

Past International Director Scott Neely: Favorite Speech

It is indeed an honor and privilege for me to be here and to have the opportunity to spend time with so many dedicated Lions. As a part of the largest service organization in the world, you are the reason we have flourished and are making a difference in our world. You are the solid foundation on which our organization stands. Your efforts have made a substantial difference in the quality of life in our towns and cities around the world. Lions have always been there to address and meet the needs. We see the need and set out to address that need.

Today a far greater percentage of the population is involved in volunteer efforts than at any other time in our history. A new consciousness of helping others is rising in our world as people begin to experience the rewards in being a part of an effort to make a difference. In our society today problems have become more complex and the solutions more involved. These challenges spark the involvement of the Lions.

Why are we motivated to be involved? Better yet, we need to ask ourselves how can we as Lions motivate others to be involved and become a part of our family. Membership and retention continue to be a major concern in our organization. We need to motivate others to become Lions but we must also motivate our members to remain Lions.

It does little good to increase our membership if we lose more than we gain. Research shows us that boring meetings are the main reason that Lions stop attending meetings and eventually forfeit membership. Our Club meetings need to be more than just a gathering to discuss activities and fund raisers. Good programs with interesting and informative speakers help to motivate members.

There are a wealth of people in our communities that can share their knowledge with Lions. Often members, especially new members, are not fully informed about areas of concern or ways we can reach out to serve. Informative speakers increase members' awareness and often motivate them to become more involved.

Innovation – Gate Way to Our Future – What President Lee really means is that we must change. Develop a new method, a new way of doing. Significantly changing the behavior of a single person can be exceptionally difficult work. Changing 101 or 1001 can be a monumental task. Organizations that are leaping into the future are doing just that.

(Inserted off-the-cuff explanations of:
Merl Program
Motivation, Incentives and Recognition
Mentoring Program
Club building toolbox

“Tools” inside the Club Toolbox explain how to:
Mentor a new member
Build a Lions Team
Organize a Retreat
Leo Clubs / Quest – Need more Leo Clubs and need to retain more Leo's
Create a signature service project
Membership – One on One)

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As a Lion, I would like to speak to you about what is undeniable one of the most important issues facing us today – The need to keep Lions Clubs the World's leading service organization.

We've always worked together to put our motto "We Serve" into action.

Our devotion to that motto and the Lions emblem, now the most recognized service emblem in the world, has resulted in:

- More than 741 million in charitable donations by clubs each year, benefiting millions of people.
- 71 million hours of community service each year.
- Millions of pairs of eyeglasses being collected each year for distribution around the world.
- Over three million eye surgeries last year in China alone.
- Hospitals built and supported by Lions.
- And thousands of other programs put in place to build a better tomorrow for communities and people in need.

Your dues have helped to support everything we have worked so hard to achieve.

But service comes with a price. More specifically, a price tag.

Members support Lions Clubs International through their per capita dues.

Historically, International dues have been modest and provide good value for the amount.

Our dues have been about half of those of other organizations.

The association has been affected by a number of factors that require remedial action.

Cumulative inflationary effecting a worldwide economic downturn, declining membership revenues, increasing LCI costs for servicing clubs and districts.

All have combined to put our association in deficit and many of our valuable programs in jeopardy.

Over the past two years, your leadership has responded diligently by reducing expenses by 8 million. Costs across the board have been cut, and program development has been put on hold.

Costs have not been enough to make up for declining revenues and inflation.

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We have therefore proposed a phased in dues increase plan over a three year period as follows:

\$4.25 in 2003 - .35 ½ per mo.

\$4.95 in 2004 - .45 per mo.

\$5.80 in 2005 - .48 per mo.

This will bring the International dues to \$39.00 at the end of three years -- still considerable lower than the dues charged by the other major service organizations.

What are we going to leave to future generations of Lions who want to follow in our footsteps of service?

Our emblem is a symbol of pride for those who have served under it. Let it continue to be a symbol of service for those who have needed us, and those who continue to rely upon us to build a better tomorrow.

LCIF is a wonderful vehicle for making a difference in peoples lives. Every dollar donated goes toward a grant. The foundation's administrative cost are paid for by interest on investments. The administrative cost averages below 9% which is among the best nonprofit, and every dollar donated is leverage. LCIF grants are commonly matched with local funding, meaning a contribution is worth substantially more than its face value. Lions, this is your foundation, my foundation, and our foundation, and we need your support.

Life brings problems, each day Lions who work as volunteers are faced with challenges that may cause individual stress or organizational dis-harmony. To help in this situation a firm commitment to the association is necessary: Be a significance presence in the association show a vested interest in finding a solution, always be open, creative and cooperative, be logical, have an analytical mind and a general sense of fairness.

Honor the best of the past. Lions change with the times, but certain traditions of the past must be preserved with pride. One is the development of strong and effective leadership. Lions Clubs International would not be where it is today without the leaders who started and built our clubs. Strong leadership never goes out of fashion, and the old definition is still relevant today. "The wisdom to see what needs to be done, the knowledge to determine how best to do it, and the ability to persuade others to join you in doing it". As Helen Keller said, alone we can do so little – together we can do so much.

Fellowship and service go hand in hand. Fellowship begins at the club level, where friendship and mutual respect are the building blocks of success. The fellowship of Lions is a tradition that is central to growth, for membership is increased through fellowship.

The Lions association is a family, whose members include not only Lions, Leo Clubs, but spouses, children, friends and especially the people served. So, remember, you can make more friends in two weeks by being interested in others, than you can in ten years by trying to get others interested in you. You can be the best you can be with the help of others. We owe our present to our past, we owe the future nothing less than our best. The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra.

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We do make a difference. A big difference when we help someone else. Lions, 50 years from now no one will remember what kind of a car I drove, how expensive was the home I lived in, how I dressed or the amount of money I had, but if I have helped someone that has made a difference in their life, then I have done something right and they will remember that. It is said what I spent is gone, what I kept is lost, but what I gave to charity will be mine forever.

Many years as a public servant and 30+ years as a member of Lions Clubs International have given me considerable insight into not only the concerns of volunteers but what works. People in the non-profit arena, as in the corporate world, need to view each challenge with a view of possibility.

Clear vision is important, a demonstrated commitment is essential, and a sense of teamwork is basic. But, unless a volunteer continually recognizes and acknowledges the contribution of other volunteers, then the success of their projects is likely to be limited. No task is more important than the people involved. The difference between ordinary and extraordinary is that little extra. Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.

Life gives back whatever you give it. Our life is simply a reflection of our actions. If you want more love in your world, create more love in your heart. If you want more competence in our association, improve your competence. This relationship applies to all aspects of life. Life will only give back to you whatever you give to it.

Lionism is the same way. For those who take an active role in their Lions Club, there are many rewards, for others it is only a privilege of carrying a membership card. Lionism and, like many other clubs and organizations, continue to hold to the basic tenets that have made us so strong throughout our existence, but it is up to us to live them.

Stop by a water fountain sometime on a clear sunny day and see your reflections in the water, and see what message your reflection will have for you.

Let me leave you with this: The most beautiful things in the world can not be seen, or even touched, they must be felt in your heart.

You will always be the best you can be by being yourself at all times. Have a sense of humor, have patience, smile and have fun. Be ever thankful for the many blessings we have. May we continue to keep foremost in our hearts and minds the need of others. Let us take comfort in knowing we are all part of a world community. May we always embrace our difference, and gain strength and knowledge through the sharing and blending of our many cultures in pursuit of building a better tomorrow with one heart.

Thank you