

The State of Wharton Lions Club Address  
July 2, 2009

Today I wish to start a dialog regarding the current status of WLC, where it has been, what we can do to help improve the Club and insure its long term viability. The status of most volunteer clubs has been changing in the past several years and Lions International recognizes this and has been actively developing procedures and programs to keep Lions relevant now and in the coming years. We are part of a parent organization that can help us a lot in keeping up with current trends. All officers especially and also members should be familiar with local, district, state, and Lions International web sites. There is a lot of good information and ideas here pertaining to everything Lions. If you want to be in the 21st century you had better learn about and get used to electronic communications.

Every organization has traditions, culture, protocols, procedures, agendas, lore and word of mouth as guides for its mission. As a relatively new member of the Club, I may have a perspective that some of you have not thought about or critically evaluated in a while. This club has a relatively informal structure with no regular minutes of meetings, irregular reports from its officers or board, but inspite of this it functions quite well. I think the underpinning of Lions International and the dedication of its members are the glue that has kept this club viable and relevant for 81 years. Many of the long time members that have been around since the hey day of Lions are gradually fading away and new plans must be implemented over the next few years to keep Lions relevant in our community.

Can I change how this club functions? No.

Do I want to change the culture of this club? Only to the extent that the membership wants to change to perpetuate its values and community service. I only want to suggest and bring up some ideas that we need to be thinking about. Some of what I say may seem critical of the club, but I only mean it to be constructive criticism only.

Now I want to take you down a brief memory lane and show you some things that many of you may remember that are no longer a integral part of the week to week function of the club. I know that I am overlooking a lot stuff since I am ignorant of most of the rich history of WLC. (demonstrate various artifacts found in dusty boxes destined to be thrown out)

The point of all this is that the club has no permanent repository of its past history and a diverse inconsistent paper trail that is usually determined by what is thought best by the current group of officers. I am sure that a lot of you have documents and other artifacts that you developed while you were an officer, but are not generally available and not currently used by the

club. I suspect that a lot of unorganized documentation is on a lot of different computers and in files around town that is often not known to be available.

One idea is to have a paid secretary or better yet a permanent volunteer secretary that would be the long term repository of all our artifacts and documents and a clearing house and preparer of most of our hand outs and computer files. This is a different person from our elected secretary whose duties relate primarily to Lion specific matters. This would add some consistency to our documents and make it easier from year to year to administer the Club. Right now each administration has to do a lot of organizing from scratch or using incomplete information. Those in active business usually have a secretary or two that they can call on, but in my case as a retiree, I have no such resource. You can possibly expect less paper hand outs from me than from at least the last two administrations. Perhaps I will use more electronic communication. This transition in Club communications has already started. A well organized club looks more professional and in the long term will better appeal to potential new younger members. Over the the year we will revisit this issue to see what we might want to do.

Membership is the life blood of every organization. Many of our members are older and new younger members are vital to the Club. The Club has no formal Membership Chairman and I think this is an important position. Until we can implement a formal Membership Chairman, I am going to appoint the 2nd and 3rd Vice Presidents as co-chairmen to this post.

I think we need to be more active in recruitment; however our standards are high. The requirement for new members should be: 1) He should be younger than you are. We have a lot of latitude here since we have members from 30 to Nineties. 2) Should be willing to attend at least 1/3 of our meetings (17 out of 50). 3) Should be willing to participate as needed in the activities of the club. 4) Must be recommended by a club member.

Membership retention should be actively pursued and previous members should be encouraged to rejoin. More attention should be given to new members and awarded for their commitment. Members who fail to attend meetings need to be followed up on. We have a number of members that rarely if ever attend meetings and do not participate in club activities. A membership chairman is critical to accomplish these goals.

My primary challenge this year to the membership is that every member is encouraged to bring in a new member over the next year. An overlooked source of members is to get former members to rejoin or to get members-at-large to become active. If you can entice a person in either of the categories to become an active member, this will count toward your

challenge goal. If we can get a dozen new members, I would consider this a very successful challenge campaign.

Sometimes personal involvement in the community is more valuable and helpful than just collecting money and giving it back to the community. We should strive to be visible to the community year round. Some of the things we should consider would be: 1) Have a car in one or two local parades each year, 2) Have a emergency response team in partnership with an established emergency group such as the Red Cross or other local emergency teams. We can cook pancakes! A larger club would make this more feasible. 3) Participate in some way with the Wharton County Fair FreedomFest or other community events, 4) Attend certain local ribbon cuttings as Lion representatives. This type of activity and visibility would help with our annual fund raising. We should not just come out of the woodwork each February and start asking for donations.

Perhaps we should have a routine formal annual installation and awards ceremony where awards for officers, outstanding Lions, new Lion members, Junior Lions and scholarships are given out. Scholarships given at a Lion ceremony may be more beneficial to the Club and meaningful to the recipients than a public graduation ceremony. Recognizing our members and many of those that help and support us lends to a vibrant organization.

During my term in office I want to institute a Lion only program once each quarter, this being the first one. A number of decisions and activities are carried out behind the scenes, both locally and area wide that the membership never hears about. I think the membership needs to be better informed. We need to discuss what we are doing or need to do, what our district and state organizations are doing and what Lions International and those Clubs in other countries around the world are doing. This will help keep us focused on our mission and make us feel good about a cause larger than our own little community. Also at this quarterly meeting I wish for for the secretary, treasurer, membership co-chairmen and board to report on their activities for the quarter. A no report will not do.

I want to issue a tentative Presidents agenda calendar for the year, of course subject to revision as specific activities are selected or rejected.

As I pointed out at the beginning, I cannot change the culture or traditions of this Club. Only the members can do this if they so choose. The points I bring up are ment for ongoing discussion. What is implemented is up to you. I just want you to think about your club and have you consider where you want it to be in 5, 10 and 81 years from now.

Now the floor is open for discussion. Any and all comments are welcome. Only the thrown bad tomatoes and eggs will be frowned upon.

