

Hi, This is Marty Van Zandt for community comment.

Boy do we have a great community. I noticed it again the other day as I stood at the entrance to the Grocery Outlet Store ringing a bell for the Salvation Army. People entered and left the store representing all walks of life. Not surprisingly, most were in a giving mood. Even those who looked as if they could use a hand themselves contributed their spare change to help the Salvation Army serve those less fortunate.

I guess that is why I am a Lion. I really enjoy helping such a fine organization as the Salvation Army especially at this time of Christmas giving. The Lions' motto is "We Serve" and there is no better way to serve than to be part of an organization of volunteers working together for the common good.

The Eureka Host Lions Club has been in existence for almost 85 years. It is currently one of seven Lions Clubs in Humboldt County and one of 59 clubs on the north coast stretching from Sausalito to Trinidad.

The primary focus of Lions Clubs is to provide eye care for those who cannot afford it. We've been doing so worldwide since 1925. It was at a Lions International Convention that year when Helen Keller, who was both deaf and blind, challenged us to become knights of the blind. And we have been ever since.

Here in Eureka the Host Club helps an average of 200 individuals a year. We cover partial or complete costs for eye exams, eye glasses and other paraphernalia intended to help the sight impaired. In our 85 years of existence, we have collected over half a million pairs of used eye glasses. These are

refurbished and graded and provided to teams of Lions and Ophthalmologists who take them to under developed countries around the world to provide free eye care to those who would not get this service any other way. Here in Humboldt County we've combined forces with other Lions Clubs to screen Veterans for glaucoma at the annual Veteran's Stand-Down. We also are supporters of the North Coast Lions Eye Foundation which provides travel support for those who need the extensive eye care only available for free for those who can't afford it at the Lions Eye Foundation Hospital In San Francisco.

The Club also provides money and labor in support of the Reading Service of the Redwoods. The Reading Service reads the local news from local newspapers over a special radio frequency for those who cannot see well enough to read on their own.

In our history the Host Lions have provided more than eye care. Our projects have ranged from helping youth sports teams to building community facilities like the John Ryan Youth Center. And we have fun doing it.

We've done much in the past but we are always looking for that new, unmet community need that we might address. If you have an idea where the Lions might help, call me at 845-2023 or join us at one of our lunch meetings on the second or fourth Thursday of the month at Babes Pizza in Cutten to tell us about it. If you are civic minded and looking for the satisfaction one gets from helping others, consider becoming a Lion or joining one of the other service clubs in the area. Our community deserves the best we can give it. Why not give the gift of service, volunteer yourself.

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