



Lions Clubs International
Presidential Theme 2014-2015

President

Joe Preston



A “pride” is a close-knit family of lions, as can be found in the savannahs of central Africa. Each member of the pride has responsibilities. Whether they are the hunters, protectors, caregivers, teachers, or learners, they work as a team, for survival and prosperity. If even one member of the pride does not fulfill its role, it can affect the entire group.

There is another group of Lions just as proud. But unlike the lions of Africa, these Lions aren’t feared. Instead they are admired and respected. They, too, form a ring of protection, and they have shown themselves to be skilled hunters – providing food for the hungry and tending to the needs of a different flock. These Lions don’t restrict themselves to grassy plains. Their territory has spread to every corner of the world, and they bring goodness wherever they exist. It’s us – the 1.35 million members of Lions Clubs International.

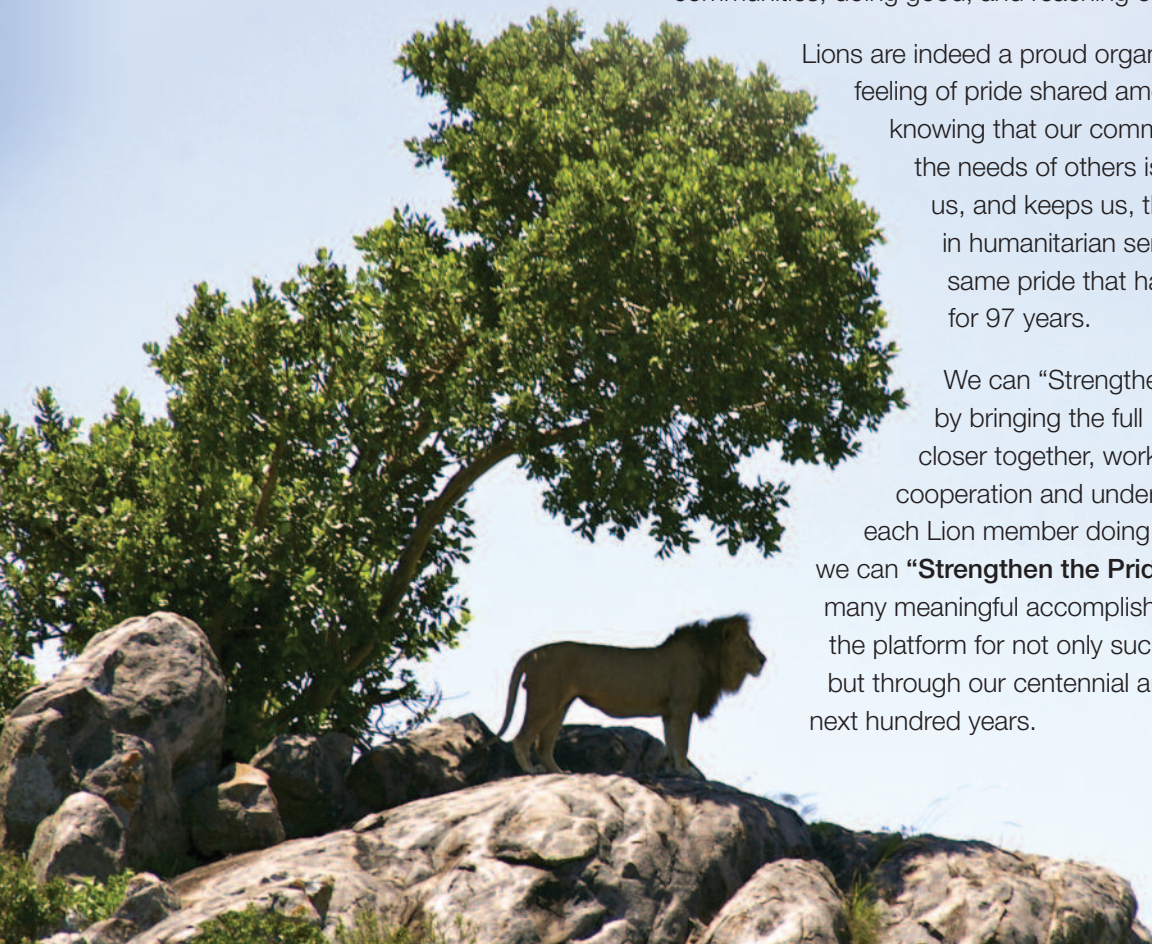
The English dictionary provides another definition of the word “Pride” – a feeling of happiness that you get when you or someone you know does something good. It is not the pride of being boastful it is the pride of accomplishment in building communities, doing good, and reaching out to assist others.



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Lions are indeed a proud organization. There is a feeling of pride shared among our members, knowing that our commitment to serve the needs of others is what has made us, and keeps us, the global leader in humanitarian service. It is the same pride that has sustained us for 97 years.

We can “Strengthen the Pride” by bringing the full Lion’s family, closer together, working in a spirit of cooperation and understanding, with each Lion member doing their share. And we can **“Strengthen the Pride”** through our many meaningful accomplishments. This is the platform for not only success this year, but through our centennial and well into the next hundred years.



STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE

THROUGH SERVICE

Service has been the bedrock of our association since we were started back in 1917. It is the essence of who we are and what we do best.

Our future is bright. We are about to embark on a three-year centennial celebration. It will be a celebration that embraces our past while shining a light for us to follow in the days and years ahead. And it will be centered around the pride that we all share in our motto “We Serve.” It gives me great pleasure to usher in our centennial by announcing our **Centennial Service Challenge** – a celebration of service that begins in July 2014 and will conclude in December 2017. There will be four elements to the Centennial Service Challenge. Clubs that report their participation in the Global Service Action Campaigns service projects that contribute to the attainment of the challenge will be eligible to receive a special patch. Please go to www.lionsclubs.org/servicechallenge for complete information.

The Family and Women’s Task Force has brought forward the idea of **Responding to Children in Need**. As such, I am asking all Lion’s Clubs to participate in a special project that not only responds to children, but especially to children in need. Whether you expand a current project you are doing or take on a new one, the ideas for this are endless. It can be to address literacy, hunger, abuse, poverty, or wherever you find children in need. Invite your friends and family members to participate in these activities.



THROUGH MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Our focus is on service, but **our strength is directly tied to our members.** The expression “there is strength in numbers” applies directly to our association. The more members we have, the more service we can provide. We have been fortunate to sustain growth over the past six years. That growth must continue – even escalate – if we are to maintain our premier role as the global leader in humanitarian service.

Countless times as I approach neighbors, friends and associates posing the question “why aren’t you a Lion?” the response has been “because I’ve never been asked.” I’m sure many of you have had similar experiences. It comes down to a simple principle – ask.

“ASK ONE”

My membership initiative this year adheres to that principle. I call it “**Ask One.**” Just imagine if each and every Lions member – all 1.35 million – asked just one person to join their club. It’s that simple – and Lions already have great tools to help them invite new members, such as the “Just Ask” brochure, or you may want to develop your own strategy, tailored to use with people you know.

But make it a meaningful ask. A genuine ask. The expression “it takes one to know one” can be applied to many things, not the least of which is Lions. It TAKES a Lion to KNOW a Lion – to know whether someone has the desire and passion to serve. After all, the single most important characteristic to become a Lion is the desire to serve others. It really is that simple. So ask one. Or two. Or three.

It is my goal this year to have our Lions make more membership invitations than we ever have had, resulting in more new members than we ever have had. Just ASK!

“SET THE EXPECTATION”

Before my visits and when I arrive, I will ask the host Lions, “How many new members do you have for me to induct?” I will ask the district governor to **set the same expectation** when they make their official visits. I will also expect current and past officers and directors to do this as well. Be ready when a prospective member says “yes” so that there is a timely club approval, meaningful induction, proper presentation of the membership certificate and Lion pin, and a thorough follow up orientation.

Every Club Needs A Plan

What we accomplish today, and what we accomplish in the future depends upon building and strengthening our membership. Survey after survey, and study after study have indicated people are volunteering now more than ever. But they have options for volunteering. In other words, the competition for volunteer time is keen. People who volunteer or join a club want to be assured that **their time is being used to make a significant impact** – locally, globally, or both. Meaningful and impactful service projects will keep members motivated and will feed their altruistic spirit. They are a great way to show our pride in serving others and involve new members. So I’m challenging every club this year to come up with both a Membership Development AND Leadership Development Plan – one that is unique to your club and your community. The “one size fits all” model simply doesn’t work.

Strengthen our Membership by **special targeting.** Although we want to grow all demographics, we challenge all of you to invite women and younger people to join, and to make the necessary adjustments in your clubs to make these new members feel welcome and to offer them equal opportunity for advancement. If for any reason you think that women, younger people or any special

group will not integrate into your club, please consider starting a **branch club** or a **new club**, specifically for these individuals.

“WE NEED MORE CLUBS”

It is not uncommon for a district to lose one or two clubs, so it is critical that we **use all extension tools and resources to bring in more new clubs** than we lose, if we want to grow. New clubs take a lot of effort and energy, so it is important to have a team of Lions to help you. It is also important to train **Guiding Lions** so that you have a pool of qualified experts to assist these new clubs so that they are successful. Remember, charter size matters. Chartering a club with 40 members doubles the chances for that club to succeed, as compared to chartering a club with 20 members.

“REBUILD EXISTING CLUBS”

Guiding Lions can also be used to **rebuild existing clubs**. Don't lose a club without a fight. If you have a club that is in trouble, get a strong and active club to work with them, and assign Guiding Lions to work with that club to increase their membership, develop better club operations and to expand the service that they are providing.

My Membership Development strategy includes recruitment, special targeting, involvement, retention, membership satisfaction, branch clubs, extension and rebuilding existing clubs. This comprehensive program is designed to grow and strengthen our association. But I'm asking you to localize the strategy to make it work for your club's particular needs and character.



STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE

BY STRENGTHENING YOUR CLUB

It is time that we got back to the basics of strengthening our association from the Club Up. Every Lions Club will be encouraged to **examine what they are doing and consider implementing new management strategies and techniques to energize their club.** The goal is to have clubs with better focus, direction, drive and purpose. The old saying, "If you keep on doing what you've always been doing, you'll keep on getting what you've always been getting," is very true. If we want new and better results, we need to try new ways.

As we enter a new Lions year, I am asking all Lions to strengthen our programs while expanding our impact, and for each club to participate in the **Community Needs Assessment** to determine how best to serve their respective communities.

Clubs that have completed the Community Needs Assessment have found it to be a valuable tool in determining signature service projects. The vast majority of clubs completing the assessment indicated that it was useful in identifying needs. Make it an ongoing process instead of a one-time event, and use it also to build relationships with key members of the community and to recruit new members.



As important as it is to recruit new members, it is equally important to **retain members** – both new and existing. New members are particularly vulnerable. Good hosts, when entertaining guests at their home, will go out of their way to make their guests feel comfortable. The same can be said of your club. Your Lions club is your home away from home. Members of your club are like members of your family. New members want to feel like they belong. Assign a mentor. Ensure all members have a meaningful experience and are allowed to contribute and share ideas. For new members, ask them to assess their experience on a regular basis.

Participate in the **Club Excellence Process (CEP)**. CEP is a fun, interactive process that brings members together to look at what your club is today and what it will be tomorrow. It gives you the tools to strengthen your service, improve your club effectiveness and enhance your membership experience. Good for all members, and good for

the overall club atmosphere. For clubs that have completed CEP, you will be able to establish a plan of action. Next you can implement your plan, and the final step is to actively manage your plan to make sure that it is successful.

Part of your plan to strengthen your club should include ensuring that all members are actively **INVOLVED** in your club. That should be part of your club's Leadership Development Plan. When we match up our members to what they are interested in, when we make sure they are participating and attending, when we listen to them, when we give them equal opportunity to lead and when we get them performing hands on service projects and activities - we will keep them busy and add value to their membership. An involved Lion is a satisfied Lion.





LEOS

Leos are an important part of the overall strength of our pride – our family. I am calling upon all Lions to involve Leos, support them and celebrate their service accomplishments so they may expand our pride even further to help us serve more people. Properly supporting and staying in contact with our Leos will provide an opportunity for these Leos to become Lions in the future. Reaching out to younger generations will benefit our organization today and throughout another century of Lions service. Strengthen your club by sponsoring a Leos club.



STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE

THROUGH LEADERSHIP

Leadership Development does not happen by accident. We can strengthen our clubs by developing strong club leaders. Leadership Development starts with a meaningful induction and a proper orientation. From there we assign our members to committees, where they are given a chance to grow into leaders. We should encourage that they become club officers and get the necessary training to be successful. As they move up the club leadership ladder they will develop new skills and expertise. *Every club should have a leadership development plan that includes goals for new member orientation, mentoring, and participation in zone meetings and leadership training.* By continually building the leadership ability of our club members we increase the pool of available leaders, which will reduce our need to recycle club officers. Successful club leaders are a good pool for district leadership positions, and above.



STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE THROUGH CREATIVITY

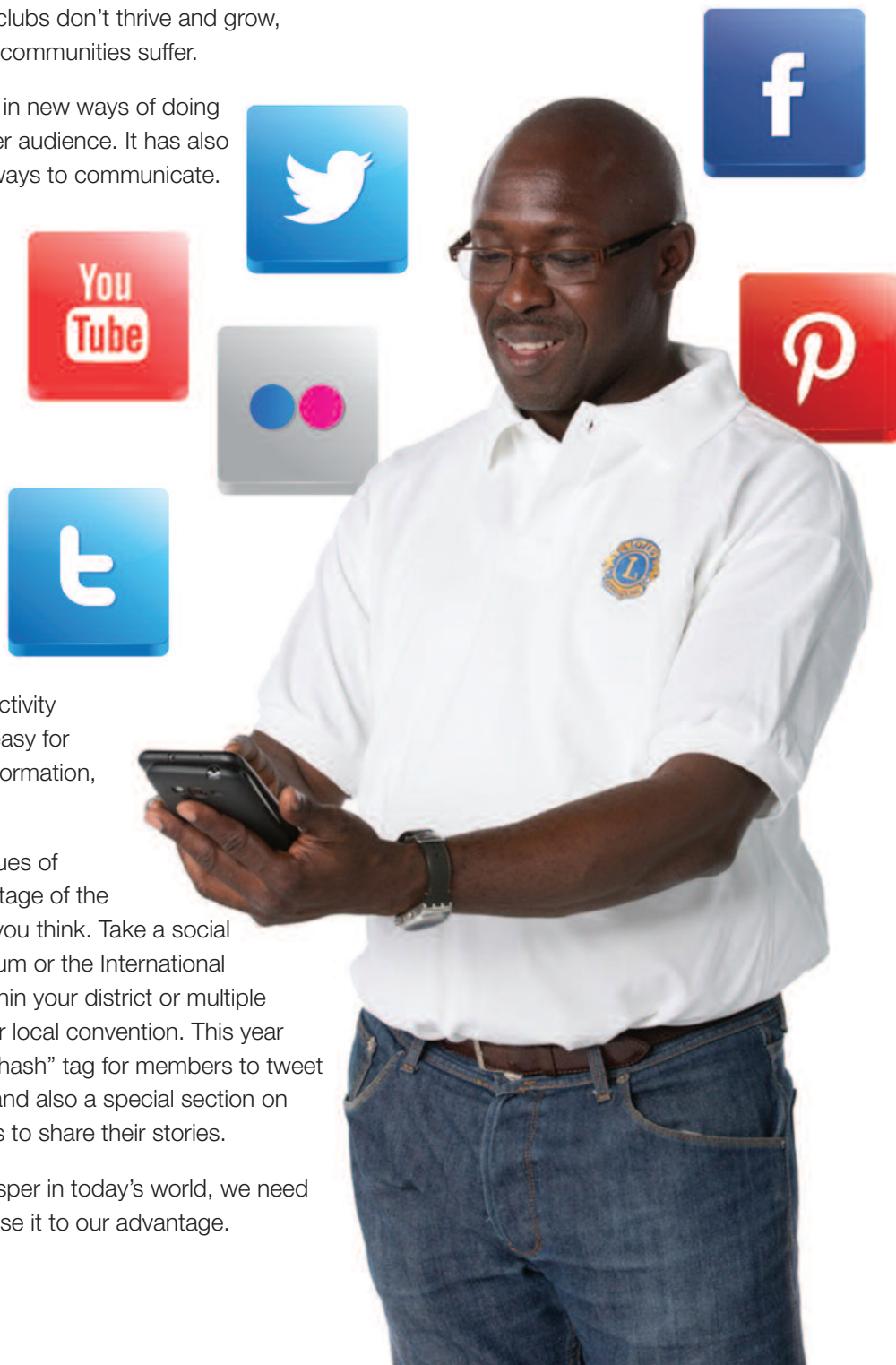
Survival is a basic instinct inherent in every lion in the Serengeti. The pride is constantly migrating to new areas. They develop creative means to thrive and overcome unforeseen challenges. They adapt. Adaptability and taking on new challenges is just as important to Lions clubs. If our clubs don't thrive and grow, countless needs go unmet and communities suffer.

The electronic age has ushered in new ways of doing business and reaching a broader audience. It has also provided us new and effective ways to communicate. LCI has built a strong network of social media tools. Followers on facebook, twitter, youtube, the LCI blog and other sites are growing each month. We're doing live tweets from major events like our International Convention, Lions World Sight Day and Lions Day at the United Nations.

Each day more clubs are developing web sites, either on their own or through e-clubhouse, and facebook pages. New tools like Service Activity Reporting and My LCI make it easy for clubs to report activities, find information, and share their pride.

Get creative. Create new avenues of communication and take advantage of the electronic age. It is easier than you think. Take a social media seminar at your area Forum or the International Convention. Find a member within your district or multiple district to host a seminar at your local convention. This year LCI staff will develop a special "hash" tag for members to tweet member recruiting successes, and also a special section on the LCI facebook page for Lions to share their stories.

For us to survive, grow and prosper in today's world, we need to **embrace technology**, and use it to our advantage.





STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE

THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

We can do more and accomplish more when we work together with like-minded people, companies and organizations. Every Lions Club is encouraged to **partner with others** when it is mutually advantageous, strengthens their communities, and helps your club better serve others. At the international level, LCI has grown by leaps and bounds in the last seven years, as to the quantity, quality and effectiveness of the service that we provide, and most of this growth has come from successful partnerships.

STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE

THROUGH REDEDICATION

Our pride not only resides in our past, it dwells in our present and will propel us toward the future. Our founder, Melvin Jones, instilled that pride of service in our first members, and nurtured pride in membership as Lions Clubs International began to grow. As we prepare for our centennial celebration, it is important to remember the legacy of service willed to us by our founder. I am asking all Lions this year to set aside **January 13th – Melvin Jones' birthday** – as a tribute to him, and to rededicate yourself to the community and humanitarian codes, objects and principles of our association. As an alternative, you might want to perform a service project, do a random act of kindness, or hold a special new member induction ceremony. Whatever you do, make this a special day.

STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE

THROUGH GIVING

The more you give, the more you have to give. I don't understand how this happens or why, but it seems to happen. This year I am asking all clubs to **make a contribution to LCIF**, the charitable arm of our association. LCIF is there to do more than clubs working alone. You decide the size of your gift.

STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE

THROUGH COURAGE AND CONVICTION

One of the story lines in the beloved movie classic "The Wizard of Oz" centers around a character referred to as the "cowardly lion." In the end, he discovers it isn't courage he is lacking, it is conviction. A roar without conviction is just a loud noise.

Lions members have both courage and conviction. Did you ever stop to consider how much courage it takes to stand up to a bully? To right the wrong? To defend a weaker person? Did you ever consider the amount of conviction it takes to live by a set of principles that says no need should go unmet? No one should be hungry? No one should surrender to a preventable disease?

As Lions, we need to roar. We need to tell the whole world who we are, and that we will never stop trying, because we have service to perform, and we are going to provide it, no matter what the challenges are.

Lions Clubs International was born of courage and has succeeded due to our conviction to the principle that it is better to serve others, than to serve ourselves. And if we stay focused - that same courage and conviction will carry us into the future.



STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE – through Service, Membership Development, Club Development, Leadership Development, Creativity, Partnerships, Rededication and Courage and Conviction. It has been designed specifically to integrate and compliment the work already underway by our membership and leadership network, the **GMT and GLT**, to take us to the next level of efficiency and effectiveness. Please use the GLT, GMT, DG Teams and all other resources to support your efforts.

Ironically, our namesake is an animal that stirs fear among many, while we are an organization not feared but respected. We have earned the respect of others because we are honest brokers of peace, goodwill and compassion for others. And we ask for nothing in return. It's enough knowing that what we do for those in need gives them strength and hope.

So roar with conviction Lions. Roar with courage. Roar because we are making a difference in the world. Focus on community and humanitarian service, and

STRENGTHEN THE PRIDE.

