

History of Multiple District 4 California Lions

In the Beginning...

Lionism in what is now known as Multiple District Four had its beginning in Oakland with the organization on February 27, 1917, of the first Lions Club on the west coast. It was not until nearly four months later on June 7 that the International Association of Lions Clubs was organized at the Hotel LaSalle in Chicago by Melvin Jones. The first president of that first Lions Club in California was Jesse Robinson, destined in 1919 to become the president of Lions Clubs International.

California and the states adjoining it formed what was then known as the First District. That district was of tremendous size, extending from the Mexican border to the Canadian line and from the Pacific Ocean to the Utah state line. It embraced California, Oregon, Washington and Nevada.

On September 8, 1918, the second club became part of the First District -- the Lions Club of Los Angeles was admitted to International with 100 charter members. The third club was Berkeley organized on June 14, 1919 with a charter membership of 65.

By the time of the International convention in Denver in 1920 there were nine Lions Clubs in the First District. The additions were: Sacramento, San Francisco, San Jose, Stockton, Fresno and Pasadena. The First District convention was held at Oakland on June 7, 1920.

In 1921 the First District was divided. Oregon and Washington became District 19 and the new District 4 consisted of California, Nevada and Hawaii. The first club in Nevada was organized between the 1920 and 1921 district conventions.

In 1924 Nevada had three Lions Clubs and the first "Deputy District Governor" was appointed and given sole charge of Lions Clubs in that state.

In 1925, at the eighth annual International Convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, an address by Miss Helen Keller changed the direction of the growing International Association of Lions. Miss Keller stood on the stage of an auditorium filled with Lions and in a ringing voice, unaided by electronic gadgets, she challenged her audience to help the world conquer her own affliction -- blindness. Touched by her humanitarian appeal, the Lions promptly made her an Honorary Member, the only woman so honored in the history of the all-male association.

The fifth annual convention of District 4 (the seventh convention for Lions in California) was scheduled for San Jose in 1926. The leadership voted to change the location to San Francisco so it could be held in conjunction with the International Convention there that year. The highlight of that convention was when 45 of the 46 members of the Covina Lions Clubs registered and attended. At that same convention, the delegates endorsed the Junior

Lions Club movement, the forerunner of the Leos Clubs. By the 1917 convention, ten Junior Lions Clubs had been formed in California.

The First Council

In 1929 the District Council was formed to run the business of the Fourth District. The members of the District Council were elected by the delegates. This same year, Ray I. Riley of Sacramento became International President and Dr. Billy Wells of Riverside became Chairman of the International Board of Directors.

In 1930, John R. Brokenshire, the first District Secretary, was hired. The district office was located in Oakland.

The 1932 district convention was held in Los Angeles on July 18 and 19 just prior to the International Convention in Los Angeles. That same year, District Four was divided into eight "zones".

On August 8, 1936, the Board of Directors of Lions Clubs International separated the Lions Clubs of Hawaii from the Fourth District making them into a separate district with its own District Governor and organization, and giving that district the number 30. Since that date, the Fourth District has been comprised of the Lions Clubs of California and Nevada. In the course of history, six Lions from what is now known as Multiple District Four have served as Presidents of Lions Clubs International and another fourteen have served as International Directors.

Multiple District Four

In 1937, in a vote of the delegates by 169 to 35, the Multiple District Governors Plan was adopted which created Multiple District Four consisting of five District Governors with equal authority over five separate areas to be designated as Four-A, Four-B, Four-C, Four-D, and Four-E. The new District Governors were: Thomas Maul, Placerville, Don M. Leidig, Hayward, Fred W. Smith, Ventura, B.K. Richardson, Inglewood and Roy O. Day, Pomona. Don M. Leidig was selected as the first Chairman of the Council of Governors. That same year, Reg Harris was hired as the District Secretary.

These five new districts were quite large in size. District 4-C ran from Stockton down to the upper end of the San Joaquin Valley and included the coast area from Paso Robles through Oxnard. Governor Fred Smith wanted to do something in his district that would pull all the diverse clubs together. One of his Deputy District Governors, Frank Colston, suggested a Student Speakers Contest for high school students. The idea was approved by the district cabinet and the contest successfully run in District 4-C that year.

The following year a proposal was made to the Council of Governors that the speech contest become a project for all of District 4. The proposal was adopted and 1938 became the first year the Student Speaker Contest was held throughout California and Nevada. It

still remains as one of the unique projects supported by the Lions of MD-4 with approximately 750 clubs annually participating. Lionism in Nevada had its biggest jump in 1938-39. Under the leadership of District Governor Joyn Bernard Foy of Reno, District 4-A gained 369 new members and 11 new clubs for a total of 1,677 members in 46 clubs.

In 1938 Walter F. Dexter of Sacramento became president of Lions Clubs International.

In 1939 the delegates at the convention held in Long Beach voted to adopt the song "God Bless America" as the official song of the Lions of California and Nevada. At that same convention, Nevada was re-designated as District 4-N and Multiple District Four had six districts.

In 1945 the district office was moved to the Granada Building in downtown Santa Barbara. In 1947 Fred W. Smith of Ventura became International President.

MD4 Grows

In 1949 District 4-C was divided and became Districts 4-C1, 4-C2, and 4-C3, increasing to eight the number of districts in MD-4. In 1950 Districts 4-B, 4-D, and 4-E were subdivided into 4-B1 and B2, 4-D1 and D2 and 4-E1 and E2 and MD-4 had 11 Districts. R.C. Harris of Santa Barbara became the District Secretary. The MD-4 office was located in the Granada Building in the business district of Santa Barbara

In 1953 Lyman Theal was hired as the MD-4 Secretary upon Reg Harris' retirement.

In 1955 a small parcel of property located at 129 Los Aguajes Avenue in Santa Barbara was deeded to Multiple District Four by Ivy M and Francas E. Lyon at a cost of \$22,000. Cost of the land was \$5,000 and the 1,100 sq.ft. building was \$17,000. Title Insurance was 4,504.47 for a total of \$26,504.47. This was dedicated as the new MD4 office and moved from the Granada Building. The MD4 office still occupies this site today.

On July 1, 1957, Multiple District Four was divided into 12 districts and the Council of Governors chose to redesignate the districts with those in the north known as the "C" districts, those in the middle of the state known as the "A" districts and the southern districts known as the "L" districts, following the then abbreviation for the State of California: CAL. Nevada remained as the "N" district.

Rapid growth of Lionism during the next decade caused the creation of a number of new districts in the Multiple. In 1960 the 13th district was added to the multiple and in 1962, two more districts were added bringing the total to 15. In 1964 the 16th district was added.

We Serve

In 1960, the Student Speaker Foundation was organized by District Governor Don Snyder, District 4-A2, Past International President Fred Smith and International Director Dwight

Stanford. The purpose of the foundation was to support the Student Speaker Contest by awarding scholarships to the district, area and MD-4 winners. Up to this point, the contest was solely supported by the MD-4 budget. The first cash for the foundation came from the profits of the Lions' Goods Store at the MD-4 convention in Apple Valley in 1962. Gradually the foundation increased its assets, created a fellowship program and today provides \$100,000 in scholarships to sixteen talented high school students.

In 1961, another unique program was created in MD-4, the Youth Exchange Program, to foster and promote better understanding and friendship among the young people of the world. The first exchange of students took place between California-Nevada and Japan, District 302 in 1962. In 1965 the Youth Exchange Committee was added as one of the MD-4 Standing Committees. The committee was changed to an Other Required Committee in 2004 to better suit the committee's needs. The program has expanded and now includes exchanges with Lions' Districts in Australia, New Zealand, Europe, South Africa and South America.

Lyman Theal retired as Secretary in 1966 and was replaced by Gene Johnson.

In 1975, Harry J. Aslan of Kingsburg became the fifth International President from Multiple District Four.

In 1976, Eddie Thompson replaced Gene Johnson as the District Secretary.

In 1980 the most recent new district was created when 4-C2 was divided into 4-C2 and 4-C7 giving the Multiple District 17 districts with 893 clubs and 34,242 members.

In 1990, Dianne Howe became the first woman to hold the post of District Secretary. The title of the position was changed in 1992 to District Administrator.

In 1991, Donald E. Banker of Rolling Hills became Multiple District Four's sixth International President.

In 1998, due to declining membership, district 4-C2 and 4-C7 merged to create one district, 4-C2. Multiple District Four now has sixteen sub-districts.

March 1, 1999, Vicky Soderman was hired as the office Secretary.

In July, 2002 at the Osaka international convention, Kay K. Fukushima of Sacramento was elected President of the Association. He is the seventh Lion from MD-4 to hold this high office.

In October, 2004 Vicky Soderman became the MD4 Administrator when Dianne Howe retired, and on December 6, 2004, Tiana Gia Cara of Santa Barbara was hired as the replacement Secretary.

In July, 2005 Sue Olin was the first woman to ever be elected to the position of Council Chairperson in MD-4 (2005-2006). Of course her husband, Bob, was the first male spouse of a Council Chairperson in MD-4.

On July 5, 2006, District 4-N (Nevada) officially separated from Multiple District 4 and became District 46. MD4 remains with 15 sub-districts.

In October 2006 Vicky Soderman left as MD4 Administrator. Tiana Cara was re-designated as the Office Manager.

There are currently over 790 Lions Clubs throughout the California Multiple with a membership of approximately 23,429 Lions.

In 2010 Tiana Cara left as MD4 Administrator and Cass Cara began her tenure as administrator.