

## **Lions Did Themselves Proud in 2007-08**

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Change can be scary. But that's what we set out to do in 2007-2008. The fundamental values of Lions need to stay. But in my presidential year, which ends in June, we strove for Lions to be more relevant and more capable of attracting new and younger members and of increasing our value and reputation within our communities.

How have we done? For the last 15 years, like other service clubs, we've seen a slow but steady decline in membership. This year we've achieved a membership growth. Our latest data shows a membership increase of 19,000. This is the greatest year in recent history for club and membership growth. Congratulations, Lions, on believing in ourselves and inspiring others to believe in us.

We've also done well in chartering new clubs. We've had 947 new clubs for the 2007-2008 fiscal year through April 30. This is an increase of 140 clubs over the previous year. Latin America has increased new club development by 41 percent. USA and Canada have increased new club development by 15 percent and ISAAME, which is India, South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, increased new club development by 39 percent.

We zoomed past the Campaign SightFirst II initial fund-raising goal of US\$150 million and are focused on the US\$200 million challenge goal. Thanks to Lions, we're prepared to save the sight of many more millions of people.

We've taken major steps to rebrand Lionism, to project an image of Lions as important and relevant. We've made it more likely that people will join us, partner with us and contribute to our mission.

We've easily reached our goal of 350,000 Melvin Jones Fellows. We've revived the Leo movement and reinvigorated Lions Quest. We've officially signed on with the United Nations to achieve its Millennium Goals. Our partnership with the United Nations has been deepened to enable Lions to help eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education and reach six other ambitious goals.

LCIF ranked best among non-governmental organizations worldwide, according to the London-based Financial Times last summer. Among 34 global organizations LCIF came in first. Lions always have known how effective LCIF is but this ranking affirms that.

You also will be pleased to know that former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, a Lion, nominated Lions Clubs International for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008. We are very humbled by this honor.

Beyond our obvious successes, I've witnessed in my travels an eager willingness to embrace change and innovation. Some clubs are shortening meetings. Others are spicing them up. Almost jokingly last year at the convention, I talked about clubs having karaoke at a meeting to make it more fun. Well, I actually know of clubs that have done exactly that—they have added karaoke to their regular meeting.

Clubs also are responding to the times we live in—a busy time in which people lead busy lives. In the United States, in Sri Lanka and elsewhere, there are new cyber clubs. Members meet via their computer, so to speak. They've been willing to rethink the traditional ways of being a club. They've taken a forward-thinking leap into the future.

The future is ours to shape. For more than 90 years, Lions have led the way as a service club in meeting community needs. We've strengthened our foundation this year. Now we can lift off and fulfill our mission of service as never before.

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