

# ***HISTORY OF***



*Emergency Aid  
and  
Statewide Humanitarian Efforts  
for  
Greater Service through Lionism  
1972-2015*

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## **BACKGROUND**

### **MAJOR DISASTER CALLS LIONS TO ACTION**

Nelson County, located about an hour southwest of Charlottesville in District 24-C, is a rural county with several mountain ranges. In the mid 1750's, many settlers built their homes in the hollows between the mountain ranges, knowing that they could find water. Generations of families lived there in those same houses for 200 years without experiencing any flooding problems. Would one think that flooding might occur in the mountains?

August 19-20, 1969 – Hurricane Camille brought disastrous flooding to Nelson County. The hurricane hit the Gulf Coast two days earlier, weakened over land, and stalled on the eastern side of the Blue Ridge Mountains, dumping a world record quantity of 27 inches of rain, mainly in a three-hour period. The ground was already saturated from a downpour of 5 inches over a five-hour period the previous day. More than 130 public bridges were washed out in Nelson County, while some communities were under water. The entire county was virtually cut off, with many roads and almost all bridges, telephone, radio/TV, and electric service interrupted.

With more than 30 inches of rain coming off these mountains and draining into the hollows, the hollows became rivers, with their banks creeping up the side of mountains where the houses were built. Happening so fast, many people did not have time to get to higher ground. Houses, barns, people and livestock were washed down the hollows, along with trees and wild animals. Many families (approximately 150-175 people) lost their lives. Some of the bodies were never found and lie buried under the mud and trees.

Nelson County Lions Club, the only club in the county, asked the Lions clubs throughout Virginia to assist in this tragedy. Realizing that they needed more hands-on service than they could possibly provide, they made direct calls to the Lions clubs in northern Virginia, asking for immediate assistance for their neighbors and relatives who lost food, clothing, and in some cases everything they owned. Clubs responded by organizing drives for contributions of clothing, bedding, food, and medicine. Past District Governor Roy Rotenberry recalls the Red Cross and Salvation Army joining the forces, followed by the Amish and Mennonites. All of this took precious time during which large numbers of people suffered.

PDG Roy went down to Nelson County and saw first hand houses that had landed in hollows, and roads completely gone. The major road through Nelson County, Route 29, was washed out and bridges gone. You can imagine how isolated those people must have felt, trapped in the mountains, no homes left, and everything they owned had washed down the hollows. The federal government eventually provided some relief; however, the devastated people needed immediate assistance. The Lions of Virginia did not have the means to offer financial help but collected many supplies and contributed assistance in every way possible.

## **GROUNDWORK**

The inability to respond quickly with funds to the Nelson County natural disaster prompted the Lions leadership team of District 24-A to forge ahead in laying the groundwork for a statewide foundation that would be managed by the six sub-districts in Virginia. Past International Director and attorney at law Bill Hix, member of Falls Church Lions Club, served as legal counsel in drafting by-laws that would allow the formation of a non-profit corporation. Necessary exemptions to allow funds to be collected and, if necessary, expended would be included.

By late summer of 1972, most of the paperwork was complete and the State Corporation Commission approved the Articles of incorporation for the Lions of Virginia Foundation. Multiple District 24 Council of Governors, comprised of Lions Roy Rotenberry (24-A), Mercer Motley (24-B), Carlyle Reeves (24-C), John Wroten (24-D), Carlton Saul (Council Chair 24-E), and Clarence Slagle (24-F) worked together to iron out the details of the foundation. The Council elected District Governor Roy Rotenberry to serve as the founding President of the new board with the responsibility of arranging the first meeting of the board, electing officers and directors from all six districts, and approving recommendations made by the committee.

## **OVERVIEW**

### **LIONS OF VIRGINIA FOUNDATION, INC. (LOVF)**

As stated above, in 1972 the Lions of Virginia took a giant step to promote and provide emergency aid and statewide humanitarian efforts for greater service through the formation of Lions of Virginia Foundation, Inc. (LOVF), a public non-profit 501(c)(3) tax exempt corporation. Virginia Lions enthusiastically agreed that this approach was the most appropriate medium for statewide Lionistic humanitarian achievement. They knew the foundation would be a vehicle to allow all Lions, Lioness, and Leo clubs in the state of Virginia to join together and respond immediately to emergency situations.

The foundation, since its beginning, has focused its major areas of involvement in disaster relief, sight and hearing conservation, and other areas of Lions Clubs International emphasis. The Board of Directors administers the Foundation. It is comprised of the Executive Committee (President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer); Past District Governors who have served in the preceding two years; current international officers; six elected District LOVF chairpersons, and the Past Presidents of the Foundation,

## **LOVF MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

### **SHARING THE LOVE OF VIRGINIA LIONS THROUGH LOVF GRANTS**

Disaster Relief – Emergency Requests up to \$10,000 may be submitted following hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods, as well as requests for construction of community centers and purchasing mobile homes for those people affected by disasters in Virginia. Distribution of funds is for emergency needs such as water, food, clothing, blankets, non-narcotic medications, toiletries, small tools, gasoline, and other personal emergency needs.

Service to Humanity Requests may be submitted by a Lions or Lioness club, or cabinet member from one of the six sub-districts to request assistance to individuals or organizations. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Special Needs Equipment Requests – In September 2008 the Board approved the special needs equipment program operating procedure. The Lions of Virginia Special Needs Program (LVSNE) is now a standing committee of the Lions of Virginia and, as such, the Council of Governors appoints its members yearly. LOVF supports the work of the committee and serves as a resource to Virginia citizens. (LVSNE submits written grant requests to the LOVF Humanitarian Committee.)

The LOVF Grant Program has been in operation since 1975 and since that time yearly total grants have ranged from six hundred seventy-six dollars (\$676) in 1975-1976 to a high of almost eighty-six thousand dollars (\$86,000) in 2010-2011.

### **LOVF HUMANITARIAN RECOGNITION**

In 1992 LOVF's executive committee, under the leadership of President Wilson Snead, adopted the Lions of Virginia Distinguished Humanitarian Recognition and designed a plaque to be issued in consideration of a contribution in the amount of \$750.00 to the foundation. A Lions club, individual, or organization may make the contribution. The designee may be an individual or organization that is committed and dedicated to the ideal of rendering humanitarian service, within or outside of Lions Clubs International. The recognition may also be given in memory of an individual.

The foundation may give, on a limited occasion, the Humanitarian Recognition to an individual or organization that has rendered worthy service to LOVF itself. LOVF chose and presented the first plaque in 1992-1993 to Myrtle Bridgeforth in appreciation of her dedication and commitment to the annual raffle at the State Convention for many years. Since that time, LOVF has given the recognition to Lions Betty Johnson, Mike Nicolais, and Edith Rotenberry.

LOVF instituted the Progressive Lions of Virginia Distinguished Humanitarian Recognition in 2002, to make available an additional acknowledgment at a cost of \$750.00 to those honored previously. This recognition is the LOVF lapel pin with insertion of a small diamond.

## THE LIONS OF VIRGINIA LEGACY FUND

The Lions of Virginia Legacy Fund was founded in cooperation with LOVF and Prevent Blindness Mid-Atlantic in 2010. A gift to the fund supports the missions of LOVF, LCIF, and Prevent Blindness Mid-Atlantic (PBMA) and is divided between the organizations (LOVF-50%, LCIF-5%, and PBMA-45%). The fund is a 501 C (3) organization.

### HIGHLIGHTS

#### **1972-1982**

##### Presidents

Roy Rotenberry (PDG)	1972-1973
*William Hix (PID)	1973-1974
*Harold Parks (PDG)	1974-1975
*Charles Mowery (PID)	1975-1977
*Edward (Moon) Kosjer (PID)	1977-1979
*Louis Bridgeforth (PDG)	1979-1981
*Arthur Lazarow (PID)	1981-1982

\*Deceased

##### Grants Awarded

\$126,435

##### Sharing the Love of Virginia Lions through Humanitarian Service (Grants)

Flood relief in southwest Virginia  
Old Dominion and Roanoke Lions Eye Banks  
Virginia Rehabilitation Center  
Virginia Society to Prevent Blindness  
Virginia Voice Print for the Handicapped  
Lions of Virginia Hearing Foundation  
Virginia Association for Blind Athletes  
Money to help establish the Temporal Bone Bank  
Purchase of one of the first canes equipped with sensors to assist the visually impaired, at a cost of \$2,500

##### Fundraiser

Statewide Raffle

## 1982-1992

### Presidents

*Sam Lawhorne (Lion)	1982-1983
*Art Lazarow (PID)	1983-1984
Roy Wilson (PID)	1984-1986
*George Mathis (PDG)	1986-1987
Joseph McCaffrey (PDG)	1987-1989
Richard Chaffin (PID)	1989-1991
*Wilson Snead (PD)	1991-1992

\*Deceased

### Grants Awarded

\$351,793

### Sharing the Love of Virginia Lions through Humanitarian Service (Grants)

Braille and Speak Computers  
Lions of Virginia Hearing Foundation  
Society for Prevention of Blindness  
Tornado damage  
Northern Virginia Lions Youth Camp  
Voice of the Blue Ridge  
Virginia Lions Eye Bank  
Burkeville Lodge  
Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind  
Flood Relief (Different 24-C Locations)  
Virginia Voice Print for the Handicapped  
Virginia Lions Drug Awareness  
Tidewater Area Libraries

### Fundraiser

Statewide Raffle

## 1992-2002

### Presidents

*Wilson Snead (PDG)	1992-1993
*Mike Guido (Lion)	1993-1995
*Warren Story (PDG)	1995-1997
*Swaeng Woraratandharm (PDG)	1997-1999
Robert Hemm (PDG)	1999-2000
Miguel (Mike) Valencia	2000-2001
Clayton Senecal (PDG)	2001-2002

\*Deceased

Grants Awarded \$277,086

### Sharing the Love of Virginia Lions through Humanitarian Service (Grants)

Flood Relief (Districts 24-C, 24-D, 24-F)  
Sight and Hearing Vans (24-A and 24-D)  
Central Virginia Lions Hearing Aid Bank  
Burkeville Lodge  
Lions Clubs Projects  
Lynchburg Sheltered Industries  
Eye Surgery for Individual  
Northern Virginia Lions Youth Camp (Clifton Cabin) (Kitchen and Dining)  
Tornado Relief  
Virginia Lions Hearing Foundation

Fundraiser: Statewide Raffle



## 2002-2012

### Presidents

Joseph Hannemann (PDG)	2002-2003
Dan Bowling (PDG)	2003-2004
James Oglesby (PDG)	2004-2005
Sherry Atwood (PDG)	2005-2006
Larry Hynson	2006-2007
Jan Bowling (PCC)	2007-2008
*Carolyn Messimer (PDG)	2008-2009
Don Colley (PCC)	2009-2010
Phil Schrack (PCC)	2010-2011
Barbara Senecal (PDG)	2011-2012

\*Deceased

Grants Awarded \$345,828

### Sharing the Love of Virginia Lions through Humanitarian Service (Grants)

Woodbridge Lions Club – Tropical Storm Lee Victims  
Sight and Hearing Unit Equipment – 24-F  
LOVF Special Needs Equipment and Devices  
Districts 24-D, 24-E, 24-F Tornado Victims  
Vision Centers and Free Clinic  
Prevent Blindness Mid-Atlantic  
Greater Falls Run Lions Local Project  
NOVA Lions Youth Camp (water system)  
Flood Relief (24-D and 24-F)  
Lynchburg Sheltered Industries  
Virginia Voice for Handicapped  
24-A Local Project  
Soccer Field  
Mobile S & H Van 24-D

### Fundraiser

Statewide Raffle

## 2012-2015

### Presidents

Jo Nelson (PDG)	2012-2013
Chet Kramer (PCC)	2013-2015

### Grants Awarded

\$147,765

### Sharing the Love of Virginia Lions through Humanitarian Service (Grants)

Smith Mountain Lake Lions Club Pavilion for Burnt Chimney Elementary School  
Six Virginia Lions Sub-Districts – Pedi vision (Spot)  
Richmond Area Lions Clubs, Warrenton Sunrise, and Woodbridge, Smith Mountain Lake –  
Pedi vision (Spot)  
Saltville Lions Club Playground Equipment  
NOVA Lions Youth Camp – Flooding – Road Damage  
Christiansburg Lions Club Basketball Scoreboard  
Troutville Lions Club – Roof and stage  
24-E Region I, Zone 2 Clubs – Henry Forks Service Center  
Crozet Lions Club Library – Books, Shelving  
District 24-A Hurricane Derecho Victims

### Fundraiser

Statewide Raffle

## SUMMARY

The Lions of Virginia Foundation's proud history includes the following:

- **Humanitarian Services** - providing assistance, including special needs equipment, to individuals or organizations
- **Disaster and emergency relief** - providing funds for blankets, food, clothing, personal care items, tools, non-prescription medicines and other necessities for hurricane, tornado, and flooding victims
- **Youth Assistance** - providing matching grants and loans for youth camps, playing fields, and exchange programs
- **Community Projects** – providing partial funding for large projects that individual Lions clubs are not able to sustain, such as assistance with construction of community buildings and parks
- **Statewide Initiatives** - providing training of school nurses to conduct eye screenings in school systems
- **Grants** - providing a total of \$1,227,417 (1975-2015)
- **Distinguished Humanitarian Recognition** – providing 485 recognition plaques (1992-2015)
- **Progressive Humanitarian Recognition** – providing 9 recognition lapel pins (2003-2015)
- **Lions of Virginia Legacy Fund** – providing an opportunity and a resource to help create a legacy for the work of Lions in Virginia

***As LCI founder Melvin Jones said, "You can't get very far until you start doing something for somebody else."***