

**William Gates Sr.**  
**Co-chair of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation**  
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Good morning, and thank you very much for that nice introduction, Chairperson Wirfs.

So, being here in the key arena, which is the former home of our beloved Seattle Supersonics, I am tempted to ask if there are any Lions here from Oklahoma City. (Cheering) You took away our basketball team. Actually, it's a pleasure to welcome so many visitors to the Pacific Northwest. We may have lost our basketball team, but we feel that we have gained 15,000 new friends.

I watched your parade on Tuesday, and all I can say is "Wow!" Here in this part of the country we're proud of our regional peculiarities. We wear sandals with socks, and we boast about it. We're notoriously passive-aggressive drivers. We yield obsessively to pedestrians and we make no apology for that. We also exhibit some more substantive traits. From our pioneering past, we learn that we need to respect the necessity of courage and the wisdom of cooperation.

Because we all enjoy living in the midst of such natural beauty, we believe we share responsibility for protecting our environment. But standing here in front of thousands of Lions from all over the world, I see very plainly that courage and cooperation and responsibility are not unique to my neck of the woods. You are proof, to Abraham Lincoln's famous phrase, that the better angels of our nature don't reside in a single region, which was precisely his point. These angels do not belong to one nationality or one race or one religion. They bless all of humanity. And as Lions, you stand for what is best in all of us.

More than a million people, organized into 45,000 clubs in more than 200 countries, and you have chosen to serve together. Not even the most dyed-in-the-wool cynic could dismiss what you do. Your significance is captured not merely by *what* you do, but also by *how you do it*. You harness people's service and channel it so it makes the greatest possible difference in our world.

You know, it's hard to have a big impact. Take the example of blindness. What can one person do about that? No matter how much money they have to spend, no matter how much energy they have to give, it's a global problem in need of a large-scale solution, and that's what you Lions provide. You combine millions of acts of service into a whole that is, as the saying goes, greater than the sum of its parts. And look what you have done. You've restored sight for more than 30 million

people.

It's worth pausing for just a moment to reflect on what that marvelous statistic really means. I'm fortunate to have pretty good eyesight, but my hearing is bad. I have no idea what it's like to be blind, but I know how much I rely on a place down the road called the Hearing and Deafness Center to help me manage my hearing problem. If I didn't have the benefit of their services I'm not sure I would be able to work and I wouldn't be able to stay involved in local causes and I probably wouldn't have been able to participate in this event.

For hundreds of millions of people with vision problems around the world, you're the equivalent of the Hearing and Deafness Center. You're the thing, the only thing, warding off the darkness. I want to congratulate you, not just for doing the right thing, but for doing it in a smart, strategic way that indeed changes many, many lives.

One major cause of blindness around the world is measles. As you saw in the video, the Lions recently started working on measles in several countries. I want to congratulate the Lions from Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mali and Nigeria for your absolutely great work. Actually, you just got started and you are already succeeding!

You're making sure that immunization systems are functioning efficiently and then you're mobilizing people in those communities to use those systems to protect their children. I hear that clubs in other countries are learning about your accomplishments and are clamoring to join you in tackling measles. But I ask your indulgence as I talk in a bit of detail about this disease.

We at the Gates Foundation think that the fight against measles is especially important and that the Lions are in a wonderful position to help lead that fight. Measles is one of the great stories in global health. You tend to hear plenty of bad news about what is happening in poor countries. Watching television and reading the papers you can get the idea that the situation is hopeless.

Now, as Lions, you know more than the average citizen in the world about these issues. You know about the recent progress on river blindness and trachoma. You know about it because you are responsible for it. Well, measles is another stunning example of what's possible when we focus on solutions. In the last decade, for example, measles deaths are down by more than 90 percent.

This is the statistic for the continent of Africa: Ten years ago, more than 2,000 children died from the disease every day. Now that number is down to fewer than 500. Cases of measles-related childhood blindness have been simply slashed around the world.

There are two main reasons for the progress we have made. The first is the measles vaccine, and the second is the world's determination to deliver the vaccine to children who need it. At the Gates Foundation, vaccines are a top priority. Bill and Melinda started their foundation because they believe that all lives have equal value. If any child can be saved from disease, then all children should be saved.

Vaccines are the best way to make sure every person has a chance at a healthy and productive life. They are relatively inexpensive, they are relatively easy to deliver, and they are proven to protect children from disease for a lifetime. The measles vaccine is a perfect example. It costs about 25 cents and it confers perfect immunity on almost every child who receives it.

However, it's important to note that progress is not the same as victory. Measles still kills: More than 150,000 children in the most recent year on record, and measles is one of the most contagious viruses in the world. So it will come back with a deadly vengeance if we give it a chance. That's where determination to deliver the vaccine comes in.

One of the challenges in the fight against measles and of immunization in general is that you've got to keep at it. You've got to be relentless, because children who need to be protected from measles, from diphtheria, from rotavirus, from polio, are born every day. You don't vaccinate once, you do it year after year. As long as you do, children are safe, but when you stop, children die.

The history of measles in the United States provides a useful case study. We started vaccinating in earnest in 1966. Within two years, cases had declined from half a million annually to just 22,000. That's how powerful the vaccine can be. But then we let up and cases more than tripled and by 1974 we were down to 22,000 cases for the second time. Then we let up again, and there was a major outbreak in 1977. The need for vigilance just isn't over. Two weeks ago the Center for Disease Control sent out a measles advisory indicating that we've had more cases this year than in any year since 1996.

A colleague of mine at the foundation wrote an article about the American experience with measles. The lesson, he said, was that a constant level of support

was needed to assure measles did not return. I am concerned that the world may not have learned that lesson well enough. After the tremendous reduction in measles over the last decade, funding has started to dwindle.

In 2007 the Global Measles Initiative raised \$150 million. By 2009, it was 50 million. Last year, 35 million. It's no wonder there has been a resurgence of measles in several African countries.

As simple as my colleague said, a constant level of support is required. You can be that support. You've already proven, with years of work on blindness, you can immunize children at Lions health centers. You can advocate for making measles a priority with the influential people you know. You can mobilize your communities and make sure children are taken for all their scheduled vaccinations.

Stopping measles will be a full-time job, and you are a full-service organization. Governments get distracted. Individuals' interest waxes and wanes, but you've been here for just about a century, and you will certainly be around for another century in the future, and if you put yourself in charge of fighting this disease, you simply will succeed.

The Gates Foundation is very proud to have been a partner in your early measles projects. We're excited to continue working together with you to battle this awful disease and to build up immunization for all children.

There's an African proverb we refer to quite often at the foundation: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. With Lions in the lead, there's just no telling how far we will go together.

You know, I really love your motto. It is so elegant in its simplicity: "We Serve." The thing I like about it is the lack of explanation and qualification. You don't say "We serve for reasons X, Y, and Z" or that "We Serve in ways A, B, and C." It's simply, "We Serve." Period. It's just what you do. There's a huge array of important things that need doing, and they don't get done unless people roll up their sleeves and get to work. No more discussion is needed. Tens of thousands of kids will live, not die, when you roll up your sleeves and get to work on measles.

Tens of thousands of kids will live, not die, when you roll up your sleeves and get to work on measles. You are Lions, and "serve" is what you do. Thank you.