

LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENTIAL THEME 2013-2014

PRESIDENT **BARRY J. PALMER**



The Three Sisters Dreamtime Legend

Follow Your Dream

“If you can dream it, you can do it.” -Walt Disney_

Martin Luther King did not say, "I have a goal." Or "I have an aim."
The most powerful words in his famous speech were "I have a dream".

A dream embraces our most cherished longings. It embodies our very identity. We often won't feel fulfilled as human beings until we realize our dreams.

The innovative and gifted Danish architect Jorn Utzon had a dream – to build a structure that would be renowned not only for its aesthetic design, but also one that would define its surroundings while defying the principles of modern architecture. In 1957 he got his chance. His design for the Sydney Opera House was selected from over 200 entries. There were many naysayers, and more than a few famous architects who said it couldn't be done.

Work began in earnest in March 1959. Through both trial and tribulation, the opera house shell began to take shape. Finally, after 14 years, the opera house opened to the public in 1973. Today, it stands as a world-wide symbol for Sydney, and Utzon's dream lives on as both an architectural marvel and a perfect example of “if you can dream it, you can achieve it.”

We all have hopes and dreams. We all go through times in our lives when we come up with ideas of things that we would like to accomplish in the years ahead. It's a natural human tendency to come up with an ideal that we would like to fulfill in our future.

Everyone should have a dream – a vision – a goal, and something as unique as our very DNA. The challenge is really twofold: first identify your dream, and then work to achieve your dream, for there is nothing more disheartening than a dream unfulfilled.

**It's never too late to find your dream.
Have you found yours?**



SERVICE.

It's More Than A Dream, It's Our Identity

We exist to serve others. It sets us apart and really defines us as an organization. It's why we can make the claim "The Global Leader In Humanitarian Service."



Our Global Service Action Campaigns of engaging youth (August), working with the blind and visually impaired (October), feeding the hungry (December and January), and working to improve the environment (April) solidify our reputation for service, providing clubs and districts with yet another opportunity to effect positive change – to make life better for our neighbors. Each year our Global Service Action campaigns account for over 200 million hours of service, with a direct impact on 16 million people.

In addition to these campaigns, I'm also challenging the Lions of the world to focus on reducing poverty through actions such as micro-financing and low-cost technologies that can improve lives and allow more people in need to break the cycle of poverty and realize their fullest potential.



As impressive as our impact is globally, our local programs – at the club and district level – really connect us to our respective communities.

With now over 46,000 clubs around the world – in urban centers, suburban areas, and small towns that dot the rural landscape, our tradition of service has established Lions clubs as the very fabric of the communities in which they serve. Last year alone, with only half our clubs reporting through the new service activity reporting system, we know we completed over 450,000 service projects, representing 500 million service hours, benefiting over 200 million people.

It's the local Lions club that sponsors youth athletic activities; that builds a community park or provides a scholarship to students. It's the local Lions club that furnishes meals directly to needy families, or keeps food on the shelves of a hometown food bank. When someone needs a pair of eyeglasses, it's the local Lions club that provides a voucher. We plant trees. We participate in activities to improve literacy rates. We sponsor youth exchange programs and youth mentoring programs. We assist the elderly, and so much more.

Lions dream big and take action to accomplish their dream. In the past several years, for example, Lions responded overwhelmingly to the challenge to improve reading and increase literacy rates through the Reading Action Program, and have planted millions of trees around the world to better our environment. Both the Reading Action Program and tree planting efforts are, of course, continuing as association programs. Together with the Global Service Action campaigns they help extend our reach by expanding our service footprint and increasing public awareness of who we are and what we do. When others see Lions in action, they want to share our dream of service for all.





FRIENDS AND FAMILY Can Share The Dream of Serving Others

Survey after survey indicates a significant interest in volunteering. But with more constraints placed on people’s time, available volunteer hours are at a minimum. Volunteers want to see immediate results and quick gratification if they are to invest free time serving others. In other words, it is no longer acceptable to simply attend a meeting or raise money for a cause. Volunteers want to roll up their sleeves and participate in a hands-on community service project. They want to see firsthand that at the end of the day, they have made a significant difference.

Volunteers want to belong to an organization dedicated to good – Lions clubs. They want an organization with experience – Lions clubs. They want an organization with global reach, but local impact – Lions clubs. They want to belong to an organization that nurtures a family atmosphere and fellowship. Again – Lions clubs.



We are a perfect fit for most people that are inclined to volunteer at the community level. So introduce your family, friends and neighbors to your Lions club.

I’m asking Lions during the month of April to sponsor “Friends and Family” events. Invite your family and friends to participate in a club service activity, open house, or casual gathering like a picnic or barbecue. There is no better way to introduce Lions to those who may be less than familiar with the organization you have come to know and love.

**“A dream you dream alone
is only a dream.
A dream you dream together
is reality”**

- John Lennon

SHARE THE DREAM

Lions Clubs International represents a global network of responsible Lions club members. Individuals who are dedicated to service, committed to creating a world without suffering, and whose relentless pursuit of their own dreams, help others to realize their dreams. We are a team. We share the Lions dream. Each of us is responsible not only for our fellow members, but for our association's future as well.

District Governor teams work The Global Membership Team (GMT) and Global Leadership Team (GLT) and others to stimulate membership growth through service and engagement, and identify and develop inspired, effective Lions leaders. They take focused action so that our dream of a better world can be kept alive and thriving.

Good leaders do not function in a vacuum. Good leaders know the value of working together, and achieving success through teamwork. The first step down the path to effective leadership is to have a team around you that can help achieve a shared dream.

As you follow your dream, it's important to initiate action, promote teamwork, generate momentum and embrace risks. Share your dream with others. Engage every resource available to make your dream come true. Work hard, learn valuable leadership skills, develop confidence, and strengthen the foundation for our future by taking advantage of our variety of web-based and instructor-led training and development opportunities. Visit the online Leadership Resource Center for ideas and suggestions as you construct your dream.



The three R's - **RESPONSIBILITY, RECOGNITION AND REACH**

As Lions, we all have a strong sense of awareness for the needs of others and a strong sense of RESPONSIBILITY in our continuing quest to make our communities better. We all know that responsibility means taking care of others, being accountable and being trustworthy.



Responsibility also means ownership: owning what needs doing, then finding a way to get it done. It means committing ourselves – to lead, to create, to solve problems – and then following through. It involves taking risks and working hard.



I think of responsibility as seizing what's in front of you, exerting choice, and taking control and having the ability to respond and take action. It's going out and creating what you want through personal choices. It is important to be aware of where our responsibilities end and where the responsibilities of others begin. We must let others be responsible for their own challenges, and yes – their own dreams, if they are to grow, and encouraging their dreams by recognizing their achievements.



RECOGNITION is a key component of member satisfaction.

Recognition is a behavior deeply rooted in the Lions heritage and tradition of service. It should be implemented on a regular basis. Timely recognition of the achievements and contributions of all members keeps club life fresh, and members motivated.

I have created the Dream Achiever Awards to recognize district governors and their teams, as well as awards for zone and region chairpersons. These awards are timely – with opportunities to earn awards each quarter, and they also require the cooperation and success at the club level. Criteria for the awards can be found on the LCI website.

Clubs can be recognized for achievement by fulfilling the criteria for the Club Excellence Award, and of course district governors can earn the District Governor Team Excellence Award. Both recognize excellence in service, management, leadership development and club growth.

But what about the individual club member? The one that can always be counted on to take an active role in service projects; the one that always calls when a club member is sick; the one that is always first to congratulate others for their achievements; and the one that no matter what, the club can always count upon. You know who they are. Don't forget to recognize THEIR achievement. Sometimes just a simple "thank you" or a handshake will do. Or why not create your own club awards – like a certificate for "unsung hero." Recognition and praise go a long way toward keeping morale high and adding to a positive club experience for members.

Member satisfaction is key to our ability to retain our members, and also key to expanding our service capacity and global REACH. Lions know what it means to reach out to other people. We've been reaching others through service since 1917.

Although all of us have individual dreams and aspirations, all Lions do share at least one dream – a world that knows no suffering. But community needs continue to escalate. We must extend our reach and expand our capacity in order to address those needs.

Reaching out to others is embedded in our heritage and our history. To understand the meaning of being a Lion and serving others, one need look no further than the Lions Clubs International Purposes and Code of Ethics. Consider the following excerpts:

FROM OUR PURPOSES

TO CREATE and foster a spirit of understanding among the peoples of the world.

TO TAKE an active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of the community.

TO ENCOURAGE service-minded people to serve their community without personal financial reward

FROM OUR CODE OF ETHICS

TO SHOW my faith in the worthiness of my vocation by industrious application to the end that I may merit a reputation for quality of service.

TO HOLD friendship as an end not a means. To hold that true friendship exists not on account of the service performed by one to another, but that true friendship demands nothing but accepts service in the spirit in which it is given.

ALWAYS to bear in mind my obligations as a citizen to my nation, my state and my community, and to give them unswerving loyalty in word, act and deed. To give them freely of my time, labor, and means.

TO AID others by giving my sympathy to those in distress, my aid to the weak, and my substance to the needy.



I often have to refer myself back to some of those phrases to remind myself how important it is to share our dream of service with others and extend our reach.

The best way to expand our reach is by increasing our membership. The more members we have, the more service we can provide. You see – we don't work for membership growth simply to increase numbers. The aim of membership growth is to increase our capacity to serve and maintain our position as the world's greatest provider of humanitarian service. Each act of service brings us one step closer to our dream.

By inviting new members – women, young people, family, friends – and by focusing on member satisfaction through an improved club atmosphere, we can retain more members and increase our capacity to serve others.



1 In 5 Keeps Our Dream Alive

Members join for a number of reasons:

- To serve their community
- To be involved with a specific service or cause
- To serve with friends or family
- For the opportunity to become a leader

Members leave because many of those reasons are not fulfilled. It is critical that new members are made to feel welcome, and that their opinions are sought. It's equally important to involve all members in club activities, and that activities are meeting the needs and desires of club members. This might mean finding new ways to serve; updating club traditions; starting new traditions; and being open to new ideas. It may also mean ensuring that all members are given an opportunity to lead – either as a club officer or chairperson of a club project. Retaining our members is incumbent upon all Lions.

Although we enjoy a very high level of recruiting, I wonder how many more members we could recruit and retain, and how much better we can make their volunteer experience with the proper care, creativity, and dedication to providing a meaningful experience?

Recruiting new members has never been a major problem. Each and every year, we recruit on average 200,000 new members. But at the end of the year, when final numbers are tabulated, our net gain is a small portion of that. Why? We simply are not retaining enough of our members. Over the past 5 years, if we had reduced the percentage of members who left by 20%, our membership today would stand at nearly 1.5 million, with positive net growth in every constitutional area. In other words – if we had

retained just 1 out of every 5 members who left over the past 5 years, our membership would have increased significantly, thereby helping us keep pace with the growing needs of our communities.

A positive club atmosphere and meaningful service activities are the most important factors in member satisfaction. The primary tool available to clubs to ensure overall success is the Club Excellence Process (CEP), available on the LCI website. It amounts to a comprehensive guide to a more meaningful club experience. Two items in the Club Excellence Process checklist pay particularly big dividends – the *Community Needs Assessment* and the “*How Are Your Ratings?*” survey. Completing both of these items has the potential to re-energize a club's atmosphere and improve member satisfaction.

Ultimately, we want to retain each and every member and see our clubs continue to flourish, allowing us to continue to provide the service our communities have come to expect from the global leader in humanitarian service.





A 50/50 Proposition To Achieving Our Dream

Since 1987 when the first woman joined Lions Clubs International, women are underrepresented in our membership ranks, but increasing. Women now represent 24.5% of our membership worldwide, even though women comprise just over half of the world's population. So we are only halfway to our full potential. My dream is to increase the percentage of women members by an additional 5.5% in the next 12 months, taking us to 30% by the end of 2013-14. In addition, I want to achieve a 50/50 parity of men and women joining our association by our centennial year.

A recent study found that:

- 83% of participants reported that they acquired, improved or developed their leadership skills due to volunteer participation, and 78% reported improvement in their communications skills.
- Some 50% of participants have been involved as volunteers for more than 5 years, and 22% for more than 10 years.
- Nearly 40% of participants started volunteering before they were 16 years old, and over 55% were volunteering by the time they were 30 years old
- Over 90% said they volunteered because it gave them a sense that they were doing something to improve the lives of others.

That study was conducted by Womens Way magazine, and all the respondents were women. Surprised? You shouldn't be.

In 2010, Lions Clubs International began a Women and Family Task Force to assess the needs of women in our organization. There have been many findings of the task force, and one thing was very clear – women volunteer for the very same reasons men volunteer. And women join Lions clubs for the very same reasons men join Lions clubs – TO SERVE.

We are making progress. There are more women filling leadership roles in our organization – at the club, district and international level – than ever before in our history. That's positive. But we can do better. We need to continue making significant progress toward achieving our ultimate goal of 50% women membership. Just remember – women join for the same reasons as men, and leave for the same reasons as men. All members want a satisfying volunteer experience.

To assist us in sharing our dream of service with others – men, women and young people, I am pleased to announce the association has developed a new tool – *“Just Ask! – New Member Recruiting Guide For Clubs.”*



Community New Club Extension

One of the best ways Lions have been able to expand global reach is to open new clubs.

New clubs create more opportunities for community and service-minded individuals to be involved in projects they care about. Forming new clubs allows Lions to identify and meet the needs of underserved areas within their communities. New clubs also create diversity by attracting new members, including more young adults and women.



There are many success stories – too numerous to mention – whereby new clubs were formed to serve a particular need. New clubs infuse new ideas and bring new ways of providing service. More importantly, they allow us to reach new members, providing them with an opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

As we try to accelerate our effort to extend new clubs, it is important to keep in mind that charter size matters. A recent LCI study shows that clubs that charter with at least 25 members are staying active longer. The higher number of charter members improves the club viability and vitality. My dream is to get new clubs to charter with 25 or more members, thereby improving their long-term success rate.

Leos and Lions - Sharing The Dream of Service

Do you remember when you were 16, 18, 21? Do you remember your first date, homework, studying for college finals? Do you remember starting your first job, or balancing your budget while balancing your career and home life with a young family? That's the life of a Leo. And yet, in spite of an inordinately busy period in their lives, Leos find time to volunteer – often putting others before their own needs. Leos want to give and make a difference. Let them be young and experience volunteering on their own terms. Their Leo experience will go a long way in determining whether at some point in the future they will follow their dreams and continue their volunteer experience as Lions.

Our Leos are making a significant contribution. They have as much to teach us, as we have to teach them. We can learn from their enthusiasm, innovation and ingenuity, and we can continue to act as mentors to provide guidance, encouragement and recognition.

Their service is unique and inspiring. Embrace it, and continue accepting them as members of the Lions family.



Are You Dreaming In New Ways?

There are many ways to attain our dream of increasing our service capacity. One way is through effective public relations.

At the turn of this century, Lions Clubs International invested several million dollars using traditional public relations outlets. We reached an external audience of 8 million people per year. In 2011, we invested only US\$300,000, yet reached an audience estimated at nearly 30 million people. That's a considerably higher return on our investment. How did we do it? Social media.

The widespread use of social media has fundamentally changed how people communicate and share information. Facebook now accounts for 12.3 percent of the time spent online versus just 7.2 percent in 2011.

PR is no longer left to the PR professional. Each and every one of our 1.35 million members now has the potential to increase public awareness of who we are and what we do – to tell the Lions story with passion and conviction – through websites and social media. But we have a long way to go. Currently, not enough of our clubs have websites and social media pages. We can do better. Through our e-clubhouse, every club can establish an online presence. I am pleased to announce that we have developed an automated e-clubhouse page for new clubs. Beginning this year, when a club receives its charter it will also be provided with an e-clubhouse site. It's a great way for new clubs to share their story as they begin their dream of service.



An improved online presence through social media and websites will allow us to communicate faster and easier, and reach a larger audience. And with an improved social media presence, no one will be able to claim we are “the world’s best kept secret,” because we can share our story and our dream with millions of other people.

Some of our best success stories result from the work we do through Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF). Through LCIF, we are making dreams a reality.

Since its founding in 1968 LCIF has strived to sustain Lions’ humanitarian service goals throughout the world, awarding over 11,000 grants totaling more than US\$811 million, in the four key areas of sight, youth, disaster relief and other humanitarian efforts.

In order to continue to make dreams possible for others, LCIF relies of the generous support and collaborative efforts of partner organizations such as The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Clinton Global Initiative, WHO, and governmental agencies. But most of all, LCIF relies on the continued support of Lions. Together, we can keep dreams alive for millions of people around the world.



**Identify your dream. Believe in your dream.
Share your dream. And most of all - "Follow Your Dream"**

Dream On

Many years ago, Anne and I had a youth exchange student from Indonesia stay in our home. Her name was Meita. One day I asked her what she wanted to do with her life. She replied, "I want to be a doctor and work with the poor in my community." We did not see or hear from her again for over 25 years. When I became an international director, I had the opportunity to speak at a Lions convention in Indonesia. I inquired if any Lions knew her as we were in her home town. The next day, Anne and I were walking through the lobby of our hotel when a young lady approached us with a gentleman and two children. She asked, "Are you Barry Palmer?" When I replied I was, she said, "I am Meita!" We were overjoyed to see her again, and not a bit surprised that she had achieved her dream of becoming a doctor and working with the underserved of her community.

Although it was difficult, and there were many obstacles placed in her way, she didn't give up. She did not listen to naysayers who said she would never achieve her dream.

Don't let anyone steal your dreams, or try to tell you your dreams are impossible.

We face many challenges. Even as we dream of a world where no need goes unmet, our dream stands in stark contrast to reality. But dreams are not achieved overnight. Dare to dream, and then work hard to achieve that dream.

In the end, remember that dreams give us reasons to be better than who we are. It doesn't matter whether you have more or less skills, charisma, or talent than someone else. It doesn't matter at all whether you come from a poor or wealthy background. Dreams know no boundaries, no demographics and no socio-economic standing. What matters is daring to have dreams and working hard to achieve them.

