



The Tale Twister

Cullman Lions Club

April 29, 2019

Program

Lion Jerry Bonner introduced our speaker, tonight, Alabama Lions Sight Executive Director, Lion Barry Elliot. Lion Barry, also a Past District Governor, noted that before Alabama Lions Sight (ALS) was created, Lions Clubs would provide individual requests for vision help by “passing the hat” or developing a project to help local indigent citizens with vision problems. But, in 1944, several Lions Club members from Birmingham responded to Hellen Keller's call to be “Knights of the Blind.” They put together a plan to help those from the area who could not provide for their own sight needs. From this humble initiative, Alabama Lions Sight (ALS) was born. ALS is unique in that it is an organization in Alabama which provides free eye care to the medically indigent of Alabama. This non-profit organization is dedicated to providing funds for the diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases and defects for Alabama's medically indigent. Its initial budget of less than \$5,000 has grown to more than one million dollars as ALS provides assistance, including eye surgery and hospital medical care, to an estimated 5,000 people annually. More than 400,000 people throughout the State have been served over the years. ALS now ranks as one of our State's leading health agencies. Also, thousands of free vision and glaucoma screenings are conducted in schools and communities throughout the State annually. In the past year ALS has served 144 patients from Cullman, alone, and 568 from it and its surround counties. It has also provided 15,000 vision

screening tests last year, state-wide. He also mentioned ALS's mobile eye clinic which travels mainly to the most indigent areas of the State, offering vision testing for \$20 and glasses for \$40.



President Lion Mike Ponder presents another check from our Club for Alabama Lions Sight to Lion Barry Elliot, Executive Director of ALS. Lion Barry also presented patches for our Lions Club's banner to our Lion President in recognition of our Clubs support to ALS.

ALS receives all of its funding from the Lions Clubs of Alabama, corporations, foundations, and other generous donors in the community. ALS continues to receive the largest percentage of the Cullman Lions Club's charitable contributions each year.

Lion Barry also talked to us about some of the latest political initiatives involving Alabama Lions Sight. Another civic organization in the State already provides vision testing for kindergarten and grades 2nd and 4th through a State Government appropriation. Lion Barry is working with State legislators to provide an appropriation to also cover screening for 6th, 8th, and 10th graders in partnership with Alabama Lions, and to provide glasses for



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them through the ALS eye clinic. Not only that, he is working to get a State Budget line item for vision testing in all school-grades. This vision testing also diagnoses diabetes. The Federal Secretary of Health & Human Resources stated that persons between the ages of 12 to 22 are the least tested, regarding vision. But they are also the ages when vision changes the most. Generally, vision problems for this age group is not detected until they fail the vision test for their drivers' licenses. Significantly, Lion Barry said that the State Dept. Of Public Health is partnering with ALS in getting Federal grants to bring vision care through the Dept of Public Health. Alabama was one of seven States to receive a 6-month pilot grant for this initiative in four counties; if successful it could expand to all counties. ALS has had an illustrious past, something that we Lions can all be proud of. The future is promising even more.

Other Business

Lion Wendell Copeland returned from heart surgery. Lion Ed Henke is having liver testing.

Thank You notes were received from Leader Dogs for the Blind, Youth Advocacy Program and Brook's Place for Kids Expo.

New Lions Club Officers for 2019-2020 were elected tonight. Their terms begin in July. Results are as follows:

- President -- Andrew Manning
- 1st Vice President -- Javon Daniel
- 2nd Vice President -- Austin Monk
- 3rd Vice President -- Milford Parish

- Secretary -- Don Smith
- Treasurer -- Jerry Bonner
- Lion Tamer -- Dave Gratz
- Tail Twister -- David Bussman
- Director 2 Years -- Casey Smith
- Director 2 Years -- Fred Osborne
- Membership Committee --
Lummie Speakman

Upcoming Programs and Events

May 6: Mr. John Williams, President and Founder of "Live that Counts, Inc."



Mr. John Williams

May 13: Families Spring Picnic at Heritage Park, at 5:45 PM with meals served, starting around 6:00 PM. Lion Josh Speakman will be catering from the Brandin Iron.

Tale Twister Input

If you need something special or to report a correction in the *Tale Twister*, see Lions Carey Thompson or Don Smith at the meetings. Lion Carey can be reached at 256-739-0580 (H) or 256-426-3207 (C). Lion Don can be reached at 256-737-7433 (H) or 256-426-7722 (C).