

**Dignity.
Harmony.
Humanity.**



Bringing Dignity To Others

Through Humanitarian Service

LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL • 2015-2016

PRESIDENT DR. JITSUHIRO YAMADA

EVERY YEAR, thousands of small cranes cross over the Himalayas at an altitude of 8000m in V formation for their seasonal migration. They are known as demoiselle cranes and they are the smallest species in the crane family of birds. During the summer, they reside in the steppes of Mongolia. As winter approaches they form groups and begin their southward journey to India. At 8,000 meters, the temperature is minus thirty Celsius and the oxygen saturation is only one third of the terrestrial oxygen level. Those brutal conditions make their migration a life or death journey in the truest sense.

This grueling route would be impossible for a small number of birds. By flying in a large V formation, each bird can make use of the backflow of air over the wings of the other birds in front of them and by doing so, reduce the total energy expended. The leading bird expends the greatest amount of energy so it is necessary to continually rotate new birds into the position. The demoiselle crane depends upon the cooperation and harmony of every other member of the flock. While each bird is small, every bird has great dignity.



Demoiselle cranes seasonal migration over the Himalayas

The determination demonstrated, as well as other characteristics like teamwork, and their family structure, have endeared the crane to multiple cultures. In Japan, the crane has traditionally been a symbol of long life. In the Japanese art of origami, the crane is the most basic and representative form that all children learn how to make. There is a custom of folding cranes and giving one to a loved one who is suffering from disease or injury as a way to say, "we wish you a quick recovery and long life." The folding of origami cranes is a meditative act that shows the heartfelt wishes of friends and family for the ill to become well again. But the crane has also become known as a symbol of peace – not only in Japan but around the world.

We Lions have been fostering international peace and harmony through service, giving hope to all people, and giving opportunity to live with dignity. As a medical doctor, I made a career out of fighting for the dignity of human life. A doctor might be able to save 10,000 lives over the course his career. By working together, our association can save tens of millions of lives each year through our programs.



Japanese Origami

Peace, hope, determination, teamwork
and uniting people through service are
central elements of my presidential theme –

“Dignity. Harmony. Humanity.”



Childhood should be a happy time

Bringing Dignity To Others Through Humanitarian Service

“What should move us to action is human dignity: the inalienable dignity of the oppressed, but also the dignity of each of us. We lose dignity if we tolerate the intolerable.”

Unknown Author

There are many questions, scientific and otherwise, to which we may never have answers. But one thing is certain – human dignity should not be a privilege. One of the basic tenets of human dignity and self-respect is the ability to provide for oneself and for one’s family. Imagine being a parent, watching your children go to bed hungry, or having a child diagnosed with a treatable disease but with no means to afford proper medical treatment. Millions of people here on earth wake up each morning wondering if they will be able to feed their children that day, or provide for their healthcare. They face an uncertain future, with little hope of bettering themselves or giving their children a life of certainty.

Childhood should be a happy time, filled with pleasant memories – vacations with family, celebrating holidays, familiar and delicious aromas coming from the kitchen, favorite stories shared with friends. It should be a time dedicated to study and preparing for the future, with a support network in place.

But for many children, there is no school. There is no support network. There are 2.2 billion children in the world today, and nearly 1 billion of them live in poverty. Poverty has devastating effects on children. It is linked to substandard housing, homelessness, inadequate nutrition and food insecurity, poor academic achievement (even when education is available), lack of medical care, and so much more that most of us take for granted. And it isn’t only in developing countries.

Children of course are our future and tomorrow's leaders, yet they are in the most desperate need of our help. So service to children will continue to be a main focus area this year. Thousands of children die each day from treatable disease, hunger, and lack of fresh drinking water. Parents often watch helplessly because they don't have the financial resources, nearby reliable facilities, or both, to save their children. I want to help alleviate the needless suffering of children. No – we can't save every child. But just by strengthening or expanding our existing programs for children, we can make a difference. That is why I am introducing this year the Children's Dignity Initiative. Under this initiative, I am encouraging Lions to expand service to children by:

- Supporting and brightening the outlook of children in hospitals
- Responding to the needs of children in refugee camps
- Addressing the needs of hungry children
- Continue and expand the Reading Action Program



Those are only a few of the many services opportunities that address the needs of children. You can read more about the Children's Dignity Initiative on the lionsclubs.org web site.



Serving others. Those are not just words to Lions. Our organization was founded on that very principle. Our tradition of service continues, and in fact has grown to meet the needs of our communities and a changing world. But we don't just serve. We don't simply provide food, shelter, or address the immediate need. We provide hope. We provide the promise of a brighter tomorrow. And yes, we restore dignity.

The question is "can we do more?" We MUST do more. Our 100 year anniversary is approaching. The centennial service challenge is an ambitious undertaking. In order to reach our goal of serving 100 million people in the areas of youth, vision, hunger and the environment between now and June 30, 2018, it will be necessary to triple our output of service in those areas. I know we can do it. Lions have shown time and time again their willingness and ability to exceed challenges when it means others less fortunate will benefit. We asked Lions to plant 1 million trees, and they exceed that ten-fold. There are countless other examples.



Service to others is changing the world. Think about it. As we serve others, we are sowing the seeds of harmony, understanding and peace. Our service programs –restoring sight, protecting children from measles, feeding empty stomachs, planting trees, and so much more, are strengthening humanity and forming bonds of mutual understanding.



Children of course are our future and tomorrow's leaders

Harmony: Mutual Understanding Through Service

Anthropologists have identified hundreds – if not thousands – of cultures. But it doesn't take an anthropologist to point that out. Just in our own world of Lions, we know we have many outward differences. But as a neurosurgeon, I can tell you beyond all reasonable doubt that in spite of any outside characteristic like skin color, hair color, different features, the way we speak, or other factors that identify culture, on the inside we are basically the same. A heart is a heart. We all function in the same manner. That shouldn't be just a scientific approach; it should be the human approach – to dignity, to harmony and to humanity.

In this rapidly changing world, where cultures and people circulate and interact on a daily basis, those people who know how to communicate effectively across cultures, in both personal and professional contexts, will have a crucial advantage over those who do not. Cultural sensitivity requires empathy, curiosity and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs

Culture is a strong part of people's lives. It influences their views, their values, their humor, and their hopes and aspirations. People learn how to function and maneuver within their own culture from the day of birth. Sometimes people mistakenly draw the conclusion based on their own perspective that all cultures are alike, that if they understand their own culture, they can easily operate in others. Not so.



Global Projects For Harmony

It is important to understand and appreciate cultures unlike our own. There is no better way to cultivate better understanding and appreciation than through joint service projects at the district and multiple district level. I encourage district governors and council chairpersons to reach out to each other internationally. I have seen this international cooperation work first hand in projects between Lions of Japan and Lions of the Philippines. International joint service projects provide a different perspective to their routine and an appreciation for other cultures. Bringing people together to address the needs of others creates true harmony within the international community. This type of activity is at the heart of the Third Purpose of the Association – “To create and foster a spirit of understanding among the peoples of the world.”

Clubs can also get involved in international cooperation. Clubs that participate in our Twinning program gain a unique understanding of another culture. Interacting with members from different cultures and with different points of view can go a long way in broadening our outlook and provides inspiration for activities in our own community.

“If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

Mother Teresa



Bringing people together to address the needs of others

Lions serve with sincerity,
they serve with passion

More Members Equals More Service

Our members and our clubs are the heart of our organization. Lions serve with sincerity, they serve with passion, and they serve unconditionally.

We have enjoyed a lengthy period of membership growth. We have shown an increase in worldwide membership for seven years in a row. There are a number of reasons for our success; we have a dynamic Global Membership Team, effective marketing strategies coupled with easy to implement membership growth programs, dedicated leaders beginning at the club level and unprecedented outreach to women and family members, to name only a few. Together, we have built our membership to nearly 1.4 million members. I want to continue that growth. More members equal more service.

Club Presidents Hold The Keys To Our Success

Our association's energy radiates from each club. So naturally, club presidents are at the heart of our success. They have the power to succeed. They have the power to affect change. They have the power to transform the way we do business. So I am asking club presidents to transform the atmosphere of their club. Transform the club to one in which members feel confident, and to one which works in unison with the community it serves, thereby garnering respect. Wouldn't it be wonderful if new members came to us instead of the other way around?

I have come up with 7 points of excellence for club presidents.

“Ask One” Begins At Home

Lions volunteering with family is a great way for families to have fun and feel closer. It is even better when family members become Lions! If you ask one, you should ask your closest friend, the person you trust most – your loving spouse and partner. Share your commitment and enthusiasm for Lions with your family members. Families that serve together as Lions establish a family tradition of serving others.

The Ask One membership campaign starts at home. If Lions families are on the front lines serving their communities, the word will spread wider and faster. We will gain the recognition we deserve as the greatest service organization in the world.

Humanity - Bringing It All Together

If clubs are at the heart of our community service, then LCIF is at the heart of our worldwide service. LCIF grants create goodwill, eliminate human suffering, and restore hope and dignity for people around the world. LCIF programs and partnerships enable us to treat preventable blindness; provide free medical care and medical training for doctors and nurses; teach life skills to school children; and so much more. This year I am asking Lions to take every opportunity to support LCIF with your generous donations and Melvin Jones Fellowships. Your support underscores our ability to combine dignity and harmony while serving humanity.

Photo Credit: Dan Morris



Club President Keys To Success

1. Increased value in being a member (*better education for new members*)
2. Making clubs that members are proud to be in (*improving club satisfaction*)
3. High quality service projects (*relevant to the actual needs of the general community*)
4. Serving with family members (*because “Ask One” starts at home*)
5. More female members / young members (*the ideal man to woman ratio is 1:1*)
6. Being leaders in the community (*more leadership training*)
7. Thinking outside the box (*reform of inefficient practices, customs and policies*)



Conclusion

As we approach our centennial celebration, we would do well to remember and meditate upon the words of our founder -

“You can’t get very far until you start doing something for somebody else.”

Melvin Jones

We have demonstrated throughout our history the ability to bring people together for a common cause. We have shown time after time that national boundary lines are nothing more than dots on a map. In spite of conflicts and disputes throughout the world, we work beyond differences – a grassroots coalition of peace through service.



**Bringing people together
for a common cause**



*“Be kind. Be open. Be curious. Be strong.
Be generous. Be sincere. Be loyal. Be honest.
Be a Lion.”*

Dr. Jitsuhiro Yamada

Dignity

As we strive to serve the needs of others, let us always remember to respect the dignity of those we serve.

As we reach out to others with hands of service, let us always remember it is not a handout.

Harmony

As we build others up, let us always remember serving others isn't just an act of kindness; it is also a means to build understanding and harmony.

Humanity

As we show empathy for the less fortunate in our respective communities, let us extend empathy to all who are suffering around the world.

And as we continue to serve human kind, let us remember that serving humanity is not a duty, it is a responsibility.

I am immensely proud and extremely humbled to be the president of the global leader in humanitarian service – Lions Clubs International. I wish you 1,000 cranes. But most of all, I hope the service you bestow on others brings you tremendous love and fulfillment, and fills your heart with joy and peace.

