lions introduced a creative way to care for the environment — a digital cleanup. Led by Lion Maria Rodivânia Matias, club members and leaders deleted old files, emails and apps from their phones to save energy and reduce carbon emissions. The initiative showed that even small, everyday actions can make a lasting difference for our planet.

## Oak Ridges, Canada

### *Oak Ridges Lions Club*

More than 100 volunteers joined the Oak Ridges Lions Club for its 25th community cleanup, including students, the Phoenix youth baseball team and fellow Lions from Aurora and Richvale. Together they collected 2.5 tons of litter from parks, roadsides and green spaces across the region. Local sponsors provided food and refreshments, keeping volunteers fueled and in good spirits. The event showed how Lions, partners and neighbors can unite to make Oak Ridges a cleaner, stronger community.



## Tullamore, Ireland

### *Tullamore Lions Club*

The Tullamore Lions are leading the way in a new national partnership between Lions clubs and Tóchar, an EU Just Transition Fund wetlands project led by the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Guided by Tóchar experts, clubs will help restore bogs and other freshwater habitats across Ireland's midlands. With €250,000 (US\$270,000) per year allocated through 2026, the initiative strengthens biodiversity and invites local communities to take part in caring for Ireland's wetlands.





## Marikina City, Philippines

### *Ayala Amity Centennial Lions Club*

The Ayala Amity Centennial Lions partnered with local government and health centers for a community outreach event at Barangay Malanday Hall. Lions planted trees, led a riverside cleanup, and distributed vitamins, medicines and milk to expectant mothers. The event also offered free meals and legal assistance, promoting a healthier, greener community and showing how service can bring people together for ongoing change.



## Altona, Australia

### *Lions Club of Altona*

Lions and community volunteers spent the day refreshing the garden beds at the Lionsville Independent Living facility in Wintringham. With donated plants and compost from local supporters, they replanted vegetables and revitalized planter boxes for residents. The project brightened the grounds and reminded residents that their local Lions are close by and ready to help.

## Multan, Pakistan

### *Multan Crescent Lions Club*

To mark World Environment Day, the Multan Lions planted mulberry and pomegranate trees at a local assisted-living facility. The effort brought Lions and the elderly residents together to create a greener, healthier space for the community. Each tree planted became a symbol of care, growth and hope for a more sustainable future.



## Manzini, Eswatini

### *Manzini Lions Club*

The Manzini Lions in Eastern South Africa were recognized by District 410E as the Most Impactful Environment Project of the Month for its work at Makholweni Care Point. Lions fenced the area, prepared the garden and planted vegetable seedlings to help children and caregivers grow their own food. The project strengthened nutrition, improved food security and encouraged self-sufficiency — showing how meaningful service can help families grow and thrive.



**SERVICE  
AROUND THE  
WORLD**

## Service the world counts on

These are just a few of the many stories showcasing the positive impact Lions are making globally. From helping one person in need to helping an entire community, each and every act of service matters.

Be sure to report your activities each month so we can effectively measure our impact, grow our membership and share our stories with the world.

Visit [lionsclubs.org/service-reporting](https://lionsclubs.org/service-reporting) to learn more.



# Harvesting Hope

## Lions support fresh food delivery program in Rhode Island.

BY SHELBY WASHINGTON

According to the Rhode Island Community Food Bank, one in three households in the state experience food insecurity. Low-income families with children and people of color are at highest risk. As food insecurity levels rise higher than those seen during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, the need for consistent access to nutritious food has never been more urgent.

The Hope's Harvest Program at Farm Fresh Rhode Island works to bridge that gap, mobilizing volunteers to harvest surplus fruits and vegetables from farms, executing contracts with local growers and paying for surplus produce. But as the need for food assistance in the state grew, Hope's Harvest was not equipped to meet the demand. Its previous vehicles — a refrigerated 12-foot box truck and a small delivery van — along with rising fuel costs made it difficult to meet the needs of the community, especially during hot summer months when perishable produce required careful transport.



To tackle this challenge, Lions of District 42 used a US\$47,995 Hunger Grant from Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) to purchase a new refrigerated vehicle. Inspired by her past involvement with the Greater Warwick Lions Club, Lion Nancy Reiter applied for the grant. The Lions of District 42 raised US\$16,250 through the "Lil Rhode Big Yum" online auction.

Equipped with the new LCIF-supported vehicle, Hope's Harvest established partnerships with three additional farms and three new food distribution agencies, greatly expanding their reach to meet rising food demands and community needs. Today, they distribute food to 43 hunger relief agencies, reaching an estimated 35,000 Rhode Islanders each year.

LCIF Hunger Grants make projects like this possible by focusing on strengthening infrastructure and providing essential equipment Lions need to fight hunger. These grants empower Lions to support vital initiatives such as school feeding programs, food banks and feeding centers, ensuring that those in need receive the nourishment they require.

Learn more about LCIF Hunger Grants at [lcf.org/hunger](https://lcf.org/hunger).



# LIONS IN THE MOVIES

## AND THE AWARD GOES TO ... LIONS INTERNATIONAL?

Well, sort of. With the 98th Academy Awards® set for March 15, 2026, we're reminiscing about our own brushes with Oscar® glory — "starring" (in the loosest sense) in not one but two Academy Award-winning films, plus a few other scene-stealing cameos.



**BABE**  
The 1995 family favorite "Babe," begins with farmer Arthur Hoggett (James Cromwell) winning a piglet at a Lions club-sponsored contest at a county fair. With guidance from his border collie pal, Babe discovers his unlikely talent for herding sheep — and proves that even the smallest voice can make a big difference.  
"Babe" received seven Oscar nominations, including Best Picture, and won the Oscar for Best Visual Effects at the 68th Academy Awards.

### BACK TO THE FUTURE

The 1985 classic "Back to the Future" follows teenager Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox), who is accidentally sent back 30 years in a DeLorean time machine built by his eccentric friend, Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd). Marty's arrival in 1955 comes with a warm welcome from the Hill Valley town sign — featuring the Lions International emblem.

"Back to the Future" racked up four Oscar nods, including Best Original Screenplay, and won for Best Sound Effects Editing at the 58th Academy Awards.



### BACK TO THE FUTURE PART II

The 1989 sequel "Back to the Future Part II" sends Marty McFly (Michael J. Fox) and Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd) from 1985 to the "future" of 2015. What starts as a mission to fix Marty's family quickly unravels into a whirlwind of hoverboards, self-lacing shoes and alternate timelines.

### SUDDENLY

The tense 1954 thriller "Suddenly" stars Frank Sinatra as a hitman who takes a family hostage while plotting an assassination attempt on the president of the United States. This edge-of-your-seat noir showcased Sinatra's darker side.

### WAYNE'S WORLD

The 1992 cult comedy "Wayne's World" stars Wayne Campbell (Mike Myers) and Garth Algar (Dana Carvey), two basement-broadcasting buddies whose public-access show rockets them to fame with classic catchphrases and plenty of head-banging laughs.

### VARSITY BLUES

The 1999 drama "Varsity Blues" follows Jonathan "Mox" Moxon (James Van Der Beek) — backup quarterback thrust into the spotlight of Texas high school football — as he navigates small-town pressure, a tough coach and the pursuit of his own dreams.

# LION MAGAZINE TIME MACHINE

## 2025 >>> 1967

### ROCKING THE WORLD FORWARD

Change was in the air in 1967. Music was louder, colors were brighter and the world was moving faster than ever. Rock 'n' roll was the soundtrack of a generation, TVs were bursting into color and people everywhere were dreaming big — even looking to the moon. The world was brimming with possibility, and people were standing up for peace and what they believed in.

Amid the excitement and progress, Lions were right there serving their communities.



Lions of San Diego collect baby clothes and diapers to send to Vietnam orphanages.



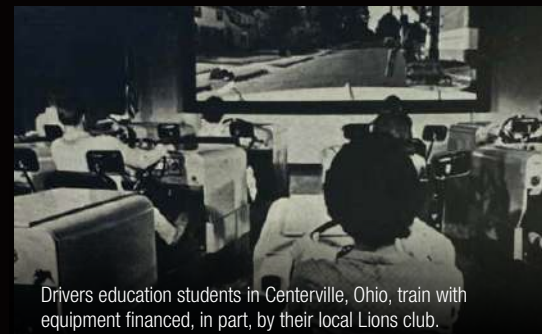
Hawaiian boys and girls participate in a tug-of-war contest at a beach party sponsored by the Lanai City Lions.



Awestruck youngsters and parents enjoy a fireworks display sponsored by three Australian Lions club.



Members of the Des Plaines Lions Club in Illinois greet 76 Finnish teens participating in Lions International's Youth Exchange Program.



Drivers education students in Centerville, Ohio, train with equipment financed, in part, by their local Lions club.



More than 280 children participated in the inaugural Tin Can Curling Championship sponsored by Lions in British Columbia, Canada.



Lions march down Michigan Avenue during the 50th Lions International Convention. The five-and-a-half hour parade attracted an estimated 200,000 onlookers.



The Kulasekharam Madras Lions Club in India coordinate a vaccine program for underprivileged youth.



International President Bird visits Norway.

### LION HIGHLIGHTS

- ▲ Nearly 21,500 Lions clubs with over 830,000 members serving across 161 countries.
- ▲ The 50th Lions International Convention drew more than 48,000 to Chicago for its golden anniversary celebration.
- ▲ Edward M. Lindsey (Lawrenceburg, Tennessee) served as international president for 1966-67, and Jorge Bird (Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico) took over for the 1967-68 term.

# SPOT THIS!

## Hong Kong Edition

We're just months away from the 108th Lions International Convention in Hong Kong, China — so let's get in the spirit by exploring some of the region's signature sights and local favorites.

How many can you find?



This image is provided solely for entertainment purposes and should not be used as a navigational resource. Reliance on this image for wayfinding may result in becoming lost.



### 1. Tian Tan Buddha

This massive bronze statue on Lantau Island offers a peaceful escape from the skyscraper-lined bustle.



### 2. Dumpling

A must-try in Hong Kong's dim sum scene, these little pockets of joy come steamed, pan-fried or boiled, with a variety of fillings.



### 3. Market Stall

Wander through Hong Kong's open-air markets to find everything from fresh produce to quirky souvenirs while experiencing pure urban buzz.



### 4. Double-Decker Bus

Grab a seat upstairs on one of these towering buses for a great view of skyscrapers, neon signs and bustling streets.



### 5. Star Ferry

This iconic boat has been ferrying passengers across Victoria Harbour for over a century and offers unbeatable skyline views.



### 6. Junk Boat

With its distinctive red sails, this vessel evokes old Hong Kong, and today, restored versions carry visitors on harbor cruises.



### 7. Hong Kong Observation Wheel

Offering a slow, scenic lift above the harbor, this Ferris wheel is especially magical at sunset or after dark.



### 8. Victoria Peak Tram

This vintage funicular climbs one of the world's steepest tracks to The Peak for sweeping views of the city, its mountains and the surrounding sea.



### 9. Tea House & Milk Tea

Take a break from exploring and step into a traditional tea house to enjoy some milk tea — a strong and slightly sweet Hong Kong classic.



### 10. Convention Registration

Still need to register? Find the hidden QR code, scan it and complete your registration. (Or scan the code to the left, but that's not as much fun.)

# L PARTING SHOT



“It takes a village to raise a child,” Tim said. “And in our small village, being a Lion has given me the opportunity to show my grandson that serving our community can be both fun and rewarding.”

## The Roots We Share

Lion Tim of the Neustadt and District Lions Club in Ontario, Canada, and his 2-year-old grandson, Hudson, plant lilac shrubs in the Memorial Grove at Neustadt Lions Park. For Tim, the club's 2025 Lion of the Year, the activity was about more than gardening — it was a chance to share the spirit of service with his grandson at an early age.

# LION



Lions International

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