



VOLUME 1, ISSUE 7

May, 2026

### **Access changes everything.**

In honor of World Accessibility Day (May 21), we're highlighting how Lions—and partners like you—are helping remove barriers and open doors for communities around the world. This impact happens through connection, collaboration, and a shared belief that everyone deserves a place to belong. You'll see what's possible when that belief turns into action—and how you're already a part of it.

### **In this Issue**

Featured – Breaking Barriers, Building Belonging

Lions on the Forefront of Inclusion and Diversity

Easy Changes Add Up to Big Wins

Featured – Color Blindness: Seeing Beyond Color

Video of the Month

Did you Know???

On the Calendar | Save the Date

Find a Club | Let's Connect

## Breaking Barriers, Building Belonging

*Access is not privilege – it is the foundation of belonging*

In communities around the world, access shapes far more than convenience—it shapes participation. It determines who is able to show up, contribute, and feel a sense of belonging. And too often, that access is uneven.

In honor of World Accessibility Day on May 21st, we're taking a closer look at the barriers that still exist—and the meaningful ways Lions and community partners are working together to remove them. Because when barriers come down, something powerful takes their place: connection, opportunity, and inclusion.

*Behind every statistic is a person navigating a world that wasn't built with them in mind.*

Certain disabilities are easier for us to recognize. We may notice someone using a wheelchair, a walker, or a guide dog, or see signs of a visual or physical impairment. These visible markers can prompt awareness and, at times, accommodation. But they also remind us that access is not just about noticing—it's about responding in ways that create comfort, respect, and true inclusion.

Not every disability can be seen—and that's where awareness becomes even more meaningful. Many individuals navigate challenges that aren't visible on the surface, from hearing loss or chronic conditions, to cognitive or mental health differences. Without obvious cues, these experiences are often overlooked, even though the barriers they create are just as real.

*Barriers don't just block access—  
they quietly decide who gets to participate.*

*Service is how barriers become bridges.*

Lions have countless stories where something as simple as a vision screening for a school-age child becomes a game changer. A child who had been quietly struggling in the classroom suddenly sees the board clearly for the first time—faces come into focus, words become readable, and confidence begins to take root.

For someone facing a barrier, inclusion isn't a bonus—it's everything.

Accessibility is often thought of as something we add after a need is identified—but true inclusion begins much earlier. It's about designing with people in mind from the very beginning, so belonging is part of the foundation.

Partnership is where intention becomes impact.

Not every act of accessibility requires a large project. Sometimes, it's as simple as adding captions to a social media post. For someone who is deaf or hard of hearing, captions can mean the difference between being included or left out of the conversation.

Creating more accessible communities doesn't start with having all the answers—it starts with noticing. One of the most meaningful ways to partner in this work is by helping to identify barriers that exist in everyday spaces.

Lions don't just serve—we strive to create spaces where everyone belongs.

The future of belonging isn't built in a single moment—it's shaped by the choices we make, the barriers we choose to see, and the steps we take together to remove them.

Lions are proud to stand at the intersection of service and possibility—but we don't stand there alone. Real, lasting change happens when people, organizations, and communities come together.

If this resonates with you, we invite you to take the next step with us. Because meaningful change doesn't happen all at once. It happens one barrier—and one partnership—at a time.

*The future of belonging is built by the choices we make today.*

## Lions on the Forefront of Inclusion and Diversity

More than a century ago, a moment of clarity helped define the future of an entire organization.

At the Lions Clubs International Convention in 1925, Helen Keller stood before Lions and issued a challenge—one that would echo across generations. She called on Lions to become **Knights of the Blind** in the crusade against darkness.

It was more than a call to service. It was a call to *inclusion, awareness, and action*. From that moment forward, Lions embraced a mission that reached beyond charity—toward dignity, access, and belonging for those often left unseen. Over the decades, that commitment has taken many forms: vision screenings, eyeglasses recycling, blindness prevention programs, and support for individuals navigating life with visual impairments.

But perhaps the deeper legacy is this:

*Access opens the door—but belonging is what invites someone to stay.*

Lions didn't just respond to a need—they helped reshape how communities think about access and inclusion.

Today, that same spirit lives on through initiatives like the **Helen Keller Challenge 2.0 (2024–2025)**—a renewed call to expand impact and deepen commitment to vision-related service around the world. Far from a singular event, the inclusion and diversity mission lives on in the **Lions For Access** committee, a permanent team dedicated to building on the momentum started with the Helen Keller Challenge.

The challenge is not just about numbers or milestones. It's about continuing to ask:

- ❖ Who is being left out?
- ❖ What barriers still exist?
- ❖ And how can we remove them—together?

Because while progress has been made, the need remains significant. Millions still face preventable vision loss, and many more navigate environments that were not designed with accessibility in mind.

Inclusion is not a single act—it's a series of intentional choices. It's found in the subtle moments where someone is seen, supported, and allowed to participate fully.

Whether it's a child receiving their first pair of glasses, a senior regaining independence, or a community space becoming more accessible, Lions continue to play a role in opening doors that once stood closed.

*Inclusion begins the moment someone is no longer left on the outside looking in.*

And Lions, time and again, have chosen to stand on the side of participation.

The story of Lions is not just one of history—it continues to unfold through partnership, awareness, and action.

Because the future of inclusion isn't built by one organization alone. It's built by communities—by people willing to notice, to care, and to take that next step.

For more than 100 years, Lions have answered that call.

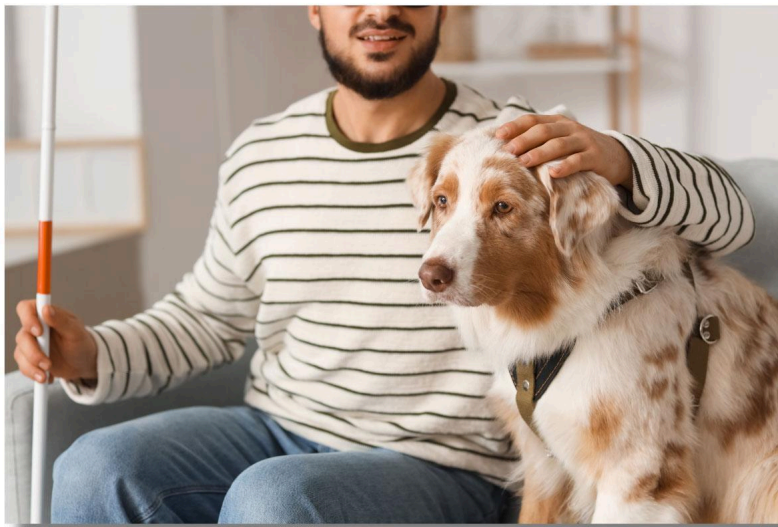
And today, the invitation remains open—to continue building a world where more people can see clearly, participate fully, and belong.

# Easy Changes Add Up to Big Wins

## Accessibility Made Simple

Accessibility doesn't always require large-scale change. Often, it's the small, intentional choices that begin to open doors—creating spaces where more people can participate, contribute, and belong.

Here is a brief overview of things to remember with the disability community, organized by the type of disability someone might have.



Picture of a blind gentleman sitting on a couch holding a white cane in one hand and his other hand on the head of his service animal sitting beside him.

### Simple Wins When Speaking to People with Vision Issues:

- ✓ Introduce yourself and speak directly.
- ✓ Offer assistance – but don't assume.
- ✓ Give clear, specific descriptions (instead of vague references).
- ✓ Respect mobility tools (including guide dogs) and guide techniques.  
*Never grab a person, their cane, or guide dog. Offer your arm if needed.*
- ✓ Describe the environment when helpful.



Two men talking in a coffee shop. The man to the right, in the white pullover has a speech issue and hesitates to speak.

#### Simple Wins When Talking to People with Speech Issues:

- ✓ Give them time to finish - allowing space shows patience and respect.
- ✓ Focus on what they are saying rather than how it is being delivered.
- ✓ Avoid interrupting or finishing sentences.
- ✓ Be open to alternative communication.
- ✓ (Respectfully) Ask for clarification if needed.
- ✓ Don't assume because they are having difficulty with their speech that they don't understand what you are saying or are not aware of what is going on around them.



Picture of two older women talking on a park bench. The woman on the right has a hearing aid showing in her left ear.

### Simple Wins When Talking to People with Hearing Issues:

Sometimes small, cost-free accommodations are all a hearing-impaired person needs. Consider the following:

- ✓ **Face the person** you are speaking with, allowing them to lip-read you or observe your facial cues. Another simple fix is to set the individual closer to the primary person who will be speaking. Make sure the area they will be sitting in has good lighting to aid in lip-reading.
- ✓ **Speak clearly, not louder.** Shouting can distort words and only makes things more difficult. A steady pace and clear enunciation are far more helpful than increased volume.
- ✓ **Reduce background noise** when possible. Use carpets, curtains, and sound-absorbing panels to improve speech clarity.
- ✓ **Use visual support** when helpful. Provide important information in writing via emails, text messages, or notes when verbal communication may not be sufficient.

- ✓ **Confirm understanding.** Ask the person to repeat back what they heard and correct mischaracterizations.
- ✓ Make use of **captions and technology.**
- ✓ Provide **sign language interpreters** and captioning service if needed.



Picture of a young man in a wheelchair at work in a professional office.

When people think about accommodating people with mobility issues, they think about the big-ticket items like installing ramps and wider doorways, or incorporating elevators. But don't overlook the small changes that can have a big impact.

Simple Wins When Helping People with Mobility Issues:

- ✓ **Keep pathways clear and easy to navigate.**  
*Small obstacles can soon turn into big barriers.*
- ✓ **Choose accessible routes and seating.**  
Try to avoid tight spaces and steps that could be an obstacle.
- ✓ **Be mindful of pace and distance.**  
Allow extra time when moving between locations and avoid rushing.
- ✓ **Service animals welcomed.**  
Allow service animals in public areas to assist with disabilities.
- ✓ **Think ahead when planning gatherings or events.**  
*Consider parking, entrances, restrooms, and layout so everyone can fully participate from the start.*

- ✓ **Alternative spaces.** Sometimes the structural changes to a building are impossible or impractical. Think about alternative venues that have such features already baked into their building design. Virtual meetings may also be an option.

#### Etiquette

- ✓ **Be aware of and respect mobility devices as personal space.**  
*Wheelchairs, walkers, and canes are part of someone's independence – avoid leaning on or moving them without permission.*

## Cognitive Disabilities:

Cognitive disabilities are real—albeit invisible - common forms of disability. Roughly 1 out of 10 Americans have been diagnosed with some kind of cognitive disability. That translates to roughly 25-30 million people with challenges related to memory, decision-making, learning/processing information, or concentration. When information is complex, cluttered, or unclear, it can create barriers that aren't immediately visible - but deeply felt.

Simplicity increases access - it doesn't reduce value.

People with cognitive disabilities face several misconceptions that complicate their experience with the outside world. Don't fall for it, the reality is:

- Cognitive disabilities **affect how information** is processed - not a person's intelligence, value, or potential. Like all individuals, they bring unique strengths, perspectives, and creativity.
- Cognitive disabilities are **invisible**. Someone may appear to be processing normally while navigating significant challenges internally.
- Tasks may require different approaches, more time, or clearer structure - not more pressure. What helps one person may not help another - flexibility is key.

Clear, well-structured information benefits everyone. When people know what to expect, it allows them to feel more at ease. The calmer/quieter the environment, the more focused and comfortable everyone feels. Be prepared to offer gentle support when needed, while still allowing independence.

Reducing barriers can take on many forms, including:

- ✓ **Give extra time to process and respond.**  
Allowing them to pause and process shows respect and patience.
- ✓ **Provide information in multiple formats.**  
Reinforce understanding by providing a variety of learning tools including written notes, visuals, and step-by-step instructions.

## ***Feature Spotlight***

### **Color Blindness: Seeing Beyond Color**

Color blindness is real—and it can make it difficult to catch key information. Roughly 1 out of 20 Americans have been diagnosed as color blind. It's much more common in men (1 in 12) than women (1 in 200). While color blindness can develop due to the presence of eye diseases (like macular degeneration), certain medications, and injury to the eye/brain, most color blindness can be attributed to genetics and linked to the male chromosome.

Color blindness isn't about seeing less –

It's about seeing differently

Most color blindness is caused by differences in how the eye's cone cells work. These are the cells in the retina that detect color. We have red, green, and blue-sensitive cones, which, together, allow us to see a full range of color.

Color blindness occurs when one or more of these cones are missing, don't function properly, or respond differently than expected.

Contrary to what the name implies, color blindness does not mean seeing the world in black and white. More often, it means difficulty distinguishing between certain colors—especially reds and greens.

When information relies on color alone, millions of people may miss what others see clearly. A chart, a button, or a message that depends only on color can unintentionally leave someone out of the conversation.

#### What This Means in Practice

Designing with accessibility in mind doesn't require starting over—it simply requires thinking a step ahead.

- Use contrast, not just color to highlight important information
- Add labels, icons, or patterns alongside color cues
- Keep designs clean and readable across different viewing conditions

*Color blindness isn't about seeing less – it's about seeing differently.*

# Make Digital Accessibility a Reality.

## Digital Accessibility Made Simple

**Accessible design isn't about perfection.  
It's about making thoughtful choices that help  
more people engage, understand, and belong.**

Digital accessibility doesn't involve just websites. Many of the best practices between websites and other types of digital information are identical. Whether you are creating a document, slideshow or webpage, the same basic rules apply.

- **Choose Readable Fonts.** Stick with clean, simple fonts and avoid overly decorative styles. Arial and Verdana are two clean fonts that work especially well. Give your text room to breathe by adjusting the line spacing and padding. It should never feel crowded.
- **Use Color Responsibly.** Ensure high color contrast (between your background and text colors), so the text stands out clearly against the background. Don't rely on color alone. Use labels, icons, and patterns so information isn't lost for people with color vision differences.
- **Use Clear, Simple Language.** Plain language benefits everyone. Make your links descriptive. Example: Replace "click here" with "Download the Event Schedule." Clear, familiar language reduces confusion and increases understanding. Avoid jargon and abbreviations when possible.
- **Include Alt Text for Images.** Describe images so screen readers can convey the meaning to the blind or visually-impaired. If an image is purely decorative, indicate so.
- **Add Captions to Videos.** Captions ensure content is accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing – and helpful in sound-off environments. Not all captions are the same, and knowing the differences can help you pick the right kind.

*Closed Captions can be turned on or off by the viewer.*

*Open Captions are always visible and cannot be turned off.*

*Auto-Generated Captions are created by platforms using speech recognition.*

*Subtitles are typically used for translation into another language.*

- **Use Good Structure with Headings.** Using proper heading hierarchy (H1, H2, H3) allows screen readers to navigate content easily. Use short paragraphs and bullet points. Use consistent navigation and layout. Predictable structure helps users orient themselves and reduce cognitive load.
- **Ensure Clickable Elements are Large Enough.** Buttons and links should be easy to tap or click, especially on mobile devices.
- **Label Form Fields Clearly.** Use a clear label on every form field so users understand what information is required. If something goes wrong, explain it in plain language and suggest how to fix it.

## **Kicking it Up a Notch**

- **Provide Transcripts for Audio content.** Automatic transcription tools use AI to use speech recognition to convert spoken audio into text. (Think YouTube, Zoom, Otter.ai). These tools are fast and convenient, but not always 100% accurate. Start with the AI-generated text and edit and refine for the final product.
- **Design for Mobile Phones and Zoom.** Make sure content remains usable when enlarged or viewed on smaller screens. For many people, mobile phones aren't just convenient – it's their primary way of accessing content. The goal is that the text is easy to read, the buttons are large enough to tap, and navigation is simple and predictable. Some best practices include:

*Use a responsive layout (designed to adjust smoothly between screen sizes).*

*Let text and images resize naturally while keeping clarity.*

*Use large, tappable buttons.*

*Test at 200% zoom. If your content still works clearly, you are good.*

- **Test with Accessibility Tools.** Use built-in tools (like screen readers) to see how your content performs. Then test with real users. Feedback from people with different abilities provides insights that no tool can fully replicate.

## **BONUS TIP**

### **Creating Content that is Visually Appealing and Screen Reader Friendly at the Same Time.**

One of the biggest challenges we face when creating content for unsighted and low- or no-vision readers is balancing aesthetics with function. It's something that the Lions for Access team has been tackling, and we've come up with a solution that works in 99% of the cases.

For images that convey real value and key information, use the alt text to describe them. When screen readers encounter that image, they will look for the alt text and read that text instead. For instance, where the sighted person sees this:



the screen reader plays that back as:

*Photo taken from inside a car through the front windshield. A young boy screaming and hanging on to the windshield of a speeding car. In the background is a roadside speedometer indicating the car is racing through a 35 MPH zone, going 99 MPH.*

Other graphics may add style and visual interest but are irrelevant to the topic being discussed. In that case, select the checkbox "Mark as Decorative."

## **Video of the Month**

Change is something we make, not wait for.



For more videos, please visit [Lions International](#) channel on Youtube.

### **Catch Up on the Latest Articles from the Lion Magazine.**

Catch the Latest Issue: [Read it Online](#)

Or Get the App: Prefer your reading on the go? – Great! Lion Magazine is available as an app on the Apple Store and Google Play store. Download it today!

## Did You Know???



Lions Clubs International President  
Dr. Jitsuhiro Yamada  
2015-2016

“

The world is happier,  
healthier and safer  
because of us.

”

### Who is Dr. Jitsuhiro Yamada?

Dr. Jitsuhiro Yamada, of Minokamo, Gifu, Japan, was elected to serve as president of Lions Clubs International at the association's 98th International Convention held in Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, June 26 through 30, 2015. President Yamada was a neurosurgeon by profession.

He applied the same keen eye to Lions. He once said “My philosophy with medicine and Lions is to leave things in a better state than we found them. “A long-time friend once observed “He’s always calm, warm-hearted, focused and ready to make a good decision that has a big impact in a split second. He always has a keen eye for details and always keeps the big picture in mind.” [Source](#)



# On the Calendar

## Save the Date

### UPCOMING PUBLIC EVENTS

05/03	Tri Tip Sandwiches	Ceres	<a href="#">Details</a>
05/03	Feeling Lucky? Fundraiser	Stockton	<a href="#">Details</a>
05/16	Antique/Wooden Boat Show	Bass Lake	<a href="#">Details</a>
05/30	Chicken BBQ Fundraiser	Patterson	<a href="#">Details</a>

### SAVE THE DATE

Stay tuned for additional public events scheduled for the rest of the Lions year.

06/13	All-Star Football	Merced	<a href="#">Details</a>
06/20	Hot Copper Car Show	Lake Tulloch	<a href="#">Details</a>
06/20	All-Star Football	Tracy	<a href="#">Details</a>



## Find A Club

### Near You

Lions International has a Find A Club search function. To access it, use the following link: [Find A Club](#).

Let's  
CONNECT



District Website  
<https://lions4-a1.org>



Lions Clubs Intl  
<https://lionsclubs.org>



District Email Box  
[4a1lions@gmail.com](mailto:4a1lions@gmail.com)



Lion Gail Cates, Editor  
[newsletter@lions4-1.org](mailto:newsletter@lions4-1.org)



@4a1lionsclub



@4a1lions



@4a1lions