

Lions of Illinois Foundation



HISTORY

magazine



A Long Look Back

Journey with us as we look back through the early days of Lionism in Illinois, leading up to the need for a Foundation to support services provided to those with vision and hearing needs throughout the state.

Helen Keller - 1925



Helen Keller addresses the Lions at the International Convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, where she famously challenges Lions to become **"Knights of the Blind in the crusade against darkness."** This begins a century long mission – impacting hundreds of millions of lives through vision related work.

*Will you not help me hasten the day when
there shall be
no preventable blindness;
no little deaf, blind child untaught;
no blind man or woman unaided?*

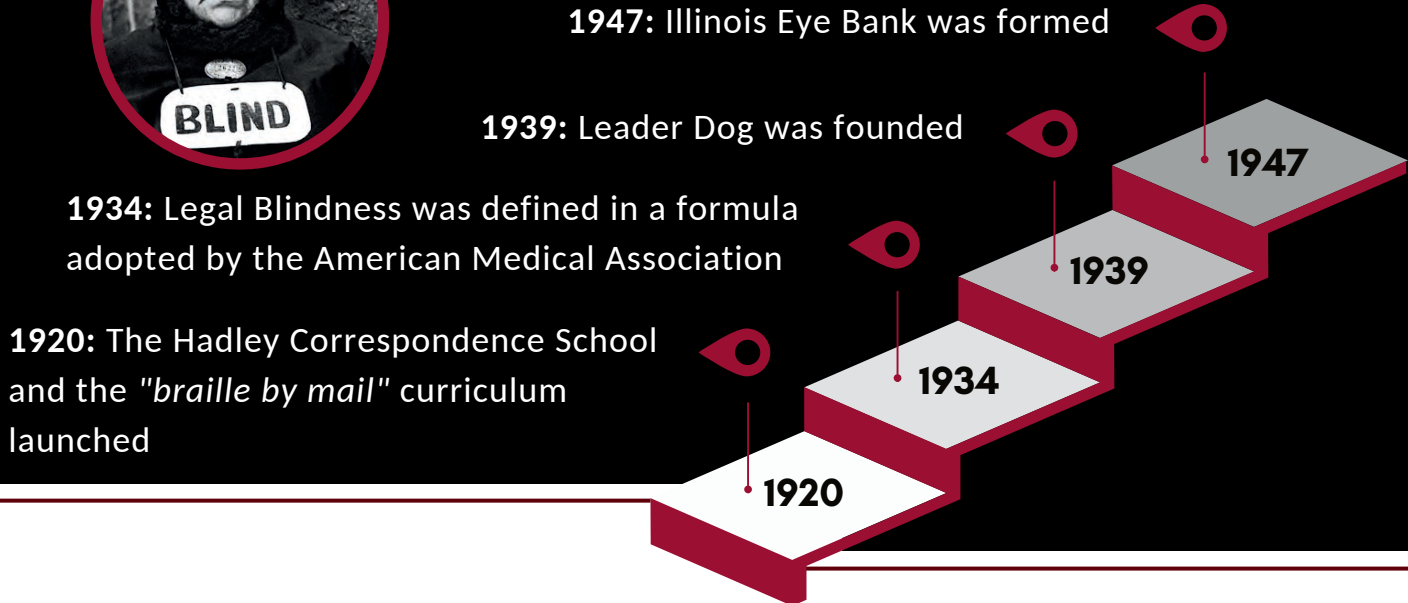
*I appeal to you Lions,
you who have your sight, your hearing,
you who are strong and brave and kind.*

*Will you not constitute yourselves Knights
of the Blind in this crusade against
darkness?*



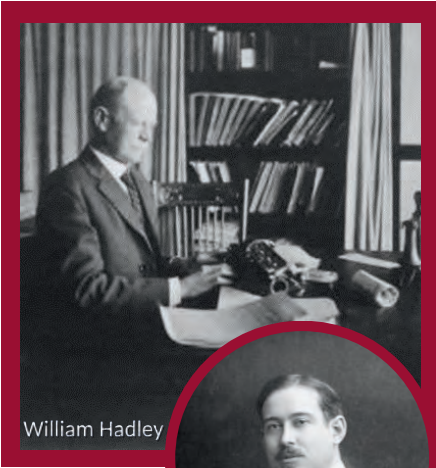
*What was happening in the Blind Community
between the 1925 Challenge to the Lions and the
forming of the Foundation?*

Vision Milestones



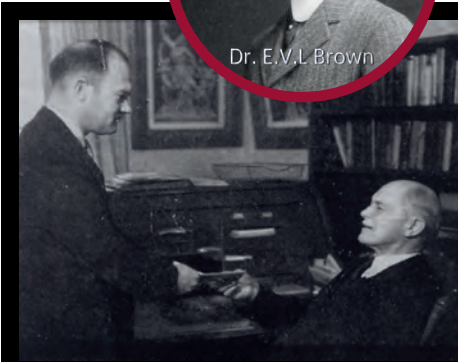
Hadley School - 1920 +

Vision Milestones



William Hadley

Dr. E.V.L. Brown



Dr. E. Nickerson Woods, President of the Winnetka Lions Club 1934-1935, presents a check from the club to Mr. Hadley

Founder William Hadley faced many challenges when he lost his sight at age 55. As a former high school teacher with a passion for reading, he taught himself braille and had dreamed to share his newfound skills with others like him, empowering them to thrive as much as he. Together with Dr. E.V.L. Brown, an ophthalmologist and neighbor, Hadley found a way to reach others from around the corner and across the globe. The Hadley Correspondence School and the "**braille by mail**" curriculum launched in 1920.

Lions Support Hadley

Elmer Selby, a member of the Winnetka Lions Club, stepped in to offer the club's support to Hadley, unknowingly at a time of dire financial need for the school. Since that day in 1929, the Lions Clubs of Illinois contributions to the Hadley School climbed toward their goal of \$100,000.00 annually.

Support from the Lions continued through the years, assisting in various ways including a great number of school improvements. The first audio book recording studio was built at Hadley with the help of the Lions and that studio is still in use today.



Legal Blindness - 1934

In 1934, legal blindness was defined in a formula adopted by the **American Medical Association** and was subsequently incorporated in the **Aid to the Blind** title of the Social Security Act of 1935, and further embodied into law in federal and state statutes providing various special services and benefits for blind persons.

Legal Blindness:

- A level of vision loss that has been legally defined to determine eligibility for benefits
- Refers to a diagnosis of 20-200 or less in the better eye with the best possible correction and/or a visual field of less than 20 degrees
- Often people who are diagnosed with legal blindness still have some useable vision



Vision Milestones

Leader Dog - 1939

Members of Lions Clubs International founded Leader Dogs for the Blind in 1939 and have been dedicated ambassadors and loyal supporters of the mission since that time. Over 4,900 Lions clubs both nationally and internationally contribute financially to Leader Dog. Lions identify people in their community who could benefit from Leader Dog's services, offer assistance to those clients and widely communicate information about Leader Dog's programs throughout their hometowns and districts.



Leader Dog sign with early Guide Dogs



Leader Dog supports Lions Candy Day



Leader Dog School for the Blind, original building

Leader Dog started with "\$400 and a hatful of ideas."

~ Donald P. Schuur, Founder of Leader Dog

On October 8, 1939, the first class of the official Lions Leader Dog Foundation graduated. The cost to graduate a client/dog team was \$600.

Illinois Eye Bank - 1947

Before modern eye banking and donation practices, the process of donor tissue recovery and cornea transplantation was very different and early eye banking was wholly reliant on volunteerism, good will and grassroots dedication to restoring sight.

The **Illinois Eye Bank** was formed in 1947 and was the **fourth eye bank in the United States**. Similar to the concept of blood banks, the eye bank collects eyes from humanitarian donors for use in corneal transplants to restore sight to people who would have otherwise gone blind. In 1975, the state legislature passed an amendment to allow Illinois drivers, who are willing to donate their eyes upon death, to express their wishes by placing an "organ donor" sticker on the back of their driver's license.



Tissue Recovery Transport



Lion Volunteer



Today, the Illinois Eye Bank is known as **Eversight** and their services reach beyond traditional eye banking by advancing treatments of all blinding eye disease.

Lion Marvin Tench - 1951

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One Man's Goal...

Lion Tench wanted to change the attitude toward blind people encouraging the public to recognize them with all the rights to dignity, education, and meaningful employment enjoyed by their fellow Americans.

A Need To Unite...

In 1951, Illinois Lions had a general interest in aid to the blind, but no strong common goal. In September, Tench invited other 1-A Lions to lunch at the Oak Park Arms Hotel to discuss ways to unite the state.

Those attending were:

- Dr. Alfred C. Boehm (Austin)
- Konrad Lopina (West End)
- Joseph Murphy (Garfield Park)
- Arthur Olson (Oak Park)
- Harry H. Semrow (Higgins-Harwood, now Higgins-Norwood)



Lions Of Illinois Blind Activities Committee (LIBAC) - 1952

The group obtained permission from the Council of Governors and the State Convention of 1952 to form a State Committee, appointed by Council Members, to coordinate blind activities through the state and organize a statewide fund-raising effort to replace the blind person with the tin cup on the street corner with the Lion raising funds to help. **That committee was called the Lions of Illinois Blind Activities Committee or LIBAC for short.** In 1952, LIBAC, chaired by Harry H. Semrow and backed by funds put up by the original six men, began their fundraising efforts. **\$8,000 was raised through White Cane Day and school house collections. Funds raised that year were given to Hadley School and Leader Dogs for the Blind,** which refunded the seed money that was put up by the six men and then put up money to fund the programs the following year.

White Cane Pins were given out from 1952-1956 but were dropped due to Tag Regulations in Chicago. Instead, Cracker Jacks were given out from 1957-1959 as a token of appreciation for donations made to LIBAC.





Camp Lions - 1957

LIBAC supports Camp Lions by giving grants to help fund this free Summer Camp. The first session of camp started in the Summer of 1957. It was originally a camp for the *Visually Impaired*, but quickly expanded to also include the *Hearing Impaired*.

Camp Ravenswood was the first Camp Lions site and *Little Grassy Lake* followed as the second site in the early 1970's. Campers enjoy a week full of fun and challenging activities to promote individual growth, and get to meet peers and mentors with similar impairments.

Candy Day - 1960

LIBAC officially introduced Candy Day in 1960 with Lions going door-to-door asking for donations. They later moved the campaign to street corner donations, similar to what is still done today.

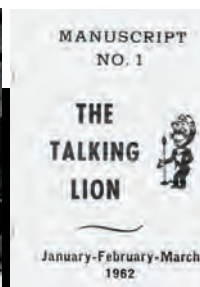
As the fundraiser grew, LIBAC was able to present grants to the following establishments:

- Hadley School for the Blind
- Leader Dog
- Camp Lions
- Dialogue Magazine (Talking Lion)
- Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness



In 1942, Lion Don O. Nold of Berwyn, IL, suddenly lost his sight. He struggled for years to adapt to blindness and knew very little of the resources to help him navigate day to day life in this new way.

His passion for journalism and personal experiences inspired him to create a recorded magazine by and for blind people to help ease this difficult path for others. First called "The Talking Lion" and later changed to "Dialogue," the magazine was first published in 1962 and was in circulation until 2019.



Candy Day Gains Support - 1960+

As news of Candy Day spreads, many local and national celebrities, radio personalities, government officials and professional sports teams get behind LIBAC's initiative to raise funds in support of vision services.



Some of the celebrities pictured:

- Lee Phillip & Johnny Balbo (A)
- Carol Channing (B)
- Don Ameche (C)
- Pat O'Brien (D)
- Chicago Bears (E)



Pictured below:

- Barbara Bush
- George H. W. Bush



Glaucoma Unit - 1965

The Mobile Glaucoma Unit ran from 1965-1993

- LIBAC funded Mobile Glaucoma screenings
- Illinois Society for the Prevention of Blindness supplied doctors to do glaucoma testing
- In 1983, the Lions add Hearing Screenings to the Mobile Screening Program

7,973 people were screened for Glaucoma between 1965-1969



Lions of Illinois Foundation - 1974

INTRODUCING ...THE NEW LIONS of ILLINOIS FOUNDATION
*Established July 1, 1974

dedicated to:

- AID TO THE BLIND
- AID TO THE VISUALLY HANDICAPPED
- VOCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
- SIGHT CONSERVATION
- SIGHT RESTORATION
- EYE RESEARCH

Our handsome, new symbol features the State of Illinois superimposed on the regal lion as the central figure. To the left, the Flag of Lionism; to the right, the Flag of Illinois. A wreath unifies the elements into one grand design.

LIONS of ILLINOIS FOUNDATION

1515 N. HARLEM AVE.
OAK PARK, ILLINOIS 60302
Phone (312) 383-1900

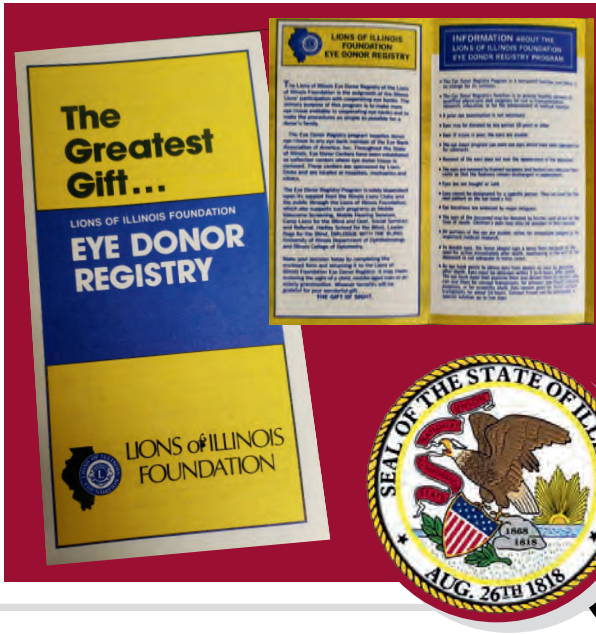
With the Lions throughout Illinois requesting programs and the blind and deaf community requesting help, it was time to change from a committee structure to a Foundation.

The *Lions of Illinois Foundation* was formed to be by, of, and for the Lions with the goal of helping the Lions create and maintain the strongest humanitarian service programs possible.

With approval from the membership, the *Lions of Illinois Foundation* came into being on July 1, 1974, as a non-profit charitable organization.

Eye Donor Registry - 1974

The Lions of Illinois Eye Donor Registry is the outgrowth of the Illinois Lions' participation with cooperating eye banks. The primary purpose of this program is to make more eye tissue available to cooperating eye banks and to make the procedures as simple as possible for a donor's family. The program is solely dependent upon it's support from the Illinois Lions Clubs and the public through the Lions of Illinois Foundation.



Did you know?

In the early 1990's, the registry collected by the Lions became a starting point for the Illinois Secretary of State's *Driver's License Donor Program*.



LIF in the 1970's

Candy Day becomes a LIF Fundraiser in 1974

Since 1974 the Foundation has sponsored and paid for Candy Day out of it's own

funds. Occurring annually the second weekend in October, Candy Day would become the Foundation's biggest fundraiser to support vision and hearing services throughout Illinois. Lions can be recognized while raising funds by their gold and blue vests.

Camp Lions becomes a LIF Program in 1975

Today Camp Lions remains a FREE Camp providing five weeks of camp at three different camp site locations.

- Northern Illinois
- Central Illinois
- Southern Illinois



LIF Student Low Vision - 1976



In 1976, Lions of Illinois Foundation partnered with Illinois School for the Visually Impaired and the Jacksonville Low Vision Screenings for Students began. The **Student Low-Vision Program** provides FREE comprehensive exams, vision equipment and continued support to students throughout their formative years of education.

The “**Seeing is Believing**” program began, when in 1991, the Foundation added two more partners: Chicago Lighthouse for the Blind and Spectrios Institute for Low Vision (formerly known as the Deicke Center for Visual Rehabilitation).



Today, this program remains a FREE Student Low Vision program serving over 300 low vision students in grades K-12 annually.



Lions Of Illinois Eye Research Institute (L.I.E.R.I.) - 1978

Thanks to the commitment and fundraising efforts of the local Lions Clubs, the Lions of Illinois Eye Research Institute has grown into a vision research powerhouse.

Since opening in 1986, researchers at the L.I.E.R.I. have obtained 138 patents, received over 150 grants, and produced over 1,500 publications. The UIC Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences is ranked 7th in National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding among ophthalmology departments nationwide.

- New building on UIC Campus
- Lions of Illinois raised \$5 million from 1978 to 1984
- Finished, completed and dedicated the new facility in June 1985

L.I.E.R.I. receives material from Eversight for research

Today's L.I.E.R.I. houses over 142 research faculty who employ the most advanced biotechnologies to search for the underlying causes of every major eye disease including macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy.

LIF in the 1980's



LIF Sight and Sound Sweepstakes - 1980

The Sight and Sound Sweepstakes Fundraiser officially started in 1980.

This fundraiser has become LIF's second largest fundraiser, providing funds to our hearing and vision programs.

Winning tickets are pulled at the Lions of Illinois State Convention on the third weekend in May.



In 2019 the Lions of Illinois Foundation introduced the "Early Bird Drawing".

LIF Endowment Fund created - 1983

The Lions of Illinois Endowment Fund was established in 1983. Donations are tax-deductible.

The Lions of Illinois Endowment Fund exists for the sole purpose of creating a consistent and permanent stream of revenue to fund the programs and services provided by the Lions for the visually and hearing impaired.

Ways to contribute to the Endowment Fund:

- Sustaining Supporter
- Legacy Supporter
- Tributes and Memorials
- Planned Giving
- Foundation Fellows
- Birdies For Charity



LIF Charity Golf Classic began - 1994

LIF in the 1990's

Held each year on the first Saturday in August, the LIF Charity Golf Classic Fundraiser is a 4-person Scramble and is open to all levels of golf experience. **All funds raised go towards the LIF Student Low Vision Program.**

Today, over 100 golfers participate in the Lions of Illinois Foundation Annual Charity Golf Classic.

LIF joins Birdies for Charity - 1994



The Lions of Illinois Foundation partnered with the John Deere Golf Classic to support the Lions of Illinois Endowment Fund and LIF Programs for hearing and vision services. **You can donate to the Lions of Illinois Foundation through the Birdies for Charity website using our Charity Bird Number 134.**



LIF in the 2000's

Retinal Mobile Screening Unit - 2007



As mobile hearing screenings continued throughout Illinois, our vision partners identified that untreated diabetic related eye diseases such as **Diabetic Retinopathy** and **Macular Degeneration** were the leading causes of vision loss.

In 2007, the addition of a retinal screening device to our mobile unit meant that we could offer both retinal and hearing screenings on the same unit. Staffed by trained technicians, this multi-purpose unit is on the road from March 1st through October 31st every year. The Foundation Programs Department sends invitations to clubs throughout the state to host the Mobile Screening Unit in their local communities.

Defined...

- **Diabetic Retinopathy:**

The most common cause of vision loss among people who have diabetes. Vision loss is associated with chronically high blood sugar levels that damage tiny blood vessels in the retina (the light-sensitive tissue of the eye), causing them to leak fluid or bleed.

- **Macular Degeneration:**

Vision loss occurs when the central portion of the retina (the macula) deteriorates from a combination of hereditary and environmental reasons. Risk increases with age with most people being over 55.

The force of SALESFORCE - 2016

LIF needed to implement a uniform software with a strong non-profit module to track and share information on donations, foundation fellows and general data collected for the Foundation and Endowment Fund alike.

Salesforce was the answer to those needs and more. This online software has helped streamline how accounts are handled and tracked within the foundation office and is accessible to everyone online.



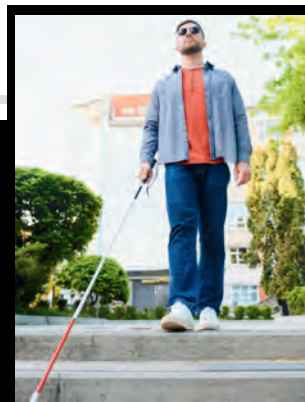
LIF Adult Low Vision Program - 2017

The Adult Low Vision Program was established in 2017. This program includes **Orientation & Mobility Training**.

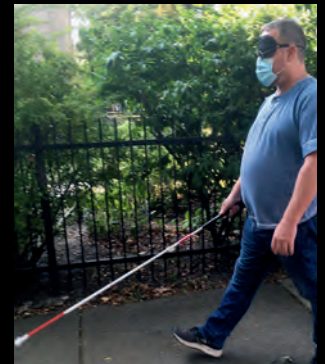
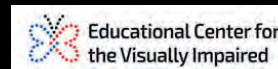


What is O&M training?

- The development or re-teaching of the skills and concepts, a blind or visually impaired person needs to travel safely and independently through their environment by an O&M specialist.
- Grants are given out annually to our Adult Low Vision partners.



Our Partners:

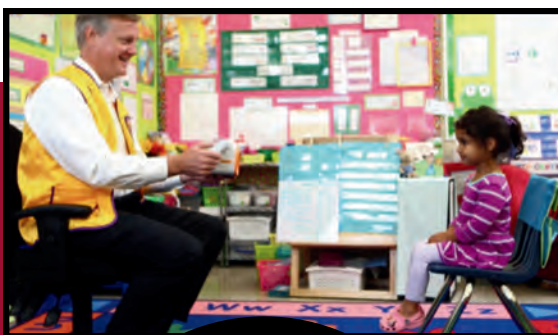


Did you know?

The average cost per session for O&M Training is \$75/hour.

In 2018 the Lions of Illinois Foundation began the **Children's Handheld Screening Program**, partnering with **Lions KidSight USA**.

Children's Vision Screenings - 2018



Plusoptix S12 Camera

- The Children's Vision Screening Program detects vision disorders in children 6 months and up.
- The earlier a vision disorder or media opacity is detected the sooner it can be treated.
- This screener is also included on our Mobile Screening Unit.

LIF Charity Car Show Fundraiser - 2019


In 2019, the first annual Roar-in' Charity Car Show was held in the parking lot of the Lions of Illinois Foundation. Since that year, the foundation continues to hold this event in support of Vision Services to those in need throughout the state of Illinois.

Free to the public, this event includes:

 Guest Judges

 Giveaways

 Food

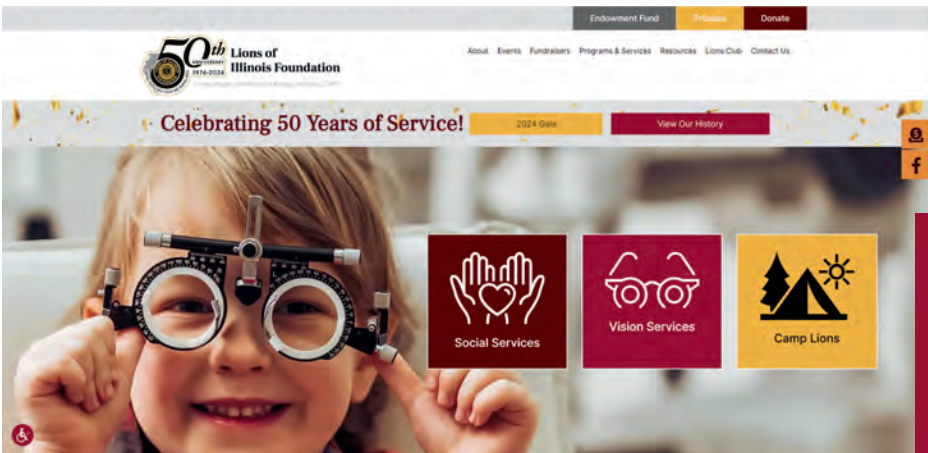
 DJ: 3D Sound

 Raffles

Participants receive dash plaques and the opportunity to win awards.

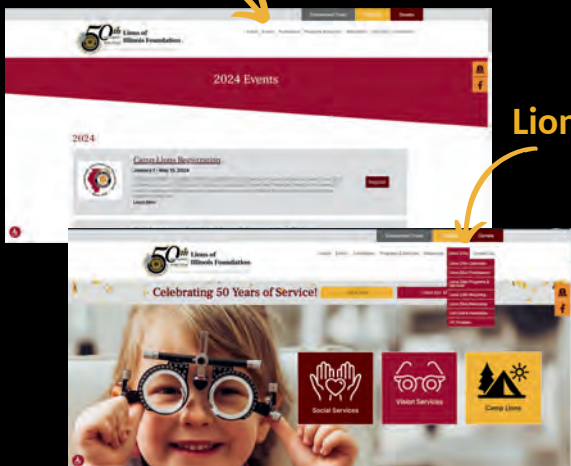


LIF Website Update - 2021



LIF saw a need to distinguish two separate user groups for the foundation website. In 2021, efforts were made to do just that. Lions Clubs can simply click the tab in the navigation bar that says "Lions Clubs" to find any resources needed from the Foundation. While the general public can explore the rest of the website to find a great deal of information about what LIF does and how they serve those with vision and hearing needs in communities throughout Illinois.

Events Calendar



Lions Club

For more information visit us online at:
Lionsofillinoisfoundation.org

LIF in the 2000's Cont'd

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LIF adds Sneakers to the Recycling Program - 2022

In 2022, LIF partnered with GotSneakers to begin collecting used sneakers. Donating sneakers provides support for our Vision and Hearing Programs and Services, while also keeping sneakers out of landfills, reducing the need for manufacturing new shoes, and supports a growing circular economy!



In addition to sneakers, LIF Recycles: eyeglasses, hearing aids, keys/key fobs, cell phones/smart phones, pop tabs, and ink cartridges. These recycled items help to fund various programs and services that assist those with vision and hearing needs throughout Illinois.

The Tribute Program began in 2023 as a reimagining of the existing Endowment Tribute Program. Honor someone special with a tribute for any occasion.

Donors will receive a simple thank you letter from LIF and the personalized acknowledgement is sent to the honoree as a nicely wrapped gift. Printed on high quality, ivory vellum paper and sealed in a matching 9x6 ivory envelope. Tributes will truly feel special.

LIF Tribute Program - 2023



- Birthday
- Gov. Night
- Wedding Anniversary
- Acts of Kindness
- Get Well Soon
- Lion Anniversary

MOVING FORWARD...LOOKING BACK

As your Lions of Illinois Foundation, we continue to strive to find new ways to serve those with vision and hearing needs throughout Illinois. While taking a look back at our rich history, we can confidently move forward with our mission while honoring the legacy that was left to us by our founding Lions. "We serve."



LION POWER



Since the challenge given to the Lions back in 1925, the Lions have strived to answer the call to become the "Knights of the Blind."

When the need became overwhelming, Lion Marvin E. Tench posed the question, in the words of John Lewis of the time, "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?" He made it his mission to unite the state to change the attitude the public had towards the blind and replace the blind person with the tin cup on the street corner with the Lion raising funds to help by providing services, programs and education throughout the state.

Lion Marvin showed the state just what the power of the Lions could accomplish.

We would like to thank our Lions and partners throughout Illinois. It was through their passion and commitment to helping those in need that the Lions of Illinois Foundation was formed fifty years ago.

Lions continue to make the commitment to serve those in Illinois with vision and hearing needs. Their ongoing dedication and support has not wavered and serve as a testimony to the legacy that was left to them and that the power of a single Lion has the ability to change the lives of so many in need.



WE SERVE!