

Lions Eye Foundation – One Year Later

submitted by IPDG Jamie Hart, District 4-C 1 Lead Trustee

It is hard to believe that it is a year since I shared about what the mission and vision of the Lions Eye Foundation of CA/NV, comprising Districts 4-C1-4, 4-C6, 4-A 1-3 and 46. In that year, there continues to be inspirational and groundbreaking events that I thought should be updated.

One of the most significant was the opening of the eye clinic in San Francisco at 711 Van Ness. The facility is nothing short of phenomenal. On the tour of the diagnostic testing services, I got to see state of the art equipment running from cameras that capture the retina to machines that meticulously measure the existing shape and size of the cornea to get an exact match for a transplant or replacement of lens affected by cataracts.

During the quarterly meetings, the group was also treated to hear from the patients about how their life was changed. Stories have ran the gamut of a young lady who had a prosthetic eye implanted, replacing one affected by cancer, to a farm worker whose received a new cornea, relieving pain caused by one which developed a cone shape. Hearing these stories first hand provided reinforcement of the importance of the mission of LEF, namely, to “preserve and restore the gift of sight by providing free ophthalmic examinations, operations and medications to the less fortunate members of our community.” Efforts have focused on two fronts to serve this mission, namely, to ensure sufficient funds to pay for the services provided free of charge and to generate patient referrals.

To pay for services, there are the traditional sources of contributions from the Lions Clubs. This can in the form of paying \$4.50 per member semi-annually to be a member Club. This affords the ability to refer a community member, without benefit of insurance, to get needed treatment. Individuals or Clubs can also make donations to the Capital fund, general fund and/or to honor a member of their Lions Club for their service by awarding them a Fellowship award. These include the Don Stanaway Fellow Award (\$250), Don Stanaway Life Fellowship (\$500) or Helen Keller Fellowship (\$1000). Another front that is being used to raise funds is to seek grants from various Foundations and companies, having each District trustee contact potential contributors in their vicinity. Holding a fundraiser is another means of generating funds. One existing fundraiser, which is run every other year, is the Rocky Lombardi Wine Tasting event. This year it is slated to be held on September 30, 2018 in Millbrae.

To generate patient referrals, efforts have focused of finding persons who aren't covered by insurance, in need of services. What makes this task hard is that this population can't afford to see a doctor or go to the emergency room. One solution to this barrier is to hold a free vision screening clinic. District C 2 has been successful in this endeavor, having held a clinic recently in the Marin area. Some Districts are working toward following suit, with the District which I am a part of, District 4-C 1, planning to hold one in the Redding area on March 25, 2018. I am very excited that I will be able to help out at this event, hoping to lend a helping hand to someone in need of eye care to hook up with one of our LEF member Clubs to sponsor them to take a trip to 711 Van Ness in San Francisco. It would definitely be an Ah-hah moment, reinforcing what Lions do best, being “Knights of the Blind in the Crusade against Darkness”.

If you like to become involved or find more about the organization, be sure to read more on the webpage: www.lionseyeca-nv.org or better yet, come join us at our next quarterly meeting to be held in Monterey at the Bay Point Motel from April 13-15, 2018.