

Membership- our responsibility

Our Lions Club membership offers a distinction found in few other organizations, one which Lions have enjoyed since our earlier days and which surely will remain as one of our most lasting legacies to future generations.

The prestige of being a member of the world's leading service club organization is in itself unique. What we have done and are doing for sightfirst and other Lions projects honours each member. And the close and lasting friendships developed as we work on club activities stand out as special benefits of Lions club membership.

But what truly sets a Lion apart goes beyond these things and also makes it possible for membership to be prestigious, meaningful and satisfying. That distinction is responsibility.

A sense of responsibility is the quality that defines a progressive and enlightened society one that is based on accountability, good judgment and trust.

As Lions, we give of our time and talent not because we are ordered to do so, nor for the prospect of any reward. But in the knowledge that doing something for someone else - and doing it well - represents a special personal commitment.

Too many people believe the word "responsibility" has a negative connotation. To them, responsibilities are better avoided, but Lions have always sought them out, embraced them, then fulfilled them.

Fulfilled them as we did in 1917 when Melvin Jones called upon us to work as hard for others as we did for ourselves; as we did in 1925 when Helen Keller asked us to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness" as we did in 1982 when the youth of the world were increasingly threatened by illegal drug and alcohol use ; and as we did in 1990 when we accepted the responsibility for helping the growing number of people who are blind.

People are at the center of Lions service, and it has always been the Lions goal to give people the tools - whether a blind person, a youth exchange student or a neighbor in need - to help them to overcome their limitations, develop their potentialities and enable them to become full, equal and responsible participants in society.

Throughout our history, Lions have responded to many challenges, to many opportunities. We have acted to meet the needs of our communities and we have accepted the responsibility for helping others to solve serious and challenging problems.

One of our greatest challenges has been with us since the beginning - to offer to other qualified people the dual opportunities of community service and personal

fulfillment that come with membership in the world's largest and most effective service organization.

Membership : A personal obligation

Identifying and inviting qualified men and women to join our clubs is a responsibility shared by all Lions. We all must seek out those friends, acquaintances and associations who are not yet Lions but who already possess the qualities that characterize Lions. We must give them the opportunity to become full participants in our organization and gain the satisfaction and prestige that come with membership.

But no membership program can be successful unless the current members feel part of an organized membership development effort and in fact also feel enough pride in the club to invite prospective members to visit it.

It is not enough to simply exhort members to go forth and find new members. A realistic and achievable plan at the club level is critical. Who are our prospects ? How can we reach them? What materials do we need to explain our programs and gain the prospect's interest ?

Negative factors can affect a club's image in the community; inappropriate alcohol consumption at meetings, unstructured programs, exclusion of potential members for racial or religious reasons, even fund raising or social events that might be objectionable to large segments of the community. A club that fails to look at its operations and programs from time to time in light of our Lions Code of Ethics and Objects may be losing sight of our original purpose and endangering its own success.

Whereas the great majority of Lions clubs have few or none of these barriers to success, it is a pity that so many are reluctant to publicize their accomplishments, feeling perhaps that service should be provided without regard to recognition. However, support from the public can only increase with understanding. And it has been clearly demonstrated that clubs with a high visibility and reputation in their communities are far more successful in attracting new members.

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