



# Tales from the *Pride*

## Lions District 35 I Newsletter May 2026

District 35 I: Governor Linda Gregory  
Editor: Jan Kunka [readinthehead1@aol.com](mailto:readinthehead1@aol.com)

### May District 35I Service Project Increasing Youth Reading (Lion Loretta Barksdale)

Did you know that 28% of the students that graduate from our schools are functionally illiterate?

Many studies indicate that students will struggle to learn to read if they are not reading on grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

Based on Counties in 35I we have only 31% of our students reading on grade level by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. In more affluent neighborhoods, 68% are on reading level. In homeless populations the reading levels go down to 28% on grade level.

It is important that we get books in the hands of these little ones. We have clubs that do furnish books to Title one schools and homeless shelters. But we can do better. When we do reach out to these populations we need to think about books that parents can read even if they speak a different language.





I was a single parent raising three children and I always made sure we had books in the house. At one point I wanted some down time so I built a little pond on the side of the house and put myself a chair out there and I would make a point that you didn't bother me during my reading time. One day my youngest didn't say a word but dragged a little chair over by me. At first glance I almost got angry at her for bothering me, but guess what! **She had a book in her hand** and that became our quiet reading place. Not all children have this chance, but they should have books to read. We as Lions make a difference in the World. I know we can all make a difference in our communities.

The link below has additional links to a variety of Children's books:  
<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/support-your-readers/free-materials>

Sponsor a Title I School child to receive a Dolly Parton Imagination Library Book. <https://imaginationlibrary.com/usa/> or organize a fundraiser



Thank you to the individual Service Chairs for their contributions to this Newsletter. They were incredible advocates for their chosen cause and hopefully all of you that read these “opening articles”, were inspired to explore new ways to do what Lions do best: SERVE



**Disaster Relief** Lion Ken Murphy



**Humanitarian** Lion Jennifer Maillard



**Childhood Cancer** Lion Diane Clifton



**Mental Health** Lion Paula Paquette



**Diabetes** Lion Diana LaSpina

**Military/Veterans** Lion Patty Jean Strong



**Hunger** Lion Kathy Lawless

**Elder Citizens** Lion Paula Paquette



**Vision** PCC Penny Gregrich



**Environment** Lion Jan Kunka



**Youth/Reading** Lion Loretta Barksdale

**Hearing** SVD Drew Ogden

## Who's Who in District 35I



**District Governor**

**Linda Gregory**

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**Companion in Service: MD 35 CC Jimmy Gregory**



**1<sup>st</sup> Vice District Governor**

**Beverly Flynn**

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**2<sup>nd</sup> Vice District Governor**

**Drew Ogden**

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## Message from DG Linda Gregory

### Why Lions Should Attend District Meetings: The Power of Showing Up

District meetings are more than dates on a calendar — they are the heartbeat of Lionism. When Lions gather, something powerful happens: ideas sharpen, energy rises, and the mission we all care about grows stronger. Yet many Lions don't realize just how much these gatherings shape the strength, visibility, and future of their clubs. Here's why attending district meetings isn't just helpful — it's essential.

#### **District Meetings Spark Fresh Ideas and Renewed Motivation**

Every club has its traditions, but growth comes from exposure to new approaches. District meetings are where Lions discover creative service projects, fundraising strategies, membership tools, and leadership techniques that other clubs are using successfully.

Lions often walk in with questions and walk out with solutions they didn't even know



#### **They Build Connections That Strengthen Every Club**

A club that operates alone can only go so far. A club connected to its district becomes part of a powerful network. At district meetings, Lions:

- **Meet fellow leaders facing similar challenges**
- **Share resources and collaborate on larger service projects**
- **Form friendships that make service even more meaningful**



**These relationships become lifelines — especially when clubs need advice, volunteers, or inspiration.**

#### **Leaders Are Made, Not Born — and District Meetings Shape Them**

Leadership in Lions isn't about titles; it's about growth. District meetings offer training, mentorship, and hands-on learning that help Lions build confidence and competence.



**Members who attend regularly often become the next club officers, project chairs, and community influencers. A club with trained, empowered leaders is a club that thrives.**

## Clubs Stay Informed, Aligned, and Ahead of the Curve

The Lions world is always evolving — new programs, grants, service initiatives, reporting tools, and membership resources appear every year.



District meetings ensure clubs don't miss opportunities that could transform their impact.

When clubs stay informed, they stay strong.

## Attendance Shows Support for the District — and for Each Other

District leaders work hard to provide training, resources, and guidance. When Lions attend meetings, it signals unity and shared purpose. It says: We're in this together. We believe in the mission. We're committed to serving our communities at the highest level.

## Clubs That Participate Grow — Clubs That Don't Often Struggle

### *There's a clear pattern across Lionism:*

Clubs that attend district meetings tend to grow in membership, visibility, and service impact. Clubs that stay isolated often lose momentum, miss opportunities, and eventually fade.



Showing up is one of the simplest, most effective ways to keep a club healthy and vibrant.

## It Rekindles the Spirit of Lionism

Every Lion has moments when the spark dims — busy schedules, challenges, or fatigue can take a toll. **District meetings reignite that spark.** They remind us why we serve, who we serve, and how powerful we are when we serve together.

## In the End, District Meetings Are About Belonging

These meetings are where Lions see the bigger picture — the district, the multiple district, the global movement. They are where we celebrate victories, tackle challenges, and dream bigger dreams. They are where Lions become stronger, clubs become healthier, and communities benefit.

**When Lions show up, Lionism grows.**

**As this year is winding down, I'd like to offer you all my sincere thanks for the opportunity to serve with you this year as your District Governor. I've never been more proud of a team of people than I have been this year by the hard work and dedication I've witnessed by so many. *You are all amazing!***

## Message from VDG-elect Bev Flynn

### Inspiration: Guiding Lions to Success

**Inspiration** is often described as a spark—but in Lions, it's something far more enduring. It's the steady flame that keeps us serving, leading, and believing that even the smallest act of kindness can transform a life.



Every day across our district, Lions demonstrate what inspiration truly looks like. It's found in the member who quietly organizes a vision screening, the club that rallies to support a family in need, and the volunteer who shows up—**again and again**—not for recognition, but because service matters. These moments may not always make headlines, but they are the heartbeat of our organization.

**Inspiration** doesn't always come from grand gestures. More often, it grows from connection. When we share stories of impact, we remind one another why we joined Lions in the first place. A simple conversation at a meeting, a photo from a service project, or a heartfelt thank-you can reignite purpose in someone who may be feeling tired or uncertain. Your story could be the very thing that motivates another Lion to take action.

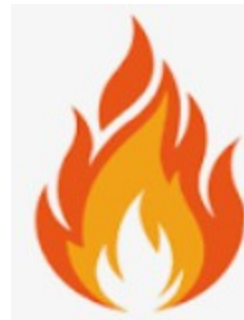
It's also important to recognize that **inspiration** is not just something we give—it's something we cultivate. As leaders and members, we create environments where ideas are welcomed, efforts are appreciated, and every voice has value. When people feel seen and supported, they are far more likely to step forward, contribute, and grow.

Looking ahead, our district has incredible opportunities to expand our reach and deepen our impact. But growth doesn't happen through plans alone—it happens through inspired people. Each of us has the ability to influence the energy of our clubs and the direction of our service. Whether you're a new member or a seasoned Lion, your enthusiasm and commitment matter.

So as we continue our journey together, take a moment to reflect: What inspires you? And just as importantly, how can you inspire others?

Because in the end, **inspiration** is contagious. When one Lion is moved to serve, others will follow. And together, we create something powerful—a community driven not just by service, but by purpose, passion, and the belief that we truly can make a difference.

Let's keep that flame burning.



## Message from 1VDG-elect Drew Ogden

May is a powerful month for Lions everywhere as we recognize two important health awareness initiatives that closely align with our mission of service:

### **Vision Health Month, and Blind Awareness Month.**

These observances remind us that Lions have long stood on the front lines of helping individuals protect one of life's greatest gifts — the ability to see, learn, and live healthy lives.

For over a century, Lions clubs around the world, through organizations such as Lions Clubs International, have been known as the “Knights of the Blind.” Our commitment to vision services continues to transform lives through eye screenings, eyeglass recycling programs, assistance with eye exams and surgeries, and educational outreach within our communities. During Vision Health Month, and Blind Awareness month, we have an opportunity to renew our dedication to these efforts while educating the public about the importance of preventative eye care.



Many vision problems can be reduced or even prevented through regular eye examinations and early detection. Conditions such as glaucoma, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and macular degeneration often develop gradually and may go unnoticed until significant vision loss has occurred. Encouraging routine eye exams, especially for children and seniors, can make a tremendous difference. Lions clubs can help by hosting community vision screenings, partnering with local optometrists and ophthalmologists, supporting schools with children's eye screenings, and sharing educational information through social media and community events.

**May is also a wonderful opportunity for clubs to engage members and communities through meaningful service projects.**

Consider organizing a vision screening event, collecting used eyeglasses for recycling, inviting a local eye care professional to speak at your meeting, or partnering with schools and senior centers to promote eye health awareness. Even small projects can create life-changing impacts for those in need.

As Lions, our service goes beyond simply helping people see better. We help people maintain independence, confidence, educational success, and quality of life. Every pair of eyeglasses recycled, every child screened, and every individual assisted represents hope and compassion in action.

Let us use this month as a reminder that service with vision creates brighter futures. Together, we can continue strengthening our communities by protecting sight, promoting health, and serving those in need with compassion and dedication.

Thank you for all you do as Lions to make a lasting difference in the lives of others.



# **DISTRICT 35 I MEETING & MINI CONVENTION**



**DG Linda Gregory Inducted Lions that became members in 25-26**



**DG elect Bev Flynn was given given a spcial "voodoo" doll by PCC Bill Ringlestein**

**Everglades City Lions Club accepts the Melvin Jones Fellow Challenge made by PCC Bob Jenkins**





**Lion Christine Malone  
is now 2VGD Elect  
with the help of her  
“Bee Kind”  
supporters**



**Bagpipes and the Ceremony of the Empty  
Chair honored the Lions that we lost this  
year. Their names were read as a candle  
was lit for each one.**



*Club Zones act as a Team.*

*United in Service*

**Zone 1:** Arcadia Centennial, Frostproof, Lake Placid, Lake Wales, Sebring Breakfast, Wauchula **Zone Chair:** Lion Diane LaSpina

**Zone 2:** Brandon, Fishhawk, Plant City, Sun City Center, Tampa Downtown, Tampa North **Zone Chair:** Lion Bridgett Zickefoose

**Zone 3:** Dade City Hispanic American, Hudson Bayonet Point, Lutz Land o Lakes, Wesley Chapel, Zephyrhills **Zone Chair:** Lion Jim Kilby

**Zone 4:** Clearwater, Gulfport, Largo, Palm Harbor, Safety Harbor, St. Petersburg **Zone Chair:** Lion Teri Barnett

**Zone 5:** Bradenton, Englewood, North Port, Port Charlotte Cenntenial, Punta Gorda, Sarasota, Venice **Zone Chair:** Lion Jeff Myles

**Zone 6:** Cape Coral, North Fort Myers Noon, Fort Myers, Fort Myers Beach, Sanibel/Captiva **Zone Chair:** Lion Jennifer Maillard

**Zone 7:** Bonita Springs, Naples, Everglades City **Zone Chair:** Lion Steve Schulz

## *Zone 1 Service & Activities*

**Frostproof Lions** were Gold sponsors of Frostproof Care Center Golf Tournament



**Wauchula Lions** guest speaker, Jim Beckman presented an update on the Hardee County Quinncentennial Plans

## *Zone 2 Service & Activities*

**FishHawk Lions**  
« Hop into Spring Fest»



Eye screening of the adorable little ones who came to get their picture taken.





**Plant City Lions** visited **Willis Peters** **Exceptional Student Education Center** **Dover, FL,** which is a specialized school serving students PK-12 with disabilities.



**Scholarship awards to the Plant City Strawberry Queen Court.** One is a dedicated member of the Plant City Leo Club,.

**Strawberry Crest High School's FFA Agricultural Issues Team presentation on the Rural and Family Lands Protection Program at Plant City meeting**





**Sun City Center/South Shores Lions scholarship Committee Members Barney Schumacher and Yoli Almeida with East Bay student Gianna Hernandez (L) and with Lennard student Omar Halwani (R).**



**Sun City Center/South Shore Lions enjoyed a visit by 2VDG elect, Christine Malone**



**Gentlemen (and Ladies) “Start your Engines”**

**Tampa Downtown  
Al Disalet  
Memorial  
Invitation Golf  
Charity Event**



**at the  
Carrollwood  
Country Club**



**Lion Tom Scherf presents A  
Tampa Downtown Scholarship to  
Douglas Carrol of Robinson High**

# Zone 3 Service & Activities

The Lions of Greater Zephyr Hills celebrated their Mortgage Burning with a Day of service!



**Blood Pressure**

**Diabetes screening**



**Eyeglass sorting  
Plant potting  
Plastic Bag  
recycling**



## Zone 4 Service & Activities

**Clearwater, Largo and St. Pete Lions** were honored by the Lighthouse of Pinellas for their service

“Thank you to the Clearwater Lions Club, Largo Lions Club, and St. Petersburg Lions Club for your unwavering support and commitment to our mission. Together, we are changing lives!”



**St Pete Lions** at Lighthouse of Pinellas Blindfolded dinner





**Largo Lions** barbeque at the Lighthouse Family Picnic at Walsingham Park



**Lion Carolyn** at the drum circle



**Safety Harbor Lions information station at the Hamptons Apartments**



**Safety Harbor fights hunger by supporting food drives at St. John's Episcopal Food Pantry and prepping for Hands Across the Harbor**



**Night time "Cornhole" ...Fun!**



**Palm Harbor Lions** care about their environment



*Zone 4*  
meeting....great  
turnout!



# *Zone 5 meeting hosted by Venice Lions*



The 60+ attendees do not know that Roary is lurking behind them, ready to pounce.



It was DG Elect Bev Flynn that Roary was looking for



It's my new gavel. I'll try to keep this out of PDG Patty Jean's sight.



Watch out! Tail Twister Paddy is looking for you!



Words of Wisdom from outgoing ZC Jeff to incoming ZC Pam

# Bradenton

## Fishing Tournament for Blind and Low Vision persons



Lions assist  
Mercy & Bella.  
Bella's spade fish  
was even given a  
name.



Smiles on the faces of  
trophy winners (even  
if it was for the  
smallest fish)



## Lakewood Ranch Leos Club



**DG Linda was the key note speaker at the induction ceremony and installation of officers for the newly chartered LEO Club of Lakewood Ranch. The community based club was organized by the president, Tyler LaPlaca and is sponsored by the Lions Club of Bradenton.**

**PCC Chip was the Master of Ceremony and Lion Jan Kunka is the LEO advisor.**

**Julie LaPlaca, mother of the club president is a new Bradenton Lion and she coordinated the Charter Dinner. Parents and LEO's enjoyed the evening.**



## Englewood



**Guest Speaker:  
Erica White, the Friendship at Home  
Coordinator with Senior Friendship Center,  
She told us about their senior companionship  
organization and how volunteers are always  
welcome and always needed.**

**These beautiful  
flowers were sold  
as a fundraiser for  
the Englewood  
Lions Club**



## Laurel/Nokomis Lions Environmental Project



## Laurel/Nokomis Lions



## Induction of new members



**Laurel/Nokomis Lions** are ready to plan for Action  
(DGE Bev Flynn is eager to participate)





**Venice Lions** are all smiles watching young people searching for “beeping eggs”



**Zone 6 Lions** (Cape Coral, N Fort Myers Noon and Fort Myers Beach) work together to plant trees at Lakes Park



# Zone 7 Lions

**Bonita Springs Lions Club:** Year long Fundraisers  
Bingo, Events, Wednesday Market, & Thrift Store  
support the *Florida Lions Eye Clinic*



**Eyecare**



**Surgery**



**Veteran  
Medical Staff**

<https://www.fllec.org/>

**Everglades City Lions** provided food for a community event that included an egg hunt among the activities.

Check out those yummy cupcakes



**District 35I YTD Totals reported to Lions Portal 4-28-26**

Type of Service	# of Activities	# of People Served
Childhood Cancer	35	6090
Diabetes	36	877
Disaster	10	3230
Environment	44	8074
Humanitarian	315	112872
Hunger	102	33705
Vision	407	110618
Youth	120	26955
<b>Total</b>	<b>1069</b>	<b>302421</b>

**"over 30000 people served in District 35I"**

# Lions Traditions: Leo Clubs



Leo clubs are sponsored by local Lions clubs through Lions Clubs International — the world’s largest community service organization with 1.4 million members across the globe. The Leo Club Program has been going strong for over 60 years and there are now more than 7,000 Leo clubs around the world.

## What makes a Leo

*The Leo motto is “Leadership, Experience, Opportunity.”*

### LEADERSHIP

A Leo develops skills as a project organizer, time manager and team leader.

### EXPERIENCE

A Leo discovers how teamwork and collaboration can change a community and the world.

### OPPORTUNITY

A Leo establishes lifelong connections with fun, hard-working people while reaping the rewards of community service.

Leo clubs consist of two branches, Alpha and Omega. Alpha Leo clubs consist of the organization’s youngest members, with ages ranging from 12 to 18, and Omega Leo clubs are ideal for young adults age 18 to 30. A Leo of any age, can find opportunities for personal and professional growth — and get the tools needed to be a real change-maker in the world by serving the community. (source: Lions International Leo Recruitment Brochure)