

Friday, July 01, 2011

Eye Mobile Replacement (AKA) Mobile Health Screening Unit Project

The Lions Eye Foundation of Southern California (SCLEF) was established in 1963.

The Screening Past:

In January of 1984, a converted 27' foot, 1976 Dodge bus began service as Mobile Sight Screening Bus and quickly and affectionately became known as the Lions "Eye Mobile". It was to fulfill an integral part of the SCLEF Lions mission, to provide free sight and hearing screening to anyone who came to the Eye Mobile and no payment is ever asked or required of them.

Over an 18 year period, the by-now 26 year old Eye Mobile bus, had screened over 140,000 people with a referral rate of 13.5% for follow up and diagnosis.

Time and service had taken its toll on the Eye Mobile and at every SCLEF monthly meeting; the first order of business was to deal with the ever escalating cost of keeping Old-Faithful ready to go for yet another month of service.

The sight screening equipment in the Eye Mobile had also become obsolete with many volunteering Doctors and medical students who donated their services recommending upgrade and replacement.

The Replacement Project:

A frequent topic of conversation, amongst us the SCLEF Lions, was to launch a fund raising project complete with a request for a matching grant from Lions International.

In the 1998-2000 year time frame, I was then the President of the SCLEF and was coming to the end of my last year term. At the end of a meeting, I was approached by the then Chairman of the SCLEF Memorial Trust, PDG Lion Emmet Corn. PDG Corn was nothing if he was not direct and to the point... With out so much as a "Hello how are you" PDG Emmet said to me ... "*Lion Oscar, why don't you do something worthwhile and get this old Eye Mobile off our hands*" or words to that effect. "*It is taking too much of our time and to get you started; the SCLEF Memorial Trust will start the fund raising effort with a \$25,000.00 pledge*".

To say that I was taken by surprise and speechless would be an understatement. So while I searched for something smart to say, PDG Corn pressed his point and virtually demanded an answer right then and there on-the-spot.

The Fund Raising.

I knew, from our previous meetings conversations, that the estimated budget to buy and equip a new unit was in the order of \$250,000.00. I had no idea how in the world did one go about raising that kind of money. Yet Lion Emmet had shrewdly posed the question as a challenge, thrown down the gauntlet so of speak, and I was too proud or too dumbfounded to back down. *So I said OK, I'll do it.*

In order to go out and get contributions a group of dedicated Lions joined forces, willing to call on Lions Clubs, Corporations, individuals or any one willing to lend a hand or make a donation to our project. Lions Roy Fisher, Tony Gonzalez, John Ogorzalek, Dr. Jim Griffone, Mary Jane Patton, John Layton and many others, too numerous to mention, came to our cause and lent their time and talent and their treasure to our cause.

A presentation was put together with which to visit Lion Clubs in the Districts and make our pitch. And so it began; PDG Gil Honeycut had the Yamaha Corporation make a \$1000.00 contribution. Lion Milton Hicks made a contribution in memory of his mother for \$660.00.

District 4-L4 Garden Grove Lions called me to a luncheon and presented me with a \$1000.00 Check.

I called on the Arcadia Lions who came through with \$7000.00 contribution. Downtown Long Beach Lions, \$4500.00, Lakewood Lions \$10,000 wow! Lion Hilda Lopez \$250.00...

Large and small donations were made from Lions of many clubs in both District 4-L2 and 4-L4. As we began gathering speed we knew the time to make a grant request from Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF) was becoming clear.

I set about learning what it took to successfully put together a Grant request and quickly found LCIF would only “match” our request for \$75,000.00 when we could show bank statements demonstrating we had at least that amount of funds in the account.

In the meantime, Lion John Ogorzalek made a pledge regarding the bequest to the Lions Mobile Screening Project from the estate of Hazel E. Thompson guaranteeing our share of the estate would be \$75,000. !! We were nearing the half-way mark to our \$250,000 Goal.

Azusa Lions made a \$1000.00 contribution, Monterrey Park Lions \$2000.00, Lions Hearing Foundation / John Layton pledged \$10,000.00 Uptown Lions, \$1000.00 and so it gathered steam.. We went back to the SCLEF Memorial Trust and received yet another \$12,000.00 pledge. PDG Lion Chuck Boone donated \$1000.00.

I completed our Draft of the Grant request. So I met with PID Kay Fukushima soon to be candidate for Lions International President and sought his advice regarding the Request. I then met with PID Pat Quigley in San Francisco and gave him a copy of our request for his review and comment.

PDG Dr. Ron Akashi gave us list of the optical equipment we needed to outfit the New Unit. Cost estimate @ \$72,000.00. ***We still had a lot work to do!!***

With the application for our Grant request ready to go and endorsed by District Governor Chris Ohrmund I sent it Lions International.

It was then I was assigned Ms. KaSondra Byrd from the LCIF Grants Program to work with me to ensure the format and content was ready to go before the LCIF Board of Trustees. We crossed the T's and dotted the I's and finally “Our Grant Request “came before Lion International and was approved July 2, 2002 at the International Convention in Osaka, Japan, the year Lion Kay K. Fukushima became President of Lions International.

As we were celebrating our good fortune and as we counted our blessings, Lion John Ogorzalek informed us we were actually the recipient *of \$330,000.00 from our benefactor's estate Hazel Thompson. We were there... We had done it!!*

We had raised \$504,515.00 and exceeded our goal and our expectations.

We ordered the new mobile unit from Winebago. PDG Lion Dr Jim Grifone and I traveled to the Winebago Factory to check on the progress of the builder. We had them make several corrections as to the Hearing Booth and the Handicap lift they were proposing to install. We ordered all the new optical and hearing equipment as per Dr. Ron Akashi's wishes.

And we set about the business of completing our Incorporation and securing a 501-c-3 Status from the IRS. The Board of Directors set up an Investment Trust through American Funds, prepared an Operations manual and sought a location in which to store the new unit.

PDG Lion Mike Brassard offered us several places in which to do so. And then went out of his way to extend the concrete driveway in his own home, install a gate and even a canopy over the unit. **Wow!**

I can't begin to thank all those who made this a successful project. My gratitude will always follow them as I am sure the appreciation from all of those who continue to benefit from their service.

Muchas Gracias to one and all!

Lion Oscar S. Bugarini Sr
1st President SCLEF Mobile Unit Project

MHSU Article2.doc