

**Sid L. Scruggs III**  
**2010-11 International President**  
**July 6, 2011, Seattle, Washington**

Well, you can see what a wonderful crew you have been and the miracles that have been made. It seems like to me only a short couple of weeks ago since we were in Sydney, Australia. We were there and we saw the excitement and I promised you then that as I took the oath to be your International President that I would guard our association against apathy and bigotry and that I would walk beside you in your service and as you would strive to do even greater service through your significant and signature projects.

I think you have seen on the screen that we have been faithful to that mission that we have guarded against apathy. We've been diversified in our activities and the people we serve. It's just been a great, great, great time.

I think it was President Harry Truman that said, "Men and women make history." It's not the other way around. History doesn't make people, but men and women. He said that progress occurs when courageous, and might I add personally, when compassionate leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.

And this year as we have traveled throughout the world visiting your communities, your towns and your villages, we have witnessed how the Lions have met the needs and literally changed things for the better.

It reminds me of the words that I wrote in the *Beacon of Hope*: You the Lions have brought sight and hope and you have made spirits soar, and when miracles were needed, just like that mighty lighthouse, you were there. You stood as a ray of light to show the way and you answered the call. Truly this year you have demonstrated how you can be a beacon of hope. And you have made this year so very special to me.

When we started out the year we wanted to focus our collective efforts. And I asked you to participate in four global campaigns. First of all I asked you to work with youth. Not the way we normally thought about youth, but new youth projects. And then in the month of October we said we would work on our traditional focus, working with the visually impaired. And then as we approached the end of the year, I said, "Let's turn our focus on world hunger." And then, we wanted to end up with Earth Day in the month of April, focusing on the needs of our planet and focus on projects that would address the needs of ecology.

It was during that month of August that we got together, and I was amazed at the creativity that you have in coming up with new service projects, those signature and significant projects.

When I thought about the youth, I knew that you were going to be working with Youth Exchange, our Leo programs, the traditional things that we think about working with the youth, but I asked you to do something more. I wanted you to focus on special needs children, and you did. And how you have worked with the Special Olympics and other outreaches to those children that have physical and mental challenges.

We also saw how you reached out to street children, how you were there to take those children right off the street, put your arm around them and teach them there is a better way of life. You did that with the orphans, those that have lost their parents through natural disasters and just natural ways. But you put your arms around those children and made them feel very special.

I was also pleased that we were at a “peace village” in Germany, that I saw those children that had been emotionally and physically damaged by the scourge of war. They were the victims of a war they had nothing to do with, whether it was during the war or in the aftermath when they may have stepped on a land mine that had been left from years in the past.

But I thank you because you did, you heard the cry of those children and you made a difference. You heard the cries of those millions of children that were going to bed hungry every night. You heard the cries of the children that did not know unconditional love. And you gave a new energy to what we are doing as Lions. You truly were a beacon of hope.

And then in the month of October we looked at our campaign for blindness. And we took some new avenues there, too. Yes, the usual things that we do to help our visually impaired, the collection of glasses, cataract surgeries, all these things. But I was excited to see the new things that you were doing. You were working with the equipment that was going on. Low vision. You were giving all sorts of new computers to schools for the visually impaired and blind children. And all of these talking computers and things were making their life more full.

We also saw an increase in your outreach to those that needed guide dogs. Heretofore, we had never been able to give guide dogs to anyone under the age of

18, but now we have two areas that are providing dogs for children between the ages of 13 and 18.

We saw an increase in the number of eyeglasses that were being recycled. We saw more missions that were going out and providing eyeglasses, as spectacles into those Third World countries.

We even saw a new use for white canes. You know, it's really interesting if you talk to a person who's visually impaired. They say when you give them a cane, you give them mobility, but when you give them a guide dog, you reconnect them with humanity.

But now we're finding out that even with a white cane and a dog, we're putting in global positioning systems into the white canes. And now we're seeing our visually impaired people that are walking with a dog in one hand and they've got on their belt a little black container and an earpiece that can tell where to go and how to get there.

We also asked you to reach out and give them a more fulfilled life with the recreational facilities. And many of you know that my involvement with United States Blind Golf Association and I always have to take a little bit of laugh from my friends at home. We live on a golf course, unlike your weekend golfer. But I have the privilege of having been inaugurated in the United States Blind Golf Hall of Fame, not as a golfer but as a coach.

We also have seen the increase in activities like blind bowling. You saw in the video that Judy and I are involved in blind ping pong. That's a little dangerous. But we are seeing people that are getting involved in so many things.

We are seeing even our visually challenged people that are snow skiing. In North Carolina we have the privilege of teaching those blind individuals that come to our camp to water ski. There is a special apparatus that they sit in and they can stand up and water ski. If you don't think that that's not a story to tell, when a visually impaired person goes back and tells their friends, "I went water skiing this year." The reply goes, "Yeah, yeah, yeah," and then we give them a photograph so they can prove they've been water skiing. You've been able to expand the life of those that have the misfortune of having visual impairment and challenges.

But one other thing you did this year that I was so pleased, we included in our Peace Poster contest, an element for the visually challenged young people, same

age limit, but now instead of drawing a photograph or a picture they are writing a story about their vision of peace, what it means to them.

I was asked recently that if Helen Keller came back and visited your convention like she did in 1925, what would she say to you? Would she say, yes, you have fulfilled your mission, or would she shake her finger and say there is so much more to do? And I tell them very proudly, no, our Lions around the world have proven that they truly have answered the call and they are knights of the blind.

In working with United Nations this year as we have for so many years, we wanted to embrace one of the millennium goals, and that's world hunger. So many of our clubs have been reaching out in their communities and they are providing meals on special occasions. But I wanted us to approach that problem of world hunger year round. And I was so excited to hear your reports that were sent in on your activity reports of how you've started food banks, how you provided feeding stations and all these things that have been done.

If you recall last year, I told you of a lady Lion that I met in Malaysia. Her name was Uma and I'm sure she is here today. She had seen this young boy going into a garbage can and retrieving food, and she thought maybe that he was retrieving food for an animal, and he said no, it was for his family. And so her club got together and they were providing food five days a week 52 weeks out of the year. And that story has been retold in country after country that we visited, how that other clubs have seen how one club can make a difference and they've accepted the challenge and said we can make a difference, too. In every community there is someone that needs better nutrition.

We've even found out in some of the schools here in the United States that we have children that are provided one hot meal a day, but they may be from a low-income home and they really don't have the same nutrition over the weekend. And now we are finding clubs that are taking this on as a challenge to provide nutrition for these children over the weekend. It's been very heartwarming to see that.

You've also seen on the short video how that we are getting involved in community gardens, that we're teaching improved farming methods, and even working with the United Nations Agriculture Department to go into countries and teach better farming, how they can have a better crop and even how they can have additional crops to bring income into their community. It's been great to see how you've responded.

And then in April we wanted to turn our focus on our environment, and we asked you to work on environmental programs and ecology. Well, it's been exciting because my club has been involved so much in road-side cleanup, recycling, different things, plastics and things, and as we've traveled I've been amazed at how many of your clubs have used your ingenuity in providing canvas shopping bags for people so that when they go in they are not worried about disposing paper or plastic, but they have a bag, and it has your Lions club on it. What a great way to advertise what we're doing, to let the rest of the world know that we care about our planet.

And then how we've seen the increase in tree planting, the pocket parks, all of these things. Through technology we're looking at the problem of deforestation in so many areas where people are cutting down trees, either for heating, for lighting, for water purification, and now we're getting involved in technology for solar heating, solar lighting and solar purification of water. All of these things are working together to improve our planet.

I think you will agree that these four organized campaigns have really done us well. It's brought attention worldwide to what we do as Lions. I like to say when I'm interviewed and they say, "What do Lions do?" I start off by saying, well, this is not your grandfather's Lions club. And through our organized campaigns we've become much more visible. We're showing that our service is valuable, and it's quite viable to those we serve. And so I thank you for your efforts.

This year we also wanted to start a little bit more real-time tabulation of your service projects, and so we have asked you to go online and record your activities. You even have the ability of supplying a photo of your activities, not just words but actually photographs. We know that we didn't get everything captured, probably only maybe about 40 to 50 percent of the clubs were reporting, but we were quite excited. But through this, more than 1.7 million volunteer service hours were reported. And just in the months of December and January, during our service project to combat world hunger, we know that more than 7 million people were fed. Thank you.

These are some huge numbers. But we know there are many more hours of service, many more people were attended, their needs were met. It seems like just yesterday, back in Sydney, I said that it would really be great to see what we came to Seattle that if each one of us could just do one act of kindness we would say that 1.4 million lives have been changed. And if we did it just once a month, we could say that almost 15 million lives were changed, and we have seen through your

reports that more lives have been changed than we ever thought possible. We're telling a story to the world, and trust me, they are watching. It gives us more reasons to be proud for a Lion, and it gives us more reasons to go out and ask people to join our hands in providing more service.

But one of the things that I've noticed as we've traveled around and we have talked about the immensity of our network and the size of our organization is that we are seeing that our light is shining just like the light of the lighthouse. If you'll notice as it rotates around, the light shines in two directions, and so I've noticed that our focus is becoming in two different directions. Not only are we focusing the light in one direction, because of the humanitarian services we are giving, but we are also challenging our lights in a different direction in new horizons.

I think it was President George Bush that says that volunteering is an act of tremendous, profound effort. It's heroic. Because he said that our efforts of service are so valuable that it doesn't just change the odds, it beats the odds. It gives people a new source of hope.

But as that light shines in another direction, I notice that we are shining in new directions of service, new frontiers. One of those frontiers is disaster relief. We are expanding our service.

We were able to have the very first ever disaster relief summit in Oak Brook in March. And it was amazing, the timing, because we had planned this for many, many months in advance. And I happened to be in New Zealand, and we were there two days after the earthquake in Christchurch. We returned back to the United States, it was almost within a couple of days that this summit took place.

We had all of these people that were coming together and we were talking about how we need to be able to respond quicker, and all the things that we could do, not to duplicate efforts but we could get new partnerships to be much more effective. And while we were talking about that, and we had formed new partnerships, new bonds of cooperation, it was just weeks that that historic tsunami hit northern Japan.

Seems like right after that, even while we were in North Carolina for my board meeting, that the tornadoes ripped through the Midwest and all through the south, and it came within a mile of where we were actually meeting in North Carolina. There's so much that is going on that is affecting our lives that these disasters that are seen to be more common every day. They tell us that last year over 46 million

people worldwide had their lives changed and became refugees because of these disasters. Forty six million people. More than the population of the state of California, USA. And if the experts are right, they are going to get worse. We are going to see more and more disasters.

And sure, we the Lions are providing life-saving needs, we're mobilizing, we've mobilized more than almost 20 million dollars this year in relief, but there's more to do, times are more volatile. And we're finding out as our world shrinks because of instant information, we are beginning to see that there are more and more needs.

And we need to be much more effective. We need to be prepared to respond quicker. We need to pre-position our supplies. We need better organizations. We need to train our volunteers to be able to handle disasters much more quicker. We need to be able to distribute relief much more quicker.

When I was in California when they had that disaster when the gas lines broke up, I was there to give the first recipient of the Lions Recognition Medal for life-saving efforts. I was there and they said would you like to go down and see the site. We couldn't get in, obviously, because it was still marked off with yellow tape, but I was so excited because before any FEMA trailers, before any of the insurance, before Red Cross, before anybody, the Lions there in the California area had already set up feeding stations. The disaster happened before midnight and by seven o'clock in the morning they had already fed almost 300 people.

I am happy to report that because of that disaster summit we have been able to seek new organizations, and some of the partnerships that we have begun to form are working with the United Nations, with the World Food Program. We know that many of our Lions are involved with the refugees. We're working with the United Nations High Commission on Refugees. We're working with the United Children's Fund. We're working with the children infected by HIV Aids in Africa. We're working with the Aga Khan Foundation, one of the world's largest charities.

We're working with planting trees in areas with drought. We're working in all of these areas and even with commercial companies like Proctor and Gamble that are providing us with water purification packets. The Inter-American Development Bank so we can build schools in Haiti. These are just some of the partnerships that we have been able to come together because you the Lions have sent a message to the world that not only do we care but we get involved.

It's because of you that people now are wanting to come and partner with us. We

used to have to go out and ask them and now our phone rings. “Can we partner with you in some of these areas?” So we are excited.

We're also excited that we're beginning to partner now with the Gates Foundation. We had our first partnership with the measles initiative. We're looking forward to further partnerships with the Gates Foundation, which has its headquarters right here in Seattle, and be able to work with the water purification and sanitation problems as well as fighting measles.

These are just some of the exciting things that we've done. In the coming year, as the chairman of your foundation, I want to be able to work with these partnerships and even make them stronger as we begin to reach out through the efforts that you provide us through your generosity and your giving to our foundation that we can meet these needs on these large disasters.

But it's very interesting that as we have traveled the world and we met so many people. We've seen bandages taken off after cataract surgery, we've seen people that have been received prosthetic devices. We've been able to be there and pass out the little tricycles that can be propelled so it gives them ability to maneuver around. It's been the same thing over and over again. The people say, “Thank the Lions.” Tell them how much their efforts have meant to us, and how they've changed my life.

And so we want to be able to give you just a little bit of an idea of how we have responded. I'm going to ask Judy to come forward and be their voice. Judy, please.

### **Judy Scruggs:**

Thank you Sid! Greetings fellow Lions and friends! Sid and I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to be your representative this year. In our many travels we have seen so many special projects that the Lions are doing all over the world.

Wherever we travel, we have the opportunity to meet these people that you have helped through your generous giving, your caring and your special love. These precious people want to thank you, Lions, for what you have done to change their lives. And so, for a moment, I would like to be their voice and tell you “thank you” for each of you who has made this miracle in my life. To those of you.

They tell me, because of you, Lions:

“I now have a pair of glasses that helps me to read, to do needlework, to make money for my family, and most importantly, to see the faces of my children. Because of you, Lions, I have a house for my family to live in and start a new life for us. Because of you, Lions, I am now learning how to work a computer, to make beautiful jewelry and learn a trade to help my family financially. And now, our family will have hope for the future.

“Because of you, Lions, I have a camp where I can spend time with other children who are physically challenged just like me, and we can share our experiences together. Because of you, Lions, after years of being blind I can now see the world and my life has changed forever. And because of you, Lions, I now have clean water that has changed my entire village and is now keeping us from being sick.

“Yes, because of you, Lions, creating miracles every day, I want to thank you for all you have done for me, but also for what you are doing in this world to make it a better place. You truly are a beacon of hope for the entire world to see.”

I thank each of you for you and for your incredible service to others. And so, on behalf of all these people, I want to say thank you, thank you, thank you, you wonderful Lions. Thank you.

### **President Scruggs:**

Now it's my time to say thank you to you, Judy. Not everybody can come to Seattle, and sometimes you doubt it when you hear that we have got 16 grandkids, well here they come.

Judy, you have truly been a voice for those people that we have seen that Lions have made miracles in their lives. But you have been more than that. You've been a companion to me, you've been an ambassador for all the Lions, because you and I know that often times the only face that they see of our organization is when an officer comes to visit and so I think it's appropriate now for me to recognize your service over the last many years and present you with the Ambassador of Good Will.

Thank you for allowing me that opportunity to recognize Judy because she truly has been your ambassador wherever we've gone. Where we have gone many people will tell us, the Lions are just like a Good Samaritan. I'm not sure if everybody here knows the parable of the story of the Good Samaritan, but let me

just share it with you very briefly.

The story of the Good Samaritan: a man traveling to a distant land and he falls among robbers. He is beaten, robbed and left for dead. As he is lying on the streets, people begin to pass by, and they look and observe and move on.

Political leaders walk by and see the individual and shake their head and move on. Religious leaders walk by, say a prayer and move on. And all of these things happen until an individual, who is a Samaritan, came, saw, had compassion and did something about it. He took the individual to a place to be cared for, to have his wounds attended to, paid for the attendants. He said, "When I return, if there's more to be paid, leave the bill to me."

And in relating that story, Dr. Martin Luther King made a different observation. He said so many times we concentrate on what would happen to the victim if the Good Samaritan didn't finally come by. But he says we should think about what happened to those people that saw and did nothing about it, and what would have happened to the Good Samaritan if he had come and did nothing about it.

And I think that in my own evaluation of this parable I begin to see the very essence of what we do as Lions. We come into areas, we hear cries, we see needs, and then we do something about it. And that's the difference. That's the story of the Good Samaritan.

And I think that's the challenge that we have today as we gather each year at the International Convention and we share our successes and talk about the challenges ahead and we learn how we can be much more effective. I think what we have to always remember the challenge to be faithful.

I was interviewed some time ago and I was asked about my work as a Lion. And as you know, those that know me, I love to tell them my story is in my pen. It's written there. And the Lions International? What story does that tell? And I say no, no, that's just the abbreviation. That that L-i-o-n-s spells a word but it means Loving Individuals Offering Needed Service.

You see, that's the story of the Good Samaritan. The others were just passersby, but one individual had passion, a loving individual willing to offer a needed service, not only when it was convenient, but when it was needed. And I think as we go back to our communities and our clubs, and as we think of new ways of serving, I want us to be reminded to be faithful. Other people are watching us. We need to set

an example because if others will follow in our footsteps and need to find us faithful.

Now I'm going to ask Kevin if he would come forward in word and song and remind us why we need to be faithful. Kevin, please.

*Musical performance by Kevin Scruggs*

**President Scruggs:**

Thank you, Kevin. We have that challenge to be faithful.

An American philosopher, inventor and scholar, Benjamin Franklin once said, "If you want to be remembered after you're gone, do something or write something that's worth reading. But if you can't write, then do something worth writing about." Lions, you have done plenty that's been worth writing about. You have written your story on the hearts and the lives of those we have served. And trust me, the whole world is reading your story.

So we all must be reminded, those coming behind us, they follow in our footsteps. They will have also a beacon of hope and will be found faithful in leading the way.

I want to leave you with a little bit of a different ending. I ran across this some time ago, and I think it's sort of appropriate maybe for me. It's a prayer that was attributed to a 17th-century nun, and it goes like this:

"Lord, you know me better than myself, that I am getting older and someday I am going to be old. So, keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from the craving to straighten out everybody's affairs, make me thoughtful but not moody. Make me helpful but not bossy. But Lord, with my vast store of wisdom and knowledge, it's such a pity not for me to use it all. But you know, Lord, in the end, I do want a few friends."

So thank you for letting me serve beside you. Thank you for being my friend. Thank you. Thank you to you! You have made it such a great year!

OK, I do have a presidential blog and it's time for me to make my final entry, so if you would bring out my brand new iPad. If I have trouble, don't worry about it, I've got a bunch of grandkids down here that will help me with this.

All right, let's begin.

*President Scruggs speaks the words he types on an iPad for his final blog entry:*

Time passes... and memories fade... but the miracles... that you have made in the lives... of those we serve... will last for a lifetime.... I thank you for the miracle you have also made in my life.

Thank you for being a beacon of hope! God bless!