

## THE FAIRPORT LIONS' CLUB

On September 19, 1949, President Albert DiRisio accepted the charter of Fairport's Lions Club, "emblem of unselfish community service," on behalf of its membership. At the ensuing celebration over 200 Lions, their wives, and guests enjoyed a full-course dinner, a baton-twirling demonstration by Fairport High School drum majorettes, singing by the Sodus Central School Girls' Trio and Art Steffen, and after-dinner dancing. The first officers of the club were Albert DiRisio, president; William Brewerton, First Vice-President; Joseph Mamrock, Second Vice-President; Louis DiRisio, Secretary; Robert Smith, Treasurer; and Don Malcolm, Tail Twister.

Albert DiRisio decided to start the club when, after speaking to the Victor Lions' Club about his experiences in World War II, an organizer from the International Lions' Club suggested that he start a club in Fairport. "He told me to get 10 merchants together at \$10 each and he'd be back in touch with me." DiRisio had 20 members when he was subsequently contacted and the group had its first meeting in August of 1949.

The International Association of Lions Clubs began as the dream of Chicago businessman Melvin Jones. He believed that local business clubs should expand their horizons from purely professional concerns to the betterment of their communities and the world at large. Jones' group, the Business Circle of Chicago, agreed. After contacting similar groups around the United States, an organizational meeting was held on June 7, 1917, in Chicago, Illinois. The new group took the name of one of the invited groups, the "Association of Lions Clubs," and a national convention was held in Dallas, Texas, in October of that year. A constitution, by-laws and a code of ethics were approved. Among the objects adopted in those early years was one that read, "No club shall hold out the financial betterment of its members as its object." This call for unselfish service to others remains one of the association's main tenets.

Fairport's newly formed Lions' Club, approximately 50 in number, wasted no time in getting involved in community service projects. From the outset, the Club was instrumental in supporting the Buffalo Eye Bank, the collection of eye glasses for re-use by the needy, and the creation of the Rochester Eye Bank and Research Society. Concern with eye health has been an on-going project for the Club, having been encouraged by Helen Keller to become "knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness."

In other areas of health, the Club donated resuscitators to both the police and fire departments, and was instrumental in the formation and organization of the Perinton Volunteer Ambulance Corps. The Red Cross and Easter Seals receive annual donations as well.

The Lions Club has been involved in youth activities too numerous to list. They have sponsored Scout troops (including a Special Boy Scout troop), Little League and bowling teams; organized bicycle safety campaigns and Christmas parties. They donated basketball courts and a skating rink at Potter Park, tennis courts at Perinton Park, bus shelters, and an electronic scoreboard at Fairport High School. They have given aid to CARE, and the Al Sigl Center, and have underwritten scholarship programs at Fairport High School. One of the Club's major projects was the Lions Den Teen Center, which

opened in 1990. The Lions Club raised over \$175,000 from a variety of local sources, and received grants from the Lions Club International and New York State. In addition they oversaw the construction of the building that sits behind the old carriage house of the Potter Mansion on West Church Street. In recent years the Club has sponsored the creation of a youth division, the Leo Club, which like its parent organization is committed to community service.

For all their many contributions to the community, the Perinton Chamber of Commerce presented the Club with their Community Appreciation Award for 1990. On their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1989, the Town of Perinton also recognized Club for its “strength and commitment to the Fairport-Perinton community.”

The Lions Club continues to be deeply involved in community service, supporting such groups as Mercy Flight, Fairport Baptist Homes, and Ronald McDonald House, as well as continuing its commitment to improved eye sight and youth programs.

Fairport’s Lions Club is part of the Lions Clubs International which has grown to include 1.3 million men and women in approximately 45,000 clubs located in 200 countries and geographic areas. The groups work to improve the environment, build homes for the disabled, support diabetes education, conduct hearing and vision programs, provide services for youth and, through their foundation, provide disaster relief around the world.



The Lions’ Club 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration at Island Valley, November 3, 1973.  
Left to right: Mr. & Mrs. George Aklin, Tom Reynolds, Albert DiRisio, Margaret Reynolds, Mr. & Mrs. Edward Boyce, Mr. & Mrs. William Brewerton, and Mr. & Mrs. Allan G. Stranford