

On June 26, 1917, the Denver Lions Club became one of the world's first Lions Clubs. Later that year, the Denver Club sent delegates to the first convention in Dallas formally establish Lions Clubs International. Melvin Jones, the Chicago businessperson who had the idea of converting business clubs into community service clubs, led the International Association for over 40 years. The hope was to attract a diverse range of men of all occupations and backgrounds interested in civic betterment.

The Lions Clubs continues to grow rapidly across the United States and internationally and continues to do so, reaching an all-time peak in 2016 of 1,410,605 members in 46,912 clubs in 205 countries. After the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, communities in many Soviet Republics established Lions Clubs. The inclusion of women as full members by the International Association in 1987 also pumped up the numbers -- and the looks and behavior of many clubs. Earlier the Denver Den had a Woman's Auxiliary, and the International Lions Club created a Lioness Program in 1975. In 1957, the establishment of Leo Clubs for high school and college aged youth.

The International Association chose as a motto "**We Serve.**" Denver charter member Joseph Schwartz designed the Lions lapel pin now worn by members all over the globe. The Club held its Tuesday meetings in the now gone Albany Hotel at the corner of 17th and Stout Streets, five blocks from the Denver Den's current meeting place. Members receive the Lions Magazine, a monthly launched in 1918, and now published in print and digitally in 20 languages worldwide. The Denver Den began publishing its own newsletter in 1923. After trying out *The Mile High Roar*, *the Den-Ver-Den* and *The Roarer*, the Denver Club settled on the current name – *Roarings* for the weekly bulletin.

Lions found their major cause at their 1925 International Convention when Helen Keller, the famous blind champion of the blind, gave an unforgettable speech challenging the Lions to become "the knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness." Inspired Lions Clubs thereafter made sight conservation and service to the blind their main community service.

As Helen Keller had urged, sight conservation remains the main mission of the Denver Den. The Lions Clubs in Colorado and Wyoming raised six million dollars for the Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Institute on the Anschutz Medical Campus of the University of Colorado. Today that Institute, with a faculty and research staff of 76 professionals, serves more than 100,000 patients a year, and conducts state-of-the-art eye research.

The Lions commitment to internationalism led them to collaborate. In 1945 with the newly formed United Nations on worldwide eye health programs such as SightFirst. On the home front, Lions crusaded, beginning in 1930, to get white canes to the blind after one Lion noted that blind folks had trouble crossing streets. By 1956, every state had passed white cane laws. Lions launched White Cane Day to educate the world about blindness and how the vision impaired can live and work independently and become community assets.

In 1952, the Denver Den created the non-profit Denver Lions Foundation to facilitate fund raising and charitable giving. Since its creation, the Foundation has given away an estimated

\$2.5 million. Expanding its missions beyond eye care, the Denver Den added three more priorities: Social Services, Youth Services, Hearing Conservation, and Diabetes research.

The Eye Institute is grateful for the generous partnership of the Lions Club for its significant and ongoing support over the past 15 years. Most recently, the Lions helped to build exam rooms thus enabling the treatment of more patients. We look forward to continuing and building upon this important partnership.