



**Lions Clubs International**

# Our History

**1917: The Beginning** Chicago business leader Melvin Jones asked a simple and world-changing question – what if people put their talents to work improving their communities? Almost 100 years later, Lions Clubs International is the world's largest service club organization, with more than 1.3 million members in more than 45,000 clubs and countless stories of Lions acting on the same simple idea: let's improve our communities.

**1920: Going International** Just three years after our founding, Lions became international when we established the first club in Canada. Mexico followed in 1927. In the 1950s and 1960s international growth accelerated, with new clubs in Europe, Asia and Africa.

**1925: Eradicating Blindness** Helen Keller addressed the Lions Clubs International Convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, USA, and challenged Lions to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness." Since then, we have worked tirelessly to aid the blind and visually impaired.

**1945: Uniting Nations** The ideal of an international organization is exemplified by our enduring relationship with the United Nations. We were one of the first nongovernmental organizations invited to assist in the drafting of the United Nations Charter and have supported the work of the UN ever since.

**1957: Organizing Youth Programs** In the late 1950s, we created the Leo Program to provide the youth of the world with an opportunity for personal development through volunteering. There are approximately 144,000 Leos and 5,700 Leo clubs in more than 140 countries worldwide.

**1968: Establishing Our Foundation** Lions Clubs International Foundation assists Lions with global and large-scale local humanitarian projects. Through our Foundation, Lions meet the needs of their local and global communities.

**1990: Launching SightFirst** Through SightFirst, Lions are restoring sight and preventing blindness on a global scale. Launched in 1990, Lions have raised more than \$346 million for this initiative. SightFirst targets the major causes of blindness: cataract, trachoma, river blindness, childhood blindness, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma.

**Today: Extending Our Reach** Lions Clubs International extends our mission of service every day – in local communities, in all corners of the globe. The needs are great and our services broad, including sight, health, youth, elderly, the environment and disaster relief. Our international network has grown to include more than 200 countries and geographic areas.