

## 9. ZONE/REGION CHAIRPERSON-FACILITATING YOUR ZONE'S SUCCESS

Presenter: PDG Bryce Day

Past District Governor Bryce Day is a three-time president of the Wellington, Kansas "Noon" Lions Club where he has been a member since 1999. Bryce has served his district and multiple district in numerous leadership roles, including chairing the 2008 state convention and serving as vice-council chair in 2008-09. Among his proudest accomplishments was, as membership chair of home club, increasing the membership from 16 to 55 members. He is a Melvin Jones Fellow. A licensed funeral director and embalmer, he and his wife, Sally, own and operate four funeral homes in south-central Kansas. He serves on the foundation board for the local hospital and advisory board for CornerBank. He is a member of the First United Methodist Church, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign War, and the Wellington Chamber of Commerce and is involved in many humanitarian and community activities.

The Zone and Region chairs are integral parts of the district Lion leadership. These individuals are the links between the district cabinet and the clubs. These people are not only responsible for making sure clubs are successful in their service activities, membership growth and maintenance of healthy clubs, they must also bring to clubs and members important information from the district governor and the international office. To do this, must be knowledgeable about the Lion organization and familiar with the details of their role in the organization. They must be motivators, counselors, effective communicators and problem solvers as well. Personally a Zone Chair must have a positive attitude, enthusiasm, and sincere concern for the position they hold. This presentation will cover the responsibilities of the zone chair, challenges one faces in the position, and other keys to success in the job.

### 14 Responsibilities of the Zone Chair

The responsibilities and duties of the Zone Chair are clearly defined in the Zone Chair Manual and should be covered in the training provided by the district. It is important that the newly-appointed Zone Chair takes advantage of this training, participating fully and asking as many questions as possible. This training is also a great opportunity to get to know the leadership in the district who can be great resources down the road. In addition, there is a wealth of information online including manuals, forms, and training videos and materials.

A member of the district's leadership team, the Zone Chair is the primary link between the District Governor and cabinet and the local clubs. Maintaining good, two-way communication, providing information and support, completing reports, participating in various meetings, and motivating clubs are among the primary responsibilities of the Zone Chair. In addition to serving as part of the district cabinet, the Zone Chair leads the District Governor's Advisory Team, maintains

close communication with clubs and monitors their status and activities, supports new clubs and struggling clubs, encourages club participation at district, multiple district and international events, makes reports to the district cabinet, completes and submits necessary reports, promotes the goals and objectives of the district and serves as a motivational figure to clubs. This wide variety of tasks requires many skills. Zone Chairs must be effective oral and written communicators, capable of leading a meeting, efficient managers of time, be flexible, positive, enthusiastic and knowledgeable of the Lions organization.

During our seminar, we will participate in a variety of activities illustrating the responsibilities of the Zone Chair and focusing on the necessary skills to be effective at this leadership position.

#### Challenges Facing Zone Chairs

With the many roles the Zone Chair plays and the varieties of people and situations they encounter, undoubtedly there will be both expected and unexpected challenges along the way. Being prepared for as many of these scenarios as possible and flexible and knowledgeable enough to deal with the unexpected is crucial. Often the Zone Chair is the first person to whom a club communicates a problem. In addition to listening carefully, withholding immediate judgment and focusing on the problem at hand, the Zone Chair also needs to communicate effectively with the relevant members of the District Cabinet on the issue and know what other people and resources might be available to address the issue. The response of the Zone Chair will immediately impact the overall outcome of the situation. Remaining calm and positive will be key.

Among the issues a Zone Chair might face are conflicts among club members, communication problems, membership drops, status quo and financial suspension issues, and failure to follow the constitution and bylaws. There are many resources available at the district, multiple district and international level to address these issues. In addition, most districts have a wealth of individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced and can support and advise the Zone Chair in the appropriate action. Remember, the Zone Chair's major roles are to motivate, counsel and communicate. They are not expected to automatically be able to fix every problem alone. Calling on the teams and committees they are a part of is crucial.

A Zone Chair who knows expectations, plans and prepares adequately, remains calm and positive and relies on other people and resources will get through any difficult situation effectively.

We will analyze a number of common situations that arise for Zone Chairs and brainstorm potential solutions for a positive outcome. A resource guide will be made available to participants as well.

#### Keys to a Successful Year as Zone Chair

Being successful in any leadership position requires more than simply fulfilling the requirements listed on paper for the job. Some skills can be learned and perfected and some traits are simply part of an individual's personality. In addition to the "job requirements", other keys to success exist which can be useful in any leadership position in the Lions organization.

Effective communication skills are a basic and essential aspect of Lion leadership. Lions in leadership positions are frequently called upon to speak at club meetings, give oral reports, lead flag salutes and prayers, explain ideas, write newsletter articles, reports, letters and emails, and listen critically and openly to reports, presentations and concerns and problems. Not only must one be willing to initiate communication, a Zone Chair must also make sure that what they say and write communicates the desired message as accurately and positively as possible in as professional a manner as possible. It requires fluency of the language, clarity of thoughts and ideas, and accuracy of information. Effective listening means being open to what is really being said-ready listening, as opposed to "already listening"-anticipating what the speaker is saying and formulating a response before the speaker is finished. Really hearing what is being said and withholding a response is difficult at times, but is important to be sure one really understands the message and has a chance to internalize it and form an appropriate response.

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It is important to plan ahead and be aware of which types of communication will be most effective for the Zone Chair and those in the zone and district who will be receiving the communication. Electronic communication is increasingly more important. Whether it is a short email, a newsletter, a blog or website article, it is crucial that the writer knows how to communicate best in that format, being succinct and clear. To be effective, written communication should also be creative and interesting. A Zone Chair who expresses their own style and personality through their communication is more likely to catch the reader's attention repeatedly and engage the reader. In our seminar, we will explore the variety of ways to share important information effectively.

Setting goals for the year as a Zone Chair can make all the difference in not only carrying out the requirements of the job but also really making the year great-above and beyond all expectations. After the Zone Chair training, the ZC should spend some time really thinking about what they have to do in the position and what they would like to accomplish in addition to those basics. Then setting some measurable long-term goals, establishing short-term benchmarks, a reasonable timeline, and a measure for achievement will keep the year focused and moving forward. Goals should be few-focusing on only those things that are really doable and important. They should be things for which the individual feels a passion and has the motivation to accomplish. They do need to be measurable and have

benchmarks and timelines. Writing these on paper and communicating them to others is helpful in following through with the commitments. A format for goal-setting will be presented and we will practice writing goals.

As in many aspects of life, flexibility is very important to effective leadership in Lionism. There are many situations we can anticipate and be prepared for but there are also those inevitable moments that arise for which we have no plan. The best laid plans for a zone meeting can be disrupted by weather, illness, miscommunication or a myriad of other issues. Being called upon to fill in for a speaker at the last minute or present an award is common. Dealing with facility issues, timing problems, emergencies, sudden changes in time, program, activity and personnel are all possible problems. Remaining calm and in control are the first steps to effectively handling the situation. Have a "Plan B" whenever possible, utilize other group or committee members to brainstorm solutions, and most important, maintain sense of humor when appropriate and positive attitude as much as possible.

Any Lion who has participated to any degree at the district or multiple district level has a keen awareness of the importance of recognition in our organization. We often see and hear of the many official awards given to deserving Lions. It is important to remember that we don't have to wait for formal occasions and official awards to communicate to our fellow Lions how valuable they are and how much we appreciate their hard work. Providing sincere and frequent acknowledgement of accomplishments, hard work, dedication and leadership can be just the inspiration and motivation necessary to keep a good member or propel a club to great acts. Be generous with positive, specific and uplifting comments, look for opportunities to publicly acknowledge a dedicated member, write frequent notes and emails of support and praise. Be sure to pass on to the District Governor and his/her cabinet the specific works of great Lions. Often this is the only way those in the district leadership positions will know about what is happening at the club level.

One strength of the LCI office is that they provide wonderful resources for all facets of Lionism and leadership. It is vital to be aware of these resources and how to use them. We will spend some time in our seminar discussing these resources. We want to be sure that everyone goes away feeling comfortable with where to obtain information beyond this presentation and participants know where to get any question answered that they might have down the road.

The Zone Chair position is a vital job with a lot of diverse responsibilities. In our time together in this seminar, we will cover as many of the key elements of the job as possible and provide resources for those items for which there may not be time to discuss. We will actively delve into as many parts of the job as time allows and actively engage in the activities we'll encounter in our year as Zone Chair. Let's make it a GREAT YEAR!!