

Imagine

Branching Out: The Club Branch Program

The history of human progress is the history of exploration and discovery. From Columbus sailing west across the Atlantic to Neil Armstrong's first step on the moon, people have pushed beyond the boundaries of tradition and logic and into new, unexplored territories. Even the highest mountain peaks, thickest jungles and iciest arctic tundra are not strangers to intrepid souls who bring their ideas to these uncharted areas.

Lions, too, are constantly expanding into new terrain. What began as the idea of one man, Melvin Jones, has grown to over 45,000 clubs in 192 countries and geographical areas. Impressive as this expansion has been, there are still places that even Lions have not penetrated, frontiers waiting to be introduced to the level of community service, humanitarian ideals and international spirit of understanding that only Lions clubs can provide.

The latest way to help Lions expand service beyond the boundaries of their current club is the Club Branch Program. Approved by the Board of Directors at its October 1999 meeting in Atlanta, the branch program gives Lions clubs the tools they need to reach into these untapped communities and locations.

What is a Branch?

First of all, it is important to know exactly what a club branch is. A club branch is a small group of people who become members of an existing "parent" Lions club, but who hold meetings and conduct service activities at a location that is separate from the parent club. Branch members are full members of the parent Lions club, with all privileges and responsibilities.

In many communities, it is difficult to reach the 20-member minimum necessary to charter a new club. Club branches can solve this problem. Because branches may be formed with a smaller number of members, they can flourish where chartered clubs cannot be established: small towns, remote rural areas, ethnic neighborhoods, business parks and medical complexes.

These are, of course, just a few examples of communities where Lions service can expand through the formation of branches. Any Lions club may establish a branch in any area of its district not currently served by Lions. A club may form more than one branch; however, the district governor must be notified that each branch is being formed.

"Community... can only flourish with the coming of others from beyond, their unknown and undiscovered brothers."

*—Howard Thurman,
educator and theologian*

Discover

Create

Clubs are encouraged to explore the possibility of branches wherever quality members can be found, members who can introduce Lions clubs to new frontiers of service.

Who's Who in Club Branches

- **Parent Club** This is an existing Lions club that recruits the original branch members and provides support and guidance as needed. All club branch members are considered members of the parent club.
- **Branch Coordinator** As an officer elected from the branch membership, the branch coordinator serves as the leader of the club branch. In addition, he or she serves on the parent club's board of directors.
- **Branch Vice Coordinator** The branch vice coordinator is also elected from the branch membership. He or she serves as administrator, recording minutes for the branch meetings and preparing monthly financial reports for the parent club, among other duties.
- **Branch Liaison** A member of the parent club who acts as the go-between for the parent and branch, the branch liaison serves on the branch's executive committee.
- **Branch Member** As members of a club branch, Lions are active participants in meetings, service activities and fundraising projects. They vote on branch activities and, in some cases, may vote on parent club activities when in attendance.

Starting a Branch

Lions clubs can start a branch by following a few simple steps:

1. **Host an informational meeting** in the proposed branch's service area, after notifying the district governor that a branch is being formed. Invite community leaders, business professionals, educators and anyone else who is interested in joining the club branch. The branch liaison should also attend. This informal gathering can introduce Lions service and discuss possible projects, among other topics. Afterwards, thank participants for their time and invite them to take the next step: attending the organizational meeting.
2. **Conduct an organizational meeting** where potential branch members learn more about the details of Lions membership—club and branch structure, duties of branch officers, dues and any other relevant issues.
3. **Invite them into membership** and officially establish the new club branch.
4. **Elect officers** within the branch. Branch members should elect their own coordinator and vice coordinator. Duties for these officers are described above.

The club branch is now ready to conduct service activities in its own community!

Once established, the club branch reports its service activities and membership changes to the parent club, while the parent club provides guidance and support for the branch. As the branch and parent club settle into these new roles, they are encouraged to hold occasional joint meetings to share information and further promote the spirit of fellowship.

The Right Map

When the call of undiscovered regions reaches the hearts of Lions clubs around the world, all they need is a good map to lead the way. That map is the Branch Builder Kit. Available from International Headquarters, this free kit contains all the materials necessary to create and maintain a successful club branch. It comes complete with all the brochures, manuals and forms needed to create and maintain a successful club branch:

- **Guide to Branch Formation (CB4)** Designed for a parent club that wishes to establish a branch and help it grow.
- **Coordinator's Guide to Branch Management (CB5)** A comprehensive guide for branch leaders, full of leadership techniques and suggestions.
- **Notification of Club Branch (CB1)** Form for notifying International Headquarters of the new branch; used by the parent club.
- **Branch Membership Update (CB2)** An easy-to-use form to report branch members to International Headquarters; used by the parent club.

In addition to these special materials, the Branch Builder Kit includes membership brochures, a powerful tool for recruiting members for the branch; membership applications; the standard form Constitution and By-Laws, to inform branch leaders of the guidelines and policies of Lions Clubs International; and a Club Officers Manual that branch leaders can reference for leadership techniques as the branch grows.

All materials included in the Branch Builder Kit are also available individually. These publications, as well as the Branch Builder Kit itself, can be requested through the New Clubs and Marketing Department. Many are also available on the Lions Clubs International Web site at www.lionsclubs.org. Look in the "Membership Programs" section which can be found under "Other Programs" on the association's home page.

Learn More

For additional information on how your club can be a part of this exciting program, or to request any of the publications listed above, contact the New Clubs and Marketing Department by phone (630) 571-5466, ext. 306; fax to (630) 571-1691; or by e-mail to clubbranch@lionsclubs.org.