



Brighter Visions Kickoff Minutes

District 31-0
August 14, 2021
10:30 am



Attendance: 64 Lions (including twelve by Zoom)

The meeting was promptly called to order at 10:30am with a warm welcome from our District Governor (DG) Barbara Thompson. Lion Ted Garrett was recognized to deliver the Invocation. 1st VDG Lacy Petty led us in our Pledge of Allegiance.

Council Chair Dale Dupree recognized our International Family PID Sid Scruggs and PID Harvey Whitley and wife PCC Diane. NCLI President Karl Ernst, NCLI Executive Administrator PDG W. Durden Dean and Camp Dogwood Administrator Tammy Thomas were also recognized.

NCLI Executive Administrator PDG W. Durden Dean was introduced to speak about our Brighter Visions Campaign for our current year. His presentation opened with showing a newly released and masterfully produced video by PDG Paul Bledsoe. Since 1967, Camp Dogwood continues to be the Flagship of the NC Lions Organization and a Beacon of Service to our VIPs.

The aerial footage of the facility was impressive. The video is very thorough in capturing the services offered. A brief listing of the highly importance services include: Water Sports, Educational Grants, Kid's Programs, Support and Mobility Canes, Low Vision Aids, a new vehicle for Mobile Eye Screening, Kids Sight USA Screenings, Matching Grants and Recycling Programs to funds and help those in need of eyeglasses.

Camp Dogwood continues to be one of the two most sought-after retreats for our VIPs in our state with the other, of course, being the VIP Fishing Tournament. PDG Durden's remarks were very positive about the overall success of the contributions from across the state of North Carolina. District 31-O was exceptional in that we led the state by obtaining 103% of the \$120,000 goal for 2020-2021 and Camp Dogwood is much appreciative. Many thanks were extended to us for our strong effort.

PDG Durden continued his remarks by stating that NCLI has been serving the Blind and Visually Impaired since 1934. Lion Volunteers and their Financial Support has played an important role in the success of NCLI.

NCLI is transitioning to smaller screening units to improve services to the state and be more efficient in doing so. The goal is to have one unit available for each District in the state. A Funding Request has been sent to the State of North Carolina to help in buying four (4) more of these smaller units and the State has this request in the budget. Funding Approval is pending.

One major initiative is that NCLI is partnering with Kid's Sight USA to detect eye problems early in children. Schools across the state have been engaged to assist in the effort and the targeted age group is seven years old or preferably younger.

A key element in helping to prevent blindness is early detection. However, follow-up with parents is equally important to assure that treatment has been received as needed. That follow-up will continue being an area of focus.

Lions Clubs International has a partnership with the VSP Eyes of Hope Organization which offers multiple types of Gift Certificates to address specific needs. This program provides eligible adults and children in need with access to eye care and new glasses at no cost through a VSP Network Doctor in their community. Most optometrist are partners in the program. It works a lot like Medicaid or Medicare. The doctor accepts vouchers as an insurance program.

Camp Dogwood has received vouchers of three (3) types: Glasses only, Exams only or Glasses and Exams. Currently, they have approximately one hundred and fifty (150) of each type that have been received from LCI. These vouchers expire after one year. These can be replenished if necessary. LCI gets an allocation from VSP then, in turn, allocates some amount to NCLI. Lions Clubs now do not have to pay any amounts that will be matched. Cash match funds for surgeries is still available from NCLI since the VSP Program will not cover them.

Before taking questions, PDG Durden closed by reciting the famous quote from Helen Keller in 1925, "Alone we can do so little but together we can do so much".

Questions and Answers:

- Is there was a limit to the number of vouchers a club can receive? Answer, no.
- Where can you get access to the above video? Answer, the video is online in a format that can be emailed. It will be put on the NCLI Website and eventually on the District 31-O Website as well.
- How do you request vouchers? Answer, contact Bryan Hoover who is the Screening Coordinator at Camp Dogwood. **Call 828.478.2135 Ext.241.**

Lions must make sure that the needed information is gathered from the VIP. This information will used to determine if they qualify financially. The financial qualifying process is the same as before. If a VIP qualifies, Bryan will send appropriate voucher.

LCI must maintain tight control over the vouchers since they are numbered. NCLI must keep records of who they served, when they served them and what services were provided. At the end of the year, NCLI must submit their report to LCI who in turn sends it to VSP. A check and balance system compares the number of vouchers issued by NCLI to the number of vouchers that are actually redeemed by the optometrists to obtain their reimbursement.

Vouchers are only issued directly to doctors, and they also help in coordinating appointments for patients.

- **What is the hardest task for Lions in getting vouchers?** Answer, finding out if a doctor is in the network with VSP. This is not a difficult task since the information is online in many cases and a quick call to the doctor's office will answer the question. Lions were encouraged to ask their doctors to sign up for the VSP Network if they are not in the system already.

DG Barbara asked the meeting attendees to sing Happy Birthday to PDG Durden since his Loyalty to Lionism graciously served us with his presence! Thank you, Lion Durden.

It was also pointed out that a couple was celebrating their marriage today! PCC Diane and PID Harvey Whitley were married 56 years ago! This was another fine example of one's dedication to Lionism and to serving others by donating your time. Thank you, Lions Diane and Harvey.

NCLI President Karl Ernst

PDG Karl is extremely honored to serve in his position this year. 1st Board Session was this past weekend. Each District has set goals to support Brighter Visions. All want to come close by doing their best if they do not make it. This is a team effort made up of individuals. Lions were encouraged to say to each other "I will so that we can"! We need to make that commitment as a team and do the best that we can and persevere.

Brighter Visions State Chairperson PDG Rahim Shomari

PDG Rahim was unable to attend but he sent a statement that PDG Karl shared.

NCLI thanked all for previous contributions to the Brighter Visions Campaign. It was cited that problems spotted in the eyes are often the first signs of diseases working in the body, like diabetes. PDG Rahim shared his personal visual impairment as a youth.

The continued support from Lions further aids in supplying White Canes, matching funds for eyeglasses, providing grant funding for Clinical Eye Research at three major facilities including the NC Lions Pediatric Eye Clinic at Duke University, The Eye Center at Wake Forest University and the NC Lions Diabetic Eye Care Center at UNC Chapel Hill.

We were also thanked for our support of the VIP Fishing Tournament. Regrettably, it will be cancelled again in 2021.

The use of our Mobile Screening Unit allows approximately 50 people per session to be screened. A number of diseases have been detected through eye screenings include: Lupus, aneurysms, brain tumors, cancer of the blood, skin & tissue, diabetes, Lyme disease, high cholesterol, hypertension, multiple sclerosis and stroke. We were encouraged to purchase Honorariums for non-Lions to reward them for work in these areas.

PDG Rahim's comments were closed with this statement; There is only one way to the top and that method is to keep striving to reach your goal. Work as a unit and thank you for your support.

Camp Dogwood Financial Campaign - State Chairperson: PDG Wayne Faber

Before his presentation started, the Lions in attendance recognized his very recent and brief retirement from the Apex Police Department doing 911 Services by singing "Happy Retirement"!

Lion Wayne opened his remarks by giving a big thank you to the clubs that supported two major projects that he undertook during the past year and a half. One was to acquire a van that had a wheelchair lift. They were successful in raising the needed funds and were able to obtain an excellent vehicle.

The second project was to upgrade the Heating and Cooling System in the main conference room. Most of the funding needs have been raised for this project but there is still more needed. Clubs are being encouraged to help where they can and send checks to NCLI designated for the Heating and Cooling.

Camp Dogwood Raffle Tickets were distributed to the clubs at the Brighter Visions Meeting. The level of participation from our clubs is the same as in the past at three books per member. These can either be sold or purchased by Lions. Each book will once again contain 12 tickets for \$10.00 per book. The Grand Prize will be \$15,000. It is more attractive to give cash instead of a car because of transactions that must occur.

During the last Eyeglass Sorting Operation at Camp Dogwood, approximately 9,000 lbs. were shipped to Distribution Centers. Since then, the stockpile slowly replenishes itself so currently there is 9-10,000 lbs. still in the warehouse waiting to be sorted.

The next scheduled sorting date at Camp Dogwood is October 12-14, 2021. Like almost any facility, wear & tear of some nature never takes vacation. Maintenance is ongoing and Camp Dogwood is not immune. The demand for electricians, carpenters, painters, gardeners, and yard workers remains high. Lions having these skills are invited to come to Work Week at Camp Dogwood on March 23-30, 2022, to serve during "Volunteer Days". Volunteers will help save a lot of money.

Volunteers are encouraged to also work during the camp weeks at Camp Dogwood. Your services are needed to help with serving meals, assisting with fishing and craft projects, boat loading and off campus activities. Volunteers typically come in on Sunday and work as your schedule will permit. Lions that have participated in the fellowship always speak of the personal joy they gain as a volunteer, much like that of volunteering at the VIP Fishing Tournament.

Lion Wayne graciously offered to visit clubs and present a program on Camp Dogwood upon request.

It was announced that Lion Wayne has placed his name in nomination for 2nd VP of NCLI. Lion Wayne was applauded, and we all wish him well in his endeavor.

Camp Dogwood Administrator - Tammy Thomas

Lion Tammy opened her presentation with a video of “Camp Dogwood Testimonies “, that featured three VIPs and each was given center stage to give an account of their experiences there and to express their appreciation of it. Their messages were very inspiring, and one could clearly see the positive impact that our fine facility has on our VIPs.

The Camp Dogwood Facebook page contains 35 similar testimonies and Lions are encouraged to follow their Facebook page to learn more.

Tammy highlighted several activities that have become favorites for many. The array is broad and there is something for every VIP to enjoy individually or as a team member.

The extensive list includes: “Beep Base Ball”, soccer, Frisbee, basketball, putt-putt, fishing, swimming, tubing and kayaking. Also available are arts & crafts, tattoos, nail painting, yoga, line dancing, talent shows and beauty pageants. Archery and shooting BB guns are also available and their placement accuracy is remarkable using sound devices. One activity of notable mention was kayaking. This water sport offers freedom to the VIPs. Just imagine how relaxing it must be in the calm quiet water as one propels and steers their vessel as they desire. Lions can volunteer to help and also experience that same level of tranquility.

So, based on the list of available activities, Lions can easily find many ways to assist.

The staff at Camp Dogwood does exceptionally well in adapting activities that will accommodate the Blind and Visually Impaired in competing or simply enjoying the activities that some may have never done before.

Tammy went on to say that camp opened up this past summer season but at 1/2 of the normal capacity. The VIPs that could attend greatly enjoyed the camp fellowship and 15 were first time campers.

In closing, Lions were thanked for all that they do. She also stated that without the donations and hard work from Lions, she could not do what she loves and she appreciated the opportunity.

Brief Announcements

To wrap up the Brighter Visions Kickoff, District Governor Barbara thanked the Julian Lions Club for hosting the meeting and for preparing the delicious lunch.

State pins were on sale for \$2.00 each. These pins pay tribute to the American Novelist and Asheville, NC native, Thomas Clayton Wolfe of the early 20th Century.

Last years' goal of \$120,000 was exceeded by 3%. The goal for this year is a little less at approximately \$115,000 or \$103.00 per member. The District 31-O July 1, 2021 opening membership was 1,115.

The Camp Dogwood Raffle Tickets were available for distribution. Clubs in attendance were asked to take their allotment. Zone Chairs were asked to take the tickets for clubs that were not in attendance.

Lions were reminded of the importance to sign-in at the registration table. Failure to do so will result in attendance points not being credited. Registration (meaning sign-in record of attendance) is required at all Cabinet Meetings, the Cabinet Installation, Officer Training Sessions, Zone Meetings and at the Conventions.

Our District and State photographer Dr Coy Rahman will provide pictures of our events to any Lion that wants one. You must provide him or his wife Clara with a physical address. Email requests to: clara.weston@att.net.

Brighter Visions Donations and Closing Remarks

Club representatives were asked to bring any available donations to the basket and the amount would be tallied.

Our initial Brighter Visions donations were very strong and represented a little over 16% of our annual goal of approximately \$115,000. Ten (10) clubs contributed a total of \$18,775 for a fabulous start !

Our District Brighter Visions Co-Chair Wayne Durham thanked all for coming and he looked forward to a great year. He also intends to use the videos during the campaign this year.

The geographical area in District 31-O will be divided into two Regions. Co-Chair PDG Chris Headley will take the Southern Region and Lion Wayne Durham will take the Northern Region. The exact dividing line is to be determined.

The Brighter Visions Kickoff Meeting adjourned at 11:50am and lunch immediately followed.

Respectfully Submitted,
CS Bob Gwyn