



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

July, 2026

As we reflect on the excitement of America's 250th birthday, and the beginning of a new Lions year, we look forward to a year of possibility and impact.

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Featured Story

Uganda Well Project Deepens

A Simple Question Leads to a Shocking Revelation

It was the last call of the year, and the Helen Keller committee was placing a video call to a small Lions club in Uganda. The call was going well when a routine question shifted everything.

“What is the biggest challenge you have with vision in your area?”

“River blindness.” No pause, no hesitation. Two words that changed everything.

The Jinja Lions Club president explained that while they were surrounded by water, the water was unsuitable for drinking, but the government has refused to put in a well.

“How much would a well cost?” It turns out the well would cost \$2850 US to install. Not overwhelming. Turns out that would be the total cost. The land would be donated. Maintenance covered by trained villagers.

“How many villagers would be helped by a single well?”

The local engineers say a single well can serve approximately 1000 people for 20 years (or about \$2.15 per villager). For about the cost of a large iced tea at any fast food restaurant, a well can provide a villager with clean drinking water for two decades. It’s crazy to think about it in those terms.

And because clean drinking water means no necessary trips to the riverbanks, that means no exposure to the insects that cause river blindness.

But the impact doesn’t stop there. Subsequent conversations with the club revealed something even more shocking. The impact goes beyond fresh water and vision.

WHY WELLS MATTER

River blindness spreads through blackflies that breed only in fast-flowing rivers — so exposure is tied directly to how communities get their water. Without a safe local source, families must return to the riverbank again and again, often multiple times a day. That burden falls hardest on women and children.

Infected people can experience intense itching, skin rashes, and depigmentation — a condition sometimes called “leopard skin” — along with skin thickening from chronic inflammation. The most severe consequence is damage to the eyes, which can progress to permanent blindness.

A well breaks this cycle. It doesn’t just deliver clean water — it removes the need to gather at infested riverbanks, cutting off exposure at the source.

270,000 people blinded worldwide. 249 million+ at risk across 28 countries.

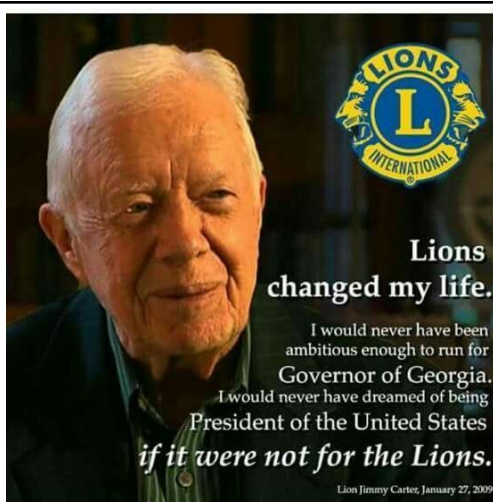
Jinja Lions explained that the responsibility often fell on the children to ride miles down to the river, fill up giant jugs of water (sometimes 2-3 per day) and cycle back. Each container of water is approximately 45 lbs – meaning these little ones would be responsible for carrying 90-135 lbs of water back, and if they spilled any they would be beaten.

The task often falls to the girls, who have an especially dangerous journey. The paths these children take are well known by men who lurk in the bushes and sexually assault the girls before allowing them to pass. If in the process water is lost, they are subject to the same beating as the boys. Why the water was lost is of no consequence.

A well means fresh water, and with it, fresh opportunity. Children could go to school, safe from roadside predators. People wouldn't need to be exposed to disease-carrying flies that alter the lives of their human hosts. But the trickle-down effects don't stop there. With clean, reliable water, villagers could start thinking about growing small food gardens as an additional source of nutrition. If someone could grow enough, they might be able to sell the additional produce as a microbusiness, which could mean more money and opportunities for families.

Now that you Know ...

You can't unknow. The question is "What can I do about it?" One of the easiest and concrete things you can do is share this story. Apple Valley Lions has run with this and has three wells funded, and a tentative grant approval for an additional three wells. That's up to 6000 people's lives changed so far. But, pardon the pun, but that's literally a drop in the bucket. We can't out-solve the need. Share the story, and brainstorm ways to help.



President Jimmy Carter served as a Lion for over 60 years. Starting out in his hometown of Plains, GA, President Carter rose through the ranks from Club President to District Governor and eventually Chair of the Governor's Council of Georgia.

He worked closely with LCIF and the Carter Center to combat preventable/treatable blindness in Africa and Latin America.

In summary, Carter's Lions service spanned more than six decades, making him one of the longest-serving Lions in the organization's history and a model of sustained leadership and compassion.

Featured Story

Move Be-Cause Champaign Launches



Move Be-Cause Champaign evolves in its second year. Last year, the Be-Cause walk started out as a 100-day virtual walk, culminating in an in-person walk at the State Convention. It was a very successful event, and Lions are taking up the charge again.

This year will be an 8-month-long campaign – and any kind of movement counts – not just walking! So you can walk, jog, bike, swim, dance, canoe – or anything else you can think of – to your heart's content and it all counts!

The public is invited to participate. You don't need to be a Lion to raise funds for incredible causes.



We're keeping the very popular in-person walk again at State Convention – but of course we have to turn it up a notch and add a whole class of puppies! Next year, the State Convention will be held at Rohnert Park, just 10 minutes away from the Lion Project for Canine Companions training facility. So the puppies are going to be joining us on our walk!

For more information about the walk, and to show your interest in participating, please visit <https://move-because.everythingCALions.org>

Featured Story

Lions in Sports

With over 1.4 million Lions worldwide, you can imagine they represent every interest under the sun. Lions in Sports are no different.

Lions and All-Star Football



The Lions All-Star Football Game became a District 4-A1 project in 1973, with the first Central California contest played in 1974 at the University of the Pacific Stadium in Stockton. The game is one of the oldest all-star football games in California and one of the few hosting its players and coaches, giving them a chance to build leadership skills and lasting friendships. Players are graduating seniors nominated by their coaches from the eight-county Central California area that makes up District 4-A1, and many who've played have gone on to college and even professional football careers. Beyond showcasing talent, the event is a fundraiser, with Lions selling program ads, T-shirts, and running a food booth supported by corporate sponsors and benefiting local Lions charitable initiatives.

The 2026 game marked the 50th anniversary, and the North swept both contests: the boys tackle football game 34-14 and the first girls flag football game 44-6. [lionsallstarfootball](#)

Boys Tackle Football: North led 34-14, with the North scoring 20 points in the second quarter and 14 in the fourth, while South scored 7 in the second and 7 in the third. Cash Byington scored twice on runs of 6 and 20 yards, Ciah Freeman-White caught a 39-yard touchdown from Mason Eagal, Steven Morfoot added a 10-yard touchdown catch from Eagal, and Eagal capped the scoring with a 4-yard run. North dominated in total yards 362-132, including 273 rushing yards and 89 passing yards, while South managed just 36 rushing yards, 96 passing yards, and turned the ball over twice. Mason Eagal (St. Mary's) took home the Wayne Schneider Game MVP award, with Cash Byington (Sonora) and Raul Diaz (Los Banos) earning offensive and defensive MVP honors respectively. [lionsallstarfootball](#)

Girls Flag Football (inaugural game): North also won big, 44-6, leading 30-6 at halftime before adding 14 more in the second half. Emma Coronado led the North with four passing touchdowns and one rushing score, Alyssa Parker hauled in two touchdown passes, Jessica Alcala and Taylor Rose each added one, and Malia Serna scored on the ground. South's lone touchdown came on a 24-yard pass from Olivia Costa to Avnoor Bains. Coronado (Kimball) was named Elizabeth Gibbs MVP for the game. [lionsallstarfootball](#)

It was a historic night all around — the 50th anniversary of the event was also marked by the debut of girls flag football as an official companion contest.

Lions and Special Olympics



Lions and Special Olympics established a connection and collaboration 25 years ago by having a partnership with the Lions Clubs International Foundation (LCIF) around their Opening Eyes program. The partnership has further shared a mission to promote inclusive health, sports, and community for people with intellectual disabilities.

Since the partnership's inception in 2000, LCIF has provided over 300,000 Special Olympics athletes with quality vision care, and more than 445,000 vision and eye health assessments have been conducted, with over 260,000 prescription eyeglasses provided to athletes at no cost. [Special Olympics](#)

In 2013, the partnership expanded significantly. The two organizations created "Mission: Inclusion," an expansive platform offering additional service areas including family health education, inclusive sports, refugee programming, leadership and national partnership development, and club creation and development. The partnership is now present in over 100 nations, and LCIF has awarded more than US\$28 million to Special Olympics for programs including Opening Eyes, Family Health Forums, Healthy Hearing, Special Smiles, and inclusive sports. [Special Olympics + 2](#)

Lions' members and Leo clubs play a hands-on volunteer role rather than just a funding one. Lions volunteer at Special Olympics events, and Leos — young people committed to serving others — are integral to this partnership, volunteering as partners in Unified Sports as well as supporting events alongside Lions. Local Lions clubs also provide some 15,000 volunteers annually to promote implementation of Special Olympics programming.

Clubs can even become dedicated "Champions" Lions Clubs focused on serving Special Olympics athletes, and individual Lions can invite Special Olympics athletes to become club members themselves. In July 2023, the two organizations signed a historic five-year agreement in Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, renewing their commitment under the Mission: Inclusion banner to sustain these services worldwide.

The 2026 Special Olympics in Minneapolis/Twin Cities

The 2026 Special Olympics USA Games brought the world of inclusive sport to Minneapolis/St Paul from June 20–26. Nearly 3,000 athletes and 1,500 coaches from all 50 states competed across 16 sports, hosted at the University of Minnesota and the National Sports Center in Blaine, with Cornhole and Pickleball making their official USA Games debut. An estimated 75,000 fans turned out to cheer them on, supported by a volunteer corps that topped 10,000 people across the week. [2026 USA Games](#)

Beyond the medals, the Games leaned hard into their mission: free health screenings through the Healthy Athletes program, mental health outreach through Strong Minds, and Fan Zones spread across three sites so communities could join in the celebration. As one reporter put it after the closing days, the week showcased why inclusion matters in sports as much as the competition itself — a fitting note for any Lions Club audience that champions service and community alongside athletes with intellectual disabilities.

Please visit the Lions in Sports page at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/24272142925731565/>

A Final Message



IPDG Matt Stickler
2025-2026

Dear Lions, Leos, and friends of District 4-A1,

As my year as District Governor comes to an end, I have struggled to find the right words for this final message. How do you put an entire year into a letter? *How do you adequately thank the people who stood beside you, encouraged you, challenged you, welcomed you into their clubs, and trusted you to lead?*

The truth is, I do not believe words will ever fully express what this year—and all of you—have meant to me. Serving as your District Governor has been one of the greatest honors of my life. It has also been one of the most humbling experiences I have ever had. This year brought moments of celebration and moments of difficulty. There were successes that filled me with pride and challenges that caused me to reflect deeply on leadership, service, and responsibility. Through all of it, I was reminded again and again that Lions is not about a title, a position, a pin, or a place at the head table.

Lions are about people.

It is about the Lion who arrives early to set up chairs and stays late to clean up. It is about the club secretary who quietly keeps everything moving, the treasurer who carefully watches every dollar, and the club president who keeps encouraging members even when the road becomes difficult.

It is about the Lion who notices when someone has not attended a meeting and takes the time to call. It is about the member who welcomes a guest, mentors a new Lion, serves a meal, comforts a family, supports a child, or steps forward when their community is hurting.

Those moments may never appear in a district report, but they are the true measure of who we are. During this year, Maggie and I had the privilege of traveling throughout our eight counties and visiting many of our clubs.

Everywhere we went, we found people who cared deeply about their communities and about one another.

You welcomed us into your meetings, your celebrations, your service projects, and your traditions. You shared your successes with us, but you also trusted us enough to share your struggles. Those conversations mattered to me more than you may ever know.

I will remember the laughter around dinner tables, the stories of Lions who came before us, the pride members showed when talking about their projects, and the quiet determination of clubs working hard to continue serving.

I will also remember the difficult conversations.

Leadership sometimes requires decisions that not everyone agrees with. There were times when I had to listen to different sides, weigh competing concerns, and make the best decision I could with the information available. I know I did not always get everything right. No leader does. *But I hope you always knew that I cared. I hope you knew that I listened. I hope that even when we disagreed, you felt respected.*

One question has guided me throughout this journey: Did I leave people respected, even when I had to rule against them?

That question will remain with me long after this year ends.

I have always believed that when the team wins, we all win. When the team struggles, the leader must accept responsibility, look honestly at what went wrong, and ask what could have been done differently.

Whatever we accomplished this year was not mine alone. It belonged to every Lion who showed up, every officer who carried responsibility, every committee chair who accepted an assignment, and every member who continued serving, even when no one was watching.

To our Cabinet members, region and zone chairs, committee chairs, club presidents, secretaries, treasurers, and district leaders: thank you for answering the calls, attending the meetings, solving problems, and giving your time to this district. There were long days, difficult conversations,

last-minute changes, and moments when the work seemed overwhelming. Yet you continued to serve. I will always be grateful for your commitment.

To every club in District 4-A1: thank you for allowing me to be part of your story. Our clubs are different in size, history, traditions, and personality, but each one has something valuable to offer. Each club matters, and every Lion has a place in the future of this district.

Our greatest challenge remains membership, but membership is about much more than numbers.

It is about belonging.

People stay where they feel valued. They stay where they are given meaningful work, where their ideas are welcomed, and where someone notices when they are missing. Growing our district will require us not only to invite people into Lions, but also to make room for them once they arrive.

Every new Lion brings a new story, a new idea, and another pair of hands ready to serve. When we welcome new members and help them become leaders, we are not simply growing a club, we are expanding our ability to change lives.

To the Lions who encouraged me personally during this year, thank you. There were times when a kind word, a phone call, or a quiet conversation came at exactly the moment I needed it. Some of you may never know how much those moments helped me keep moving forward.

To Maggie, Glenn, and Kinsey: thank you for sharing this journey with me.



Public service and Lions leadership often ask more from a family than people see. There were meetings, phone calls, miles on the road, evenings away from home, and responsibilities that did not end when the event was over. Maggie, you were not merely beside me during this year—you were part of everything that made it possible.

Your patience, strength, honesty, and love carried me through more moments than I can count. Glenn and Kinsey, thank you for understanding that your dad had made a promise to serve. I know that promise sometimes required sacrifices from you as well. I did not serve this year alone. My family carried this office with me, and I will always be grateful.

To our incoming District Governor and the leaders who will serve in the coming year, I offer my friendship, encouragement, and full support.

Leadership is not something we own. It is something entrusted to us for a season. We carry it for a while, protect it, learn from it, and then place it into the hands of the next leaders. We should do so - not with bitterness or regret, but with hope.

I believe deeply in the future of District 4-A1. I believe in our clubs. I believe in the Lions who continue to serve when the work is difficult. I believe in the leaders who have not yet discovered that they are leaders.

And I believe our best days are still ahead of us—if we are willing to listen to one another, welcome new people, strengthen our clubs, and remember that service is the reason we are here.

The state of our district is not simply found in where we stand today. It is found in what we are willing to build together tomorrow.

As I leave this office, I do so with a heart full of gratitude. I am grateful for the trust you placed in me, for the lessons you taught me, and for the opportunity to serve alongside you. I hope that in some small way I helped make our district stronger. I hope I encouraged someone to keep going. I hope I helped a club believe in its future. Most of all, I hope I served you with honesty, fairness, and respect.

Thank you for allowing me to be your District Governor. Thank you for your friendship, your service, and your faith in what Lions can accomplish. *This year will remain with me for the rest of my life.* I did not serve this year alone. Together, we carried the work forward. Now, with gratitude, humility, and confidence in those who follow, I place it into the hands of the next Lions who will carry it forward. Lead to serve, and serve to lead.

With heartfelt gratitude and yours in Lionism,
Matthew H. Stickler, District Governor,
2025–2026 Lions District 4-A1

Proud Moments

In District 4-A1, we are incredibly proud of the local impact and contributions of our Local Lions Clubs to our communities.

Bass Lake Triathlon. On Saturday, May 30, 2026, Bass Lake Lions held its annual triathlon with over 400 participants. The Bass Lake Lions, along with the Yosemite High Leos, assisted in making this event a huge success. The Lions and Leos cooked waffles and served breakfast for the athletes starting at 6 a.m. and ending just before noon. Many of the athletes commented on how much they enjoyed having breakfast and thanked the Bass Lake Lions and Yosemite High Leos for our service.

Lathrop Lions Make Memorial Day Sweet. Lathrop Lions spent Memorial Day handing out donuts to the wonderful Lathrop community and their Veterans. Lathrop Parks and Recreation put on a wonderful ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Wall. Thank you to all our Veterans for the sacrifice you made for us!

Lathrop Lions Feed the Hungry. On June 19, 2026, Lathrop Lions had the pleasure of providing a catered Panda Express dinner for the North flag football ladies' team, serving 20 players and their coaching staff following their practice.

Mokelumne Hill Lions Host a "Fun Day." On June 6th, the Mokelumne Hill Lions Club hosted 'Fun Day' for the elementary school students who were ending their school year. A great crew of Lions served 170 meals and provided games to all the kids who marched up to the ballfield from the school...and met their new Lion mascot!

Tracy Tank Town Lions Host Female Athletes. June 20, 2026 was the 50th Annual All-Star Football Game at Wayne Schneider Football Stadium at Tracy High School. This was the first time the Girls Flag Football Team was included in the games. During the week before the big game, the Girls Flag Football Team held their daily practice at Kimball High School. Tracy Tank Town Lions provided three of the five after-game meals.

Upcountry 88 Lions celebrated Youth and Education. At Amador High School Gymnasium on May 19th, Chloe received the Joe Bonini Memorial Scholarship. Sophia received the Lion Ed Shaver Memorial Scholarship. Both were \$800 scholarships. Lions Frank and Gail did the presentation.

Video of the Month



Having trouble viewing it? Watch it online at
<https://youtu.be/Y0EVotW6eJk?si=zeWko6qsabiQpG3V>

Did You Know???



IPDG Matt Stickler
District 4-A1
2025-2026

“
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something we own. It is
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”

Who is IPDG Matt Stickler?

Matt Stickler served District 4-A1 as District Governor in the Lions Year 2025-2026.

IPDG Matt is married to Lion Maggie Stickler, and raising two incredible Lions Cubs in their own right, Glenn and Kinsey. The family lives in Madera and are members of the Madera Breakfast Lions.



On the Calendar

Save the Date

UPCOMING PUBLIC EVENTS

07/13	Destruction Derby	Turlock	Details
07/14	Destruction Derby	Turlock	Details
07/18	11 th Annual Block Party	Stockton	Details

SAVE THE DATE

09/12	Autumn Cruise Car Show	Escalon	Stay Tuned
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Find A Club *Near You*

Lions International has a Find A Club search function. To access it, use the following link: [Find A Club](#). Or go to District 4-A1's [Clubs In District](#) webpage.

Let's
CONNECT



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



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