



DECEMBER 2023

CLUB PRESIDENT'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Dear Lions,

Christmas may feel different to us all. Sometimes, we use the holiday season to take stock of what we went, or are going through our lives. When this season comes around, we see all the things that have changed during the past year, some were milestones which we've worked to achieve and rightfully celebrated, others were heartbreaking periods in which put a weight on our shoulders.

Away from the pine scented candles and colourful street lights members of our society suffer in silence. Health, both physical and mental, loneliness, financial constraints and family relationship problems are at their peak during this season. All the cheer that surrounds us does nothing but make us more aware of our difficulties.

Our success as Lions is not measured from the fundraising we make, or the number of guests we have during our events. Our success is when we, as Lions and as a club, identify members within our society who need us to share their burden and lighten the weight from their shoulders. Such gestures do not require a budget, they require the dedication of our time. I am convinced that there are members within our club who do so without ever mentioning it, living in true Lionism.

We, as a club have also gone through some turbulent times, times which could have been eased. While we should cherish our friendships, let us not forget the true meaning of our membership. Our different views is what should make us stronger, not weaker. Let's open ourselves to discussions, not arguments. We should not belittle anyone since each and every one of us has a lot to offer.

This Christmas might be different. We may be healing from a situation or maybe we are still working on it, but we have grown and made it through this year. This, as president gives me pride for this club.

Come this 31st December at midnight I will be raising a glass - to the people who even though suffering, fought to remain in this world, but went on through eternal life; to you, fellow Lion members who will put aside personal gratification over the well-being of our society; to those who seek self-fulfilment, as next year you might come to realise that life is too short; to those who throughout this year have supported our club through various initiatives; to my parents, whos' support makes me go through the toughest of times; to Daniela, my life companion of whom I would certainly won't be able to function without, and lastly to you, dear Auntie Bella, for some of the best times you've brought upon every room you enter, you will forever be truly missed. Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and a Wonderful New Year.



1Lion Bill Russell presenting certificate to Lion President Karl

CHRISTMAS GET-TOGETHER

The Christmas Get-Together for Club members and their guests was held on Saturday December 16 at Victoria Palace.



During the evening, Lion Bill Russell and his wife who are frequent visitors to Malta and who make it a point to be at Club meetings, presented the official Friendship Document between our Club and Lions Club Abingdon. The document reads as follows: ***"To unite the Clubs in the bonds of friendship, good fellowship and mutual understanding between the Lions Clubs of Abingdon, Oxfordshire UK MD105SC and Lions Club Sliema, Malta VO46. A*** good number of Club members and their guests were present for the event.

LIONS GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT – “SIGHTFIRST”

In the late 1980s blindness plagued over 18 million people around the world. Left unchecked experts predicted that number would more than double to 80 million by the next generation. Despite this grim situation, the experts estimated that 80% of all cases of blindness were preventable, treatable or even curable. About 90% of people with vision impairments lived in developing nations, where significant but surmountable challenges impeded progress. The situation was dire but not unsolvable.

After a year of initial work, the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) officially inaugurated Campaign SightFirst in 1991. It would immediately become the most ambitious and far-reaching fundraising drive in the organisation history. The goal of the campaign was to raise US\$130 million by 1994 and to aim to conquer blindness, in all its diverse forms, through grant projects driven by local Lions. With this in mind, Lions focused on creating programmes that could provide direct, practical benefit to people in the developing world with easily preventable or treatable afflictions.



The most prevalent cause of blindness in the early 1990s was cataracts. Surgery had long been common, safe and very effective but developing countries had to contend with major barriers. The lack of education about the causes, symptoms and treatment for cataract was one obstacle. Unfounded fear of treatment was another.

Assuming a broad education campaign could help raise awareness, there were still many inherent challenges to overcome, lack of accessible medical services in remote areas, lack of transportation and communications, infrastructure to facilitate treatments, and lack of trained eye-care professionals, facilities and technologies.

By December 2003 over US\$180 million were raised for 758 projects in 89 countries. These projects included constructing or expanding 207 eye hospitals, providing treatment to 65 million people for river blindness, training eye care professionals and launching the world's first initiative to combat childhood blindness. Lions funded cataracts surgeries also restored eye sight to some 4.6 million people.

The Maltese Lions Clubs participated in this worldwide project not only by donating funds to LCIF but also by obtaining glaucoma screening equipment for health centres.

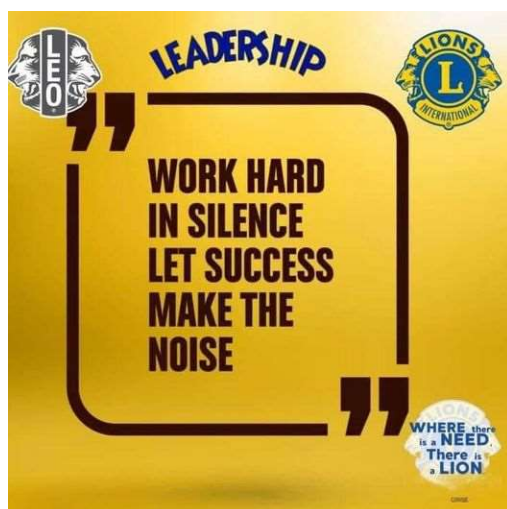
<< WHAT IS THE LIONS' WORK >>

Lions are groups of service-minded men and women who are interested in improving their communities. To become a Lion is to become an active volunteer, a member of a respected international organization, a leader in the community and a friend of people in need.

Membership of a Lions Club is by invitation. LIONS' work is projected towards:

- More volunteers in more places, when it comes to meeting challenges, our response is simple "WE SERVE".
- We want everyone to see a better tomorrow.
- We believe everyone deserves a healthy life.

We empower the next generation and we serve local communities



BBs of RELATIONSHIP BUILDING:

- *BE Real
- * BE a better listener – BE Honest
- * BE a better Listener – BE Empathetic
- * BE Helpful – BE Engaged
- * BE Glad that you are there to help

JANUARY MEETINGS:

The dates of the January 2024 meetings have been changed. The meeting scheduled for the first Wednesday has been transferred to the second Wednesday. Hence Meetings will now be held on Wednesday 10 and Wednesday 17. Members are requested to note the new dates.



BINGO EVENING: Our next fund-raising event a "Bingo Evening" is scheduled for Saturday January 13. Further details will be sent in due course.

ACCOMPLISHED ARTIST

Lion Susan Galea Borg besides being a very active member of our Club is also an accomplished Artist. She has recently opened an “Art Gallery” at Pembroke. On the inauguration evening Lion Susan invited Club members and other guests.



2An array of paintings of Malta's scenes

Susan will be donating 50% of the proceeds from the event which was held on December 14. The money will go towards the fund supporting the Ursuline Sisters in building a

childcare centre instead of the Crèche. The Sisters in Sliema no longer house babies, as these are now fostered by families. They are now refurbishing the building to set up a child care day centre to accept not only children of working parents/guardians, but also socially disadvantaged children. Besides this, they will continue to give a home to children in need and to provide for all their requirements.

Since this project has already been started it is hoped that during Lion President Karl Grima Bezzina more funds will be raised by the Club for this project.

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First Vice President Lion Stephane Moyet was one of the first members to acquire one of Lion Susan's paintings. In the photo Lion Stephane is showing the painting of Vittoriosa.

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EXTENSION OF LIONS CLUBS INTERNATIONAL

As our Association is targeting to have 1.5 million members by the coming year, it is appropriate to give some information about the “Extension of Lions Clubs International.

When in 1917 Melvin Jones, the Founder of the Association, formed the first Lions Club in Chicago, Illinois (USA), little did he know that 107 years later Lions Clubs International, would be reaching 1.5 million members spread in 226 countries and geographical areas since the first overseas Club was chartered in Calgary, Canada.

Seven years after the first Lions Club in Chicago there were Lions Clubs all over the United States from Alabama to Wyoming. Eventually more clubs were chartered in Central and South American countries. In 1947 Lismore in New South Wales, Australia, became the first Australian Lions Club.



A year later (1948) the first Lions Club was chartered in Europe. This was Lions Club Stockholm Host in Sweden. In the same year clubs were chartered in Switzerland (Geneve), France (Paris Doyen). Norway (Oslo) and England (London Host). Since then, Lions Clubs have mushroomed all over Europe. In 1989/1990 after the dismantlement of the Soviet Union, clubs were chartered in Hungary (Budapest), Poland (Poznan), Estonia (Tallinn), Czechoslovakia (now after independence) known as Czechia (the first club known as Prague Eagle) and Slovakia, Romania (Bucharest and Craiova), Yugoslavia (Ljubljana, now the capital of Croatia), Russia (Moscow Host and Moscow Centrum) and Lithuania (Vilnius).

The first Lions Club in the Middle East was in Lebanon (Beirut Host) which was chartered in 1952. Casablanca in Morocco and Algiers in Algeria became the first African clubs to be chartered in 1953. Since then, several other clubs were chartered in the African Continent so much so that with the increase in members Africa is now considered a Region and eligible to have an African Lion on the Lions International Board of Directors.

Lions Club Bombay Host was the first club to be chartered in the Indian Sub-Continent in 1956. By 2021 the number of Lions in India exceeded the number of Lions in the United States and it is still on the increase.

As the number of Lions continued to increase worldwide, it was therefore not a surprise that Malta also had its first Lions Clubs. In fact, the first Lions Club in Malta was chartered in 1958. According to a book published in the United States, Lions Club Valletta is cited as the first Maltese Lions Club. As far as it is known, the first Maltese Lions Club was known as Malta George Cross by its first members. Its members were multi-national including several Maltese which included, advocates, doctors and business men.

In 1974 most of the members of Lions Club Malta George Cross who hailed from Sliema decided to form Lions Club Sliema, the club being sponsored by the first Lions Club in Malta. Hence in 2024 Lions Club Sliema will be celebrating the Golden Anniversary of its Charter.



The remaining members of the first Maltese Club decided to rename the Club as Lions Club Malta Host. Later on, when female members then known as Lionesses formed their own Club calling it Lions Club Mdina. Eventually there were other clubs in Malta namely Lions Club St. Paul's Bay, a club still functioning, and Gozo which had a short life as after a few years of its existence was dissolved as there were only a few members.

When Lions Malta Host Club was disbanded, the handful of remaining members were accepted as members of Lions Club Mdina, who however eventually resigned. Two years ago, Oak Brook accepted Lions Club Mdina to change the name to Lions Club Mdina Malta Host.

Editor's Note: This article was first produced in January 2021 and has been updated December 28, 2023.

LOOKING AHEAD

The coming year will be an important one in the annals of our Club as we will be celebrating the Club's Golden Anniversary of its Charter.

The Club's First Vice President Lion Victor Borg Barthet has appointed a Sub Committee to prepare a programme of events from July 1, 2024 when he takes office as the Club President. A commemorative booklet will be printed while a new bannerette and lapel badge are also planned. Though no fixed dates have as yet been decided, the 2024 Charter Night will be held in November.

