

WisconsinLions



WHERE THERE'S A NEED, THERE'S A LION **FEBRUARY 2019** wisconsinlions.org



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MD27 State Convention





Welcome Kettle Moraine Equine Lions Club

On Saturday, December 15th, with representatives from Clubs across 27-A1 and Multiple District 27, Wisconsin welcomed the start of a new Lions Club: the Kettle Moraine Equine Lions Club (KMELC). The evening featured Lion Clarence Harris with the keynote address, who got us on our feet and reminded us of the beauty of diversity; the presentation included the stories by a young man, the mom of a high school girl and by a veteran, who have all been positively impacted through the equestrian therapy program that KMELC will support. The highlight of the evening was, of course, the induction of 17 new members and affirmation of membership by the five originating branch members by MD27 Council Chairperson Jodi Burmester. The Club's sponsor, Hales Corners Lions Club, by President Penny and 2nd Vice District Governor Lion Don Drew, presented the Club's new bell and gavel, and many Clubs were on hand to welcome the new Club. District Governor Sharon Eberhardt also read a congratulatory letter from International President Gudrun.

Launched in August 2017, the LCI Specialty Club program was designed to create clubs in which members share a common interest or passion, allowing them to connect with one another on a deeper level.

For example, through a shared hobby, profession or ethnicity. Forming specialty clubs allows groups of people around the world to turn their passions into rewarding service projects that directly benefit their communities. For more information about specialty clubs, check out LCI's youtube video: <https://youtu.be/afJjZUbpAco>

The KMELC are a group of people passionate about the positive impact of equestrian therapy for children and adults. They have a vision and are excited for the opportunity to share that with others and with our Lions. To better understand this vision, read on for the very personal story of the beginnings of KMELC.

Victor & the Kettle Moraine Equine Lions Club

by KMELC Lion Diane Besson

I first saw Victor in April 2018 at a Farm in Muskego, Wisconsin. I had joined a CSA and had

gone to pick up my share of eggs. There was Victor and a horse named Max who shared a paddock with a fabric quonset hut for shelter. Vic was a total mess. I couldn't believe he had survived our last Winter living in that hut. I asked the farmer what was wrong with him and I was told 'that's what an old horse looks like'. I was shocked and not convinced. I continued to see Victor weekly and began to research horse care and observe him. I tried to get Victor out of my head. After several weeks of watching Victor's continuing deterioration, I decided to save him. It was apparent to me, but not his owners, that he was malnourished and would not survive another Wisconsin Winter. Other people must have been commenting on his deplorable physical state because the farmer had placed a sign outside stating 'this is what an old horse looks like'.

I went to my friend and fellow Lion Robin Salerno for help. She let me groom her horses and to begin to understand horse care. I knew I was going to rescue Victor and I had better learn how to care for him. I had never owned a horse or been around them much besides a few trail rides. I needed to find a place to

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New Equine Club cont. from p. 1

board Victor. Lion Robin suggested we drive one mile up the road to Jericho Creek Farm to meet Wendy Konichek. The property had a calm, quiet energy to it and I instantly liked Wendy. She took one look at the picture I had taken of Victor and said, "You get him here and I will make room for him!" Wendy had no clue who I was or what I was like but it didn't matter. She saw the care and help Victor would need and didn't hesitate to get involved.

I then approached my husband, Lion Dan Besson, and asked for this help. I needed his political expertise and negotiation skills to convince the farmer to give us Victor. Lion Dan went to talk to the farmer and took along the brochures describing Jericho Creek Farm and Horse Power Healing Center (HPHC). I truly believe that seeing the brochures and the wonderful place Victor would be going to helped convince the farmer and his wife to give me Victor. Granted they weren't happy, but I think they knew I was an answer to their problem. They either couldn't afford to take care of Victor and/or were ignorant of his needs. I think both.

My life changed on July 25, 2018. Lion Dan, Lion Robin and Lion Jim went to the Farm and put Victor on Lion Robin's horse trailer. I was not allowed back on that farm property, so I met everyone at Jericho Creek Farm. Lion Robin told me that when they pulled up to Jericho Creek Farm all the 30 plus horses whinnied in greeting to my Victor! There is video of Victor on Facebook being off-loaded from the trailer. I created a persona for Victor and he posts to Facebook (as Victor Besson) where people can follow his journey to wellness. I would go out to the farm 3-4 days a week to see Victor and help with barn chores. Eventually, I proved able to help to let out some of the 30 horses on the property. I learned more about HPHC and started to volunteer assisting with the veterans Thursday nights and with the special need riders, whenever Wendy asked/needed my help. Lion Dan started to tag along and see the amazing program that HPHC was and formed an idea. Wendy had been trying for quite a while to raise funds and expand the program. An indoor arena and building are crucial to keep the programs running all year long

and expand them while not being weather dependent.

Lion Dan Besson was instrumental in the creation of the KMELC. He talked a few times to DG Lion Sharon Eberhardt about branch clubs. At our yearly Hales Corners Lions picnic in August, the conversation between Lion Dan and Lion Sharon grew to include myself and Lion Robin. Lion Sharon talked about the formation of a speciality branch club with the sole focus of fundraising to build the year round facility that Wendy had been working on to bring to life. We have our Lions Foundation Camp up north, but nothing down here in Southeast Wisconsin. A meeting was set up with DG Lion Sharon, myself, Lion Dan and the original five Charter members: Lion Robin, Wendy, Tracy, Nancy and Suzi. An explanation of Lions, the Branch Club and possibilities were discussed. On September 25, 2018, (two months after Victor came to Jericho Creek Farm) the Branch Club became official and Lions Wendy, Tracy, Nancy and Suzi were inducted, along with Lion Robin and became the KMELC. I was asked to be the liaison between the parent club-Hales Corners and the KMELC.

The Lions name holds credibility. The strength and name recognition of Lions is already helping with networking and potential fundraising while approaching businesses for help and donations.

In my mind, Lion Wendy was already a Lion. She saw a need and stepped forward to serve and help. That included horse care and rehabilitation but it also included the needs of our fellow men and women, those veterans who have served this country and those men, women and children born with special needs. The programs at HPHC help these individuals and families. I watch as a Mom or Dad are able to let down their guard while their child is in Lion Wendy's care having their therapeutic riding session. I see the joy in the faces of all the riders while enjoying their independence and freedom, sitting atop their horse. I look and I see the possibilities. This is when I truly became a Lion... I hope you will look and you will see the possibilities this facility, its programs, volunteers along with Lion Wendy's dreams can achieve.



Wisconsin Lions Do Mission In Haiti

by PCC Bill Taubman, Wisconsin Lions Mission Chair

A small group of Wisconsin Lions Missions (WLM) members returned recently from Haiti where they gave eye exams to nearly 1,000 people and fitted about 300 with eyeglasses. The eyeglass mission was done in conjunction with a medical mission organized by Change A Persons World, a faith based non-profit located in northwest Wisconsin and was led by Shell Lake Lion Rudy Kessler, who leads all of WLM's vision efforts in Haiti.

The group of 14 traveled in an old school bus that occasionally had to be pushed up steep hills and out of tough spots. Two armed guards traveled with the group at all times, but there never were any signs of danger. Four people worked on the eyeglass mission part and the other 10 people worked on the medical mission. While vision problems were abundant, significant medical needs were even more so, and critical.

The volunteers were able to stay in a mission house operated by a church and traveled more than an hour each day to the work site. The first two days the campaign was held in a small rural church constructed of cement/mud blocks, a tin roof and a dirt floor. The second two days required hiking about ¾ of a mile into a village and again operated in a small, but nicer church. The final day the volunteers worked in a church right next to the mission house they stayed in. In each location, the church was divided up into small exam rooms by stringing rope and hanging tarps over them. Crude but functional.

Doing mission work in Haiti may not be for everyone. The weather was in the low 90's every day with very high humidity and there is no way to escape it, even for a few minutes. The travel is difficult and dangerous. The housing is marginal with bunk beds, cold (if any) showers and intermittent electricity. The cooks did a great job with what they had to work with and thankfully, no one got sick. After seven days of these conditions the volunteers returned home to the comforts they are accustomed to. The Haitian people, who live every day in far worse conditions than the volunteers experienced, continue living their poverty stricken lives with little or no hope for change.

Did the volunteers make a difference? Yes. Was it worth the hardships? Very much so. 'We Served' and were richly rewarded with heart warming satisfaction. Will WLM go again? Of course. 'Where there's a need, there's a Lion. No one said serving would be easy, but that doesn't mean it isn't fun!