

To all members of District 45:

I am sure that all of us have read with increasing concern and horror about the epidemic of drug related deaths among our Youth in Vermont. It seems as though we are losing a generation to this horrific scourge in our communities. I am sure that everyone knows of some family that has been affected by drug addictions, alcohol and the sadness of the loss of our loved ones and all the potential of our up and coming generations.

Feeling helpless is not an emotion that we as Lions dwell on. WE SERVE. We, as Lions, will always look for a way to support our neighbors, if it is to visit someone who is sick with a bowl of that home made soup, donate to a food bank to fight hunger, help with vision screening, or raise money for a natural disaster like Irene. Well, I feel that we are in the middle of an UN - NATURAL disaster at the moment and our children and youth are in the greatest danger we have ever seen.

We are not helpless if we can support our children and youth – giving them skills to make positive decisions, giving them a positive view of who they are and what they can do and link them to their communities by service.

At our August Board Meeting, we were fortunate enough to have Kelly Anderson speak to us about the Lions Quest Program.

Lions Quest is a school – based life skills program for children ages 5 – 19. In the US education system, this encompasses children from Kindergarten to the 12th Grade. Originally Lions partnered with Quest International to nurture youth in 1984. It became part of LCIF in 2002 to increase the program's reach and to offer greater support and visibility for the Lions who work with their local schools and communities on the program. Over 13 million youth have taken part in a Lions Quest classroom. The program has received high ratings from government agencies and educational groups. It has been implemented in more than 90 countries and program materials have been translated into nearly 40 languages.

The Lions Quest programs bring parents, educators, and community leaders together to teach children important life skills within a caring and consistent environment. This includes developing skills needed for self-discipline, responsibility, good judgment, conflict resolution, and the ability to get along with others. As a curriculum-based program, Lions Quest provides detailed lesson plans and classroom materials. All lessons are designed to complement the standard curriculum, offering a variety of ways to teach and reinforce social and academic skills. Research shows that students' academic achievement increases with the implementation of a social and emotional learning curriculum. Lions Quest also emphasizes service learning; students learn important leadership skills by organizing and carrying out school and community service projects. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, students who are involved in helping out in the community are happier at home, less likely to use alcohol or other drugs, and more successful in, and committed to school.

To enable this program to take place in your community, LCIF and the Lions Quest Team are prepared to offer grants for training and materials. This is a start, but the core of success is building partnership between your Lions Club and other community groups (e.g. police, health, education, colleges, and the business community).

Please consider the adoption of this service project in your community and think about supporting the “Seed Corn” of our future – our children.

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