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Lions Clubs Facts

Membership

Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization with 1.4 million members in 46,000 clubs in 193 countries and geographical areas.

Lions are men and women who volunteer their time to humanitarian causes. Founded in 1917, the volunteer organization's motto is "We Serve."

Service To Others

Worldwide, Lions clubs are recognized for their service to the blind and visually impaired. This service began when Helen Keller challenged Lions to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness" during the 1925 Lions Clubs International Convention.

Today, Lions extend their commitment to sight conservation through countless local efforts, as well as through their international SightFirst Program and Lions World Sight Day, a global partnership of United Nations agencies, eye care and philanthropic organizations and health professionals, held the second Thursday of each October to increase awareness of the need to eradicate blindness. Lions also collect and recycle eyeglasses for distribution in developing countries year-round and especially during May, which is Lions Recycle for Sight Month.

In addition, Lions make a strong commitment to young people through youth outreach programs. Lions also work to improve the environment, build homes for the disabled, support diabetes education, conduct hearing programs and, through their foundation, provide disaster relief around the world.

Based on a recent report of Lions clubs worldwide, it is estimated that each year Lions clubs donate approximately US\$506 million and 71 million hours, which is equivalent to 34,000 people working full time for a year.

Sight Programs

In 1990, Lions established SightFirst, a US\$143.5 million global initiative to fight the major causes of preventable and reversible blindness. The unprecedented program joins Lions volunteers with blindness prevention experts and organizations and governments. SightFirst has:

- provided more than 3.4 million cataract surgeries
- built or expanded 154 eye hospitals
- supported more than 47 million treatments to prevent river blindness
- improved eye care in 78 countries around the world.

Lions clubs support other sight-related activities. Lions clubs and members:

- provide 600,000 free professional glaucoma screenings and make 25,000 corneal transplants possible each year
- establish and support a majority of the world's eye banks, hundreds of clinics, hospitals and eye research centers worldwide
- collect more than 6 million pairs of used eyeglasses annually for free distribution to those in need in developing countries
- offer screenings, eyeglasses and sports goggles to athletes through the Special Olympics-Lions Clubs International Opening Eyes Program

- provide free quality eye care, eyeglasses, Braille-writers, large print texts, white canes and guide dogs for thousands of people each year.