

# **North American International Directors Initiative To Strengthen the Health of North American Lions Clubs**

## **The Plan**

### **North American Healthy Club Initiative**

The size and number of Lions Clubs in the United States and Canada have been steadily dwindling for the past 20 years. International President Dr. T.S. Lee called upon the North American Directors to turn this devastating trend around. President Lee allowed the Directors to meet in Portland, Oregon for two days prior to the USA/Canada Leadership Forum in September of 2003, and again prior to the start of the October 2003 Board Meeting in Oak Brook, Illinois. From those meetings, the North American Directors decided to focus their energy toward helping strengthen Lions Clubs in North America by meeting with as many of our Initiative-targeted clubs as possible and assisting them in their membership problems and help lead them into becoming a stronger/healthier club in their respective communities.

Our initial goal was to have this in place immediately after January 1, 2004. However, with sickness hitting some key individuals around the holidays, the start-up date has been delayed by one month. The new start-up date is now February 1, 2004.

### **Characteristics of a Weak/Struggling Club (Healthy Club Initiative Category)**

This list **is not** intended to be a full and complete list of symptoms and/or characteristics that would constitute a club as a weak or struggling club. There are certainly others. And it is important to note that just because a club may have one of the symptoms listed, that does not automatically constitute that club to be a weak or struggling club. This list is to be used by the District Governor and Immediate Past District Governor to help them determine which clubs in their respective Sub-District have two or more of these, or similar, characteristics, and whether or not they wish to put them on our Healthy Club Initiative List. Certainly the more characteristics a club has, the more chance of them being the type of club we want to contact.

*(continued decreasing membership...no new members...repeat presidents...PU101 forms and other membership activity reports not turned in on time, or not at all...no regular meeting schedule...late payment or non-payment of dues or other financial obligations...lack of community involvement or activity...lack of fund-raising projects...lack of service projects...membership under 20 members...no membership committee...lack of an active membership growth program...lack of proper orientation and induction of new members...lack of self-pride in the association...high average age of members...etc.)*

## Time-Line

2004

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| Jan 6   | Draft from ID Bud Wahl to Lead Team on Initiative Procedures.  |
| Jan 9   | Letter to all Lions on Jan 22 mailing list, giving a quick update.   |
| Jan 20  | Responses due back from Lead Team to Bud Wahl, including suggested changes/revisions/deletions/additions to the Draft.   |
| Jan 22  | Final Initiative Procedures mailed to all North American Directors and Appointees, Other Key Lion Participants, Pres. Lee, IPIP Fukushima, VP Kusiak, PID Ross.            |
| Feb 1   | Initiative Plan goes into effect. All State/Province and Sub-District Key Lions begin their work as described in their respective "Responsibilities" section of this Plan. |
| Ongoing | Sub-District Key Lions report to State/Province Key Lions on progress.   |
| Apr 1   | State/Province Key Lions begin reporting progress to ID Bud Wahl on a quarterly basis until further notice.  |

### Responsibilities of Each State/Province Healthy Club Initiative Key Lion

- One Lion in each state/province will be responsible for the program in his/her respective state/province.
- Contact each District Governor in the Multiple and ask the District Governor to identify clubs that would fall into our Healthy Club Initiative Category. (IPDGs should definitely be utilized.)
- Work with each District Governor in the Multiple to select Key Lions in each Sub-District who will contact the clubs identified. (You can contact the clubs, too.) In many instances, these Lions will be the Sub-District MERL Team members. In other instances, other Lions may be selected (PDGs, PIDs, Zone/Region Chairs, any respected Lion.)
- Remains in contact with the Sub-District Lions on a regular basis to monitor progress.
- Receives reports from Sub-District Key Lions on a regular basis.
- Distributes Healthy Club Kits to District Governors, or directly to the Sub-District Key Lions. (Keep one for yourself.) Maximum of 15 per Sub-District.
- Reports quarterly directly to ID Bud Wahl (Apr 1, Jul 1, Oct 1, Jan 1) to monitor progress until further notice.
- Distributes a copy of this outline, in its entirety, to each Sub-District Key Lion.

### Responsibilities of Each Sub-District Healthy Club Initiative Key Lion

- Selected by the District Governor and State/Province Key Lion.
- Will call on the individual Lions Clubs in their area as requested by the North American International Directors and their own District Governor. Their mission is to meet with each club individually to offer their assistance in whatever capacity the club feels they would welcome help in improving the health of their club. (Membership, leadership training, community involvement, fund-raising, club meetings, orientation, etc.)

- Sub-District Key Lions can meet as a Team with a club, or they can split up and meet individually with a club. However they proceed, all Sub-District Key Lions must follow the same basic format as outlined in this document in order for this program to be successful.
- Report regularly to the State/Province Key Lion on the progress of each club. Advise of successes and of lingering problems. Be specific...*increased membership by 5 members...club has 2 new service projects...club members have begun attending zone meetings and other district functions...club has performed orientation on all members...etc.*
- Advise the State/Province Key Lion if additional work is no longer needed with a particular club, and if new clubs have been identified for the list.

### **Format to Follow When Contacting Each Club**

- In most cases the clubs will know the Lion(s) contacting them. However, make sure they know who you are and what club you are from.
- Let them know why you are contacting them. You must be very diplomatic. **Do not say, “Your club has been identified as a weak and struggling club and we’re going to come in and fix your problems.”** You will be dead in the water and probably end up with a club charter for an anchor?
- Tell them that the size and number of Lions Clubs have been steadily dwindling in the United States and Canada over the past 20 years, and as a result, the North American International Directors have taken on a project in an attempt to help strengthen the Lions Clubs in North America. This will be accomplished by meeting with as many of our Initiative-targeted clubs as possible to see if there is anywhere the clubs feel they could use help to possibly lead them into becoming a stronger/healthier club in their community.
- Not all clubs will agree to have you meet with them. Some will say they don’t need any help. Don’t force the issue. You cannot help those who do not want help.

### **Format to Follow When Meeting with Each Club**

- Meet with the club during one of their regular meetings. Ask that there not be a scheduled program. Your meeting with them should be the main focus. Ask for as many members in attendance as possible.
- If going as a Team, no more than three. Dress accordingly. This is a very important visit.
- Briefly re-state bullet number three in the “Contacting the Club” format, just to be certain *everyone* knows why you are there.
- Ask them to tell you what they see as “*their problems and issues.*” They should give you enough information to help you with a direction. If not, have them take some time to fill out the “How Are Your Ratings?” questionnaire from the Healthy Club Kit. (Make certain you make several copies before meeting with them.)
- Using the information from the “Club Ratings” questionnaire and from dialogue with members of the club, you should be able to identify a few areas where assistance can be given.
- Do not drag-on your first visit. Obtain the key information needed, and if time is a factor, review the information obtained and offer follow-up by attending upcoming

meetings to work on a plan of action. You must become involved with their action plan and help find solutions. If possible, plan to also attend other club functions. You, in effect, will be their very own unofficial Guiding Lion.

### **Healthy Club Kits**

- 5,000 will be requested, however the initial supply will be less.
- Each sub-district will be allotted 15 kits, delivered by the State/Province Key Lion to the District Governor or directly to the Sub-District Key Lions. (If a sub-district only needs 10, then only 10 will be given.)
- Each NA International Director/Appointee, IMPACT Team Leader, NA International Officer, and State/Province Key Lion will receive a kit.
- Clubs will not use all the materials in the kits. However, since not all clubs experience the same problems, a wide variety of healthy club information will be provided.
- Sub-District Key Lions will use only the material from a club's kit that will pertain to that club's problems/issues.
- **Kits are not to be "just given" to the clubs.** *(The contents of the Healthy Club Kit can be very overwhelming to a struggling club if simply given to the club. Nothing would get accomplished. The kit would end up on someone's shelf.)* **The sub-district Key Lion will be in control of the club's kit.**
- Kits may be left in possession of a club once the type of support to be offered to the club has been identified and the Key Lion is comfortable leaving the kit with the club. The club can use the remaining items in the kit for future reference.

### **Contents of the Healthy Club Kit**

The Healthy Club Kit is the largest membership package ever assembled by Lions. It covers more than just membership. It covers the entire topic of building and running a healthy club. It contains too many pieces to list here. However, all the information provided is divided into five sections:

1. Club Management (How Are Your Ratings?, Club Meetings, Retreats...)
2. Member Recruiting (Pocket Applications, Recruiting Ideas, Orientation...)
3. Member Retention (Working Together, Meetings, Involvement, Mentoring...)
4. Service Activities (Community Needs Assessment, Project Development, Fundraising...)
5. Special Incentives and Order Forms (Entrance Fee Waivers, Public Relations...)

### **Action Prior to Receipt of Healthy Club Kits**

While we are waiting for the Healthy Club Kits to be made, we can still be actively involved in working our Plan with these clubs. Recently I accompanied my DG and a PDG, and we visited a club in our district that was talking of folding. They were five months late in paying their dues, they only had 13 members, all of which were men and averaged well into the 60s. They had not performed any community activity recently, nor had they had any fund-raisers. They had not brought in any new members in at least the last three years. They lost two members to death and another to "lost interest" in the last year. They were considering not paying their dues and turning in their charter.

The District Governor made the initial contact and asked if a few district Lions could come to an upcoming meeting and talk to them about some of their concerns. They were actually pleased that we felt they were important enough not to lose, that we would take the time to visit with them. They invited us to their next meeting.

Since we traveled together, we talked about our “strategy” on the trip to the club that night. We had them talk to us first and asked them to tell us what they thought their problems/issues were. Basically, they said the age of their club was a major problem with their average age being well into the 60s. They said they could not find anyone new to join their club. They were getting “tired” of the same 9 or 10 members doing the same thing all the time. A few other issues were also mentioned.

Then the Governor spoke for a few minutes. He gave them a few ideas about recruiting new members. He asked them to consider women. He suggested they find a different fund-raiser to try, instead of the same old one year after year. He gave them a few suggestions. I spoke to them about their membership problems too suggesting they open up to spouses, sons, daughters, and gave them a whole list of prospect categories to consider. They were going to have a raffle and I suggested that every raffle ticket would have a name and address. What a great way to collect names of potential members. I stressed creating a greater public awareness of the good deeds their club does for the community. Write more newspaper articles, have membership application brochures and other Lions information, along with a listing of the club’s contributions to the community, during their upcoming pancake day. Let the people know what you do. The PDG stressed to them the importance of their club to the community. If they were not around, who would take care of the eye exams for the needy students? If they were not around, who would have the senior citizen dinner for the community? Who would put up the Christmas lights in the city park? He made them realize how important they were to their community. They are the only act in town. If they didn’t do these things, who would?

There were 9 of the 13 members present during this meeting and everyone of them sat back and thought about what we said. Before we left that night, they had two new community service activities and two new fund-raisers planned, and they were talking about having a membership drive in the early spring! Before we left, we also received their dues! Since that meeting on December 1<sup>st</sup>, the Governor has spoken with the club president three times and he reports that the club has found new energy and excitement by trying some of these new things. They are planning their membership drive in the spring and have been successful in their new fund-raising projects.

So, our work can begin now, even without the Healthy Club Kits. Simply start contacting the clubs as outlined in the Plan and begin meeting with them and become involved in their activities and become a part of the solution to their problems.

**GOOD LUCK!!!**

Bud Wahl  
ID Bud Wahl, Chair  
North American Healthy Club Initiative  
January 22, 2004