

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Lions 36th Annual Multiple District Convention

Wednesday 18 May 2016 at Queens Hall, at 7:00PM

Feature Address and declare the convention open

I am honoured this evening and particularly delighted to address you at this 36th Multiple District 60 Convention of the International Association of Lions Clubs.

I have been aware of your activities for some time and by my presence here I want to endorse your efforts to give hope to the less privileged and help to those who need it.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I know that you take an active interest in the civic, cultural, social and moral welfare of the community, using as your platform, your motto: We Serve.

We Serve.

So simply elegant as Bill Gates put it.

You do not qualify it.

You do not justify it.

You state simply: We Serve.

In service, you offer a broad range of humanitarian, intercultural, and educational programs and activities designed to improve the condition of those who are in need.

It is encouraging that organisations such as the Lions Club are helping to take some of the heavy burden of community service off the public authorities by undertaking to assist the underprivileged and vulnerable in our society.

I wish to commend you for the important role that you play in providing vital services to communities and individuals all over the country and indeed in the entire region.

These efforts have greatly complemented public authorities' efforts at poverty reduction and improving the lives of people.

That is what you do. In service you improve the lot of those who are unable to do it themselves.

I would like to thank all the Lions here present, individually and together for your commitment and dedication to community service.

Lions a force for good

In Trinidad and Tobago we have benefitted in several areas:

1. Health Services – health clinics in partnership with the Regional Health Authorities, eye screening projects, screening for chronic illnesses
2. Education Services – scholarships, school quizzes
3. Youth Services – career seminars, educational visits/field trips, Peace Poster contest, leadership training
4. Environmental Services – beach clean ups, recycling projects, refurbishment of school recreational facilities

5. Social Services: provision of meals, toiletries, relief for fire victims, care for the elderly

6. Cultural services – Festival of Chorale competition, Calypso competitions for youth, parang competitions

I was particularly impressed to learn that you provide pace makers to those who need them and cannot afford them and that you partner with Heartbeat International in this project.

Further you have initiated a project at the Success/Laventille Secondary School on recycling.

And the list goes on.

You have been a force for good.

And here today you have gathered to consider how better you may provide your service.

I am sure you will take stock of the successes your clubs scored in the past year and reflect on the areas where you can achieve more in the future.

Service a fundamental and compelling response.

It is well known that Lions break barriers to uplift the standard of living of people all over the world.

I am struck by your overwhelming sense of optimism, celebration, mutual support, and generosity: a sense that no matter how hard things may get in our world, service remains a fundamental and compelling response.

You are men and women quietly and determinedly getting on with the job of helping those less able and advantaged than yourselves.

You contribute your dollars; your talents and wise counsel; you give hands-on, practical assistance.

You are part of a world family of men and women whose compassion leads you to serve well.

Friends, I want you to know that I respect and admire and value your efforts and your generosity.

Your generosity allows you to make connections with the most unexpected of people.

Your generosity does not depend on learning, privilege, status or riches.

It ignores nationality, class, colour and gender.

Your generosity is as vital in the boardroom as it is in the kindergarten.

It is impossible to manufacture, measure, sell or waste it.

You are a generous force.

To do the work you do and spread your generosity and goodwill, you need financial resources and you need solid well-formed human resources.

I want to focus a bit on your human resource and in particular your youth.

Appeal for focus on youth

I want to ask you to pay special and deliberate attention to the youth in your organisation and in our communities.

Youth are of particular concern to me.

You see, young people:

- Can contribute to local development and prosperity.
- Can be a bridge between cultures and between tradition and modernity.

- Have the interest, energy and passion to address issues and concerns, such as heritage management, sustainable tourism, local development and community involvement.
- Have affinity for information and communication technologies to network and transcend geographical boundaries.
- Are in the position to act as potent agents of positive social change that will yield greater economic and social well-being in the perspective of sustainable development for generations to come.

At the same time, young women and men are particularly affected by development challenges at all levels, frequently faced with disproportionately high levels of unemployment, insufficient access to education and professional training, intolerance and exclusion, among others.

This is all the more important in cities where increased urbanization has further accentuated these challenges.

Hands-on activities, appropriate adult mentors and community service, are absolute requisites for positive youth development.

Youth development, the process of growing up and developing one's capacities, happens no matter what we do.

The challenge is to promote **positive** youth development and plan **quality** experiences for young people.

It would be nice if there was a drive-through window where you could order the positive aspects of youth development when planning a program.

But it takes active involvement and careful planning to fill the order.

In positive youth development we need to stimulate, challenge, and encourage youth and adults as they work together to plan, conduct, and evaluate quality experiences.

Many young people do not have the advantages that promote optimal, healthy development of the body, mind, and spirit.

Many youth do not have opportunities to experience positive stimulation for growth or nurturing support from family, friends, and community.

Youth development is a natural process, but it cannot be left to chance.

Youth development in organizations such as yours exists to promote the positive, healthy development of young people.

The mission is to provide the challenges, experiences, support, and help young people need to develop to their fullest potential.

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Young people need learning strategies that are based upon action, and group and individual challenges teaching life skills as they go along.

To grow and learn to optimum capacity in healthy ways and to function successfully in the adult world, young people benefit from opportunities to:

- feel a sense of safety and structure
- experience active participation, group membership, and belonging
- develop self-worth achieved through meaningful contribution
- experiment to discover self, gain independence, and gain control over one's life
- develop significant relationships with peers and adults

- discuss conflicting values and formulate their own
- feel the pride and accountability that come with mastery
- Expand the capacity to enjoy life and know that success is possible.

It is all part of positive youth development.

It is what Lions can provide and what Lions does provide.

I was delighted to learn that you have been having programmes for the Leo clubs at which you take time to train young persons to grow up understanding the work of the Lions.

You have 10 Leo clubs in Port of Spain who do a great deal of community service.

You have Alphas and Omegas.

Alphas are from 11 to 16yrs.

Omegas are from 16- 28 yrs. old.

You are providing a safe environment for your people to be formed in positivity.

They are being shaped to understand and embrace the meaning of your motto: We Serve.

I want to publicly applaud your efforts and encourage you to take your effort in youth development to another level.

Exhortation to use Lion Quest to benefit youth in the region and in Trinidad and Tobago

We know that Lions provide young people with opportunities for achievement, learning, contribution and service, individually and collectively.

You advocate activities identified as best practices in the field of youth development.

The Lions Club International Foundation reports that:

“More than 13 million youth have been taught positive life skills through Lions Quest, our most comprehensive program for youth.

Lions Quest unites the home, school and community to cultivate capable and healthy young people through positive youth development programs.

More than 550,000 educators have been trained to implement the programs, which supports character development, social and emotional learning, civic values, violence and substance abuse prevention and service-learning.

Lions work with the schools to implement the program from kindergarten through 12th grade, and often partner on community service-learning projects.

The program has drawn rave reviews from educators and high ratings from government agencies.

Over the past 25 years, program developers, school districts, universities and independent research firms have conducted program evaluations which indicate that the Lions Quest program improves achievement test scores, changes attitudes and beliefs regarding substance abuse and violence, lowers rates of disciplinary problems, lowers risk of dropping out of school and decreases use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Continually expanding, Lions Quest is present in more than 90 countries and program materials have been translated into 36 languages.”

This positive youth development program is having a huge, global impact;

I want to exhort you. I want to appeal to you to consider using the Lion Quest model and program to the benefit of our youth in the region and in Trinidad and Tobago.

I have been told that you have made an effort before and it did not gain the traction you expected.

I call on you to try again.

Concluding Remarks

As Lions, you stand for what is best in all of us.

Internationally, you are more than one million people, organized into more than 45,000 clubs, located in more than 200 countries—and you have chosen to serve together.

You harness people's service, channel it, so that it makes the greatest possible difference in our region and in our world.

You know, it's hard to have a big impact.

But you, Lions International have had a huge impact on our world, especially in the restoration of sight and the prevention of serious vision loss.

You have restored sight for more than 30 million people!

You have had an impact in our communities and in our region.

Here in Trinidad your involvement in so many areas from education, to health, to the environment speaks to a deep involvement in our society.

You have an impressive record.

You are providing much needed support to people who need it.

I am so excited to see how much good you will do in the future.

I offer my encouragement and support.

Continue to improve the living standards of our people.

Focus on youth perhaps through your Lion Quest programme

I wish to once again thank you most sincerely for the work you are doing and at the same time wish you continued commitment

and success in whatever projects you will embark on in the future.

I trust that this convention, with all the satisfaction of being able to engage your counterparts from the region and further abroad, will also serve to be the place where you plan your future projects and endeavours.

I understand that this is a period of particular excitement for you as you look ahead to your 100th anniversary next year.

I congratulate you even now that you are approaching such a magnificent milestone.

Therefore in the joy of your celebrations and looking forward to fruitful deliberations, it gives me great pleasure to declare the Convention open.

I thank you.