

District 10 Lions News

March, 2026

March Madness Membership Edition



Lion Bob Block, our Area E leader and his team, have patterned a membership challenge after the NCAA college basketball tournament. Lions created a page in their playbook – a **MARCH Membership MADNESS challenge**. For more information, see the flyer and letter at the end of this newsletter!

In this edition you will catch a bad case of spring fever from Lion Steve and his Gwinn Food Systems update. Find a resource list of electronics recycling centers in your neighborhood. Create a club service recycling project for April's Environment week! Learn about our Childhood Cancer Bruce LaBelle Memorial Scholarship, Meet our new Leader Dog representative, enjoy the smiling faces of childhood cancer warriors and their families as they take a winter horse-drawn sleigh ride, and celebrate Lion Stephanie's invitation to speak at Lions Day at the United nations in MYC. Strengthen your club by getting ideas of how to engage and retain members, and don't miss Lion Colleen's personal invitation to attend our upcoming district convention in "From the Desk of the District Governor."

Let's work together to keep District 10 strong! We hope to see you at our upcoming convention May 1-3 at the Island Resort & Casino! Your club secretary has been sent the registration materials, or you can find forms on district10lions.org.

March Madness . . . begins!



It's been a remarkable UP start to 2026 with a wobbly polar vortex that is weak and can't hold back the arctic blasts we've been getting. But . . . that doesn't stop the pursuit of seed selection, planning gardens for new crops, laying out the gardens, planning to provide sufficient space for cross-pollination issues and studying companion planting. And, having a greenhouse to sit in when it's 4 outside and 70 inside (yes, I'm serious!) allows for a moment of joy, relaxation and deep breathing, taking in that lovely moment inside before going back outside to . . . snow!

How do we (Gwinn Food System) plan and include you / others to prepare for the 2026 season? We run workshops! Please know, these are for Lions too! FREE*!



March 14 – Seed Swap. Seed savers – we will host a seed swap for any who bring seeds. This is about acquiring seed varieties you may not have tried before. Ask the seed providers at the swap, they usually have a lot of information on seed varieties they bring. *No seeds to swap? We will provide seed packets at the end of the swap to those who didn't have seeds to swap.* **Location: Gwinn Community Church, 85 N. Pine St., 11am**

March 31 – Gwinn Seed Library (Forsyth Township Public Library) will be open and available for seed packets!



April 18 – Grafting Tomatoes. A hands-on workshop demonstrating the techniques for using strong root stock to grow better tomatoes and how to combine cherry tomatoes on a single plant. Materials and plants provided. A materials donation is suggested. Workshop host – Grace Alto-Rosenbaum. **Location: Gwinn Community Church, 85 N. Pine St., 11am**

May 30 – Plant Swap. The usual and unusual swapping of plants between growers. There may be some very interesting varieties of plants this year for you to swap. Swap begins at 1030 for those who brought plants to swap. For those who didn't bring plants, come at 1130. There will be plants available. Please do not come before 1130, you will be turned away. **Location: Gwinn Community Church, 85 N. Pine St., 11am**

*The workshops are open to all and free except for a recommended donation for the materials you'll be given at the **Tomato workshop**. Anyone can attend our workshops! *Lions, this is a great opportunity to take back some information (we always have handouts) to your club to help to start the conversation on community gardens! And, just for Lions! How can we help you / your club learn more about setting up, financing, managing gardens for your community?*

What is March for us? We start up to 7000 trayed seeds in two greenhouses and as soon as the ground can be worked, add a few more thousand seeds into the ground directly. If you want to volunteer and learn more about planning gardens, companion planting, starting seeds and when, watering, fertilization or growing



(Seed tray shelves were added. It was 85 in the greenhouse that day! Kale, radishes, spinach, onions, totsoi are starting to pop again!)

from seeds, please contact Steve, Kris or Todd at gwinnfoodsystem@gmail.com or go to gwinnfoodsystem.com/volunteer/. We're looking forward to hearing about gardens you may be working on, planning or want to plan – Grow UP! *Gwinn Food System is supported by the Gwinn Lions Club and many more in the District! Go Lions!*

Meet Lion Jess from Leader Dog



Lion Jess VandenBoom is our new Leader Dogs for the Blind Manager of Philanthropy for Lions Engagement. You will have the opportunity to meet her at our upcoming D 10 Convention at the Island Resort & Casino in Harris, MI on May 1-3, 2026."As district Leader Dog Co-Chairs, Lion Pam Miller and I have found Lion Jess, to be friendly, engaging, and an awesome representative for Leader Dog," shares Lion Gretchen Preston. Her story is inspiring. Meet her below!

A native Michigander, Lion Jess grew up in Grosse Pointe Woods, in the southeast corner of the state. Inspired by the Helen Keller books she read as a child, she went to college at Northeastern University in Boston, earning a bachelor's degree in American Sign Language and psychology. Channeling Annie Sullivan, while studying in Boston, Jess volunteered with people who were deaf and deaf-blind. She went on to earn a master's degree in behavior analysis from Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. Behavior analysis is the study of the learning foundation of positive reinforcement training.

Lion Jess admits, “Helen Keller's story was inspirational to me from a very young age. I remember arguing with my elementary school teachers so they would allow me to write yet another book report on a new Helen Keller biography. I learned about Leader Dog thanks to my local Lions club- they had set up a donation jar in the ice cream shop at the end of my block. I ended up so interested in guide dogs that I petitioned my parents to adopt a golden retriever and claimed that I would clicker train him. I was 10... so Cody didn't end up very well trained. But he was an amazing dog!”

Jess is a member of the St. Clair Shores Lions Club. She started working at LDB in 2024. Her position includes servicing D-10 and downstate Michigan MD-11. Additionally, she covers most of Canada, and the Western US.

“I have a lot of fun and got very lucky that I can bring all my interests together with the work I get to do for Leader Dog. It's an amazing place to work - I'm so thankful to get to work with such an incredible team and meet clients from around the world!”

An avid reader, Jess enjoys kicking back with a good book in her sunroom with her three cats. She loves going out to coffee shops and breweries with friends, and lately she's been getting into home improvement projects.

Lion Jess VandenBoom

Manager of Philanthropy for Lions Engagement

Leader Dogs for the Blind

P: 248.218.6318 |

Jess.VandenBoom@[LeaderDog.org](mailto:Jess.VandenBoom@LeaderDog.org)

[1039 S. Rochester Rd., Rochester Hills, MI 48307](https://www.leaderdog.org/1039-S-Rochester-Rd-Rochester-Hills-MI-48307)



Childhood Cancer March News

Sleigh Rides for Our Young Cancer Warriors

On a crisp Saturday in February, 18 of us gathered at the Up North Lodge in Gwinn for something truly special: horse-drawn sleigh rides through the snowy Upper Peninsula woods. Four families from across the UP — Marquette, Ishpeming, Escanaba, and Negaunee — came together for a day of laughter, warmth, and connection. Every one of these children has had to travel hundreds of miles away from home to receive cancer treatment. That reality makes days like this one even more meaningful. For a few hours, the focus wasn't on hospitals or long drives — it was about being kids together, enjoying the moment, and making memories.

A Scenic Ride Through the Woods

The highlight of the day was the sleigh ride itself. The horses were beautiful, and the kids absolutely adored them. There's something magical about gliding through snow-covered trails with the sound of hooves and sleigh bells in the air.

Making Friends — Two-Legged and Four-Legged

After the ride, the kids couldn't wait to meet the horses up close. Watching them reach out to pet those gentle giants was one of the sweetest moments of the day.



More Than a Sleigh Ride

Beyond the ride, it was a day for families to connect over great food and share their experiences. These families understand each other in a way that's hard to explain — the late nights, the fear, the hope, and the strength it takes to keep going. Getting to know each other more deeply, watching the kids play together, it all felt like exactly what everyone needed.



What Days Like This Mean

For children battling cancer in the Upper Peninsula, community can feel far away. Treatment centers are downstate, support groups are distant, and the isolation of rural life adds another layer of difficulty. That's why we do what we do. Days like the sleigh ride at Up North Lodge remind us that no family should have to walk this road alone.



Thank you to the Up North Lodge for hosting us, to UP Lions Serve for financially supporting this event, and to every family who made the trip. Here's to many more days of warmth and wonder together. *If you or someone you love is facing pediatric cancer, you're not alone.*

We're here to help families in Michigan's Upper Peninsula find their way forward.



Recipe for Retention

“I don’t believe we have a problem getting new members. We have a problem retaining them.” States our District Membership Chair IPDG Scott Kwarciany. Share the ideas below with your membership and let’s keep our service engaging, fun, and our district strong!

Retaining members is one of the most important responsibilities of any Lions Club, because strong membership creates stability, continuity, and the ability to serve the community with confidence. When members feel valued, included, and connected, they are far more likely to stay engaged and contribute their time and talents. The following strategies focus on building a welcoming culture, improving communication, and creating meaningful opportunities for involvement.

A positive club culture begins with genuine connection. New members should be greeted warmly, introduced to others, and paired with a mentor who can help them learn about the club's traditions, expectations, and service opportunities. Long-time members also benefit from feeling appreciated, so regular recognition, whether through a simple thankyou, a spotlight in a newsletter, or acknowledgment at a meeting—goes a long way toward strengthening commitment. People stay where they feel seen.

Clear and consistent communication is another essential part of retention. Members should always know what is happening, when events are scheduled, and how they can participate. Using multiple communication channels—email, phone calls, text reminders, and social media—ensures that no one is left out. Meeting agendas and follow-up summaries help members stay informed even when they cannot attend. When communication is strong, members feel connected and confident that their time is being respected.

Engagement is also key. Members want to contribute in ways that match their interests and strengths. Offering a variety of service projects, leadership roles, and committee opportunities allows everyone to find a place where they can shine. Asking members directly what they enjoy, what skills they want to use, and what innovative ideas they have helps create a sense of ownership. When people feel that their contributions matter, they are more likely to stay involved.

Another crucial factor is flexibility. Today's members often juggle work, family, and other commitments. Clubs that offer hybrid meetings, varied project times, and short-term volunteer options make it easier for people to participate. Flexibility shows respect for members' lives and encourages continued involvement even during busy seasons.

Finally, retention thrives when the club's mission remains front and center. Members join Lions because they want to serve. Regularly sharing the impact of projects—how many people were helped, what difference was made, and what the community gained—reinforces the purpose behind the work. Celebrating successes together builds pride and unity.

By fostering connection, communicating clearly, offering meaningful engagement, staying flexible, and keeping service at the heart of everything, Lions Clubs can create an environment where members feel valued and inspired to stay. Strong retention strengthens the club, deepens its impact, and ensures that the spirit of service continues for years to come.



Bruce LaBelle Memorial Scholarship Seeking Eligible High School Seniors

The U.P. Lions Serve Foundation is pleased to award an annual scholarship in honor of Past District Governor Bruce LaBelle. The scholarship award of \$1,000 is presented annually to graduating high school or home-schooled seniors who have battled childhood cancer or their siblings.

The students must be residents of the Upper Peninsula. The scholarship award of \$1000 will be awarded to assist with the recipient's education at a college of higher learning, a certified trade school, or apprenticeship program.

Bruce LaBelle was a member of the Bark River Lions Club, a District Governor, a multiple Lion's award recipient, and a leader in District 10. Lion Bruce embodied the principles of service to individuals and to his community. His passion was to enhance the lives of others through the Lions organization. Those of us who knew him found him to be a selfless community servant who promoted humanitarian service and generosity. It was after his death we learned that PDG Bruce had left a financial gift to our Childhood Cancer program in his will to benefit U.P. youth.

A stout advocate of higher education and community service, the Bruce LaBelle Memorial Scholarship was created to provide opportunities for graduating high school students whose lives have been affected by childhood Cancer. His scholarship provides the opportunity for Cancer Warriors or their siblings to further their education after high school graduation.

Bruce LaBelle Memorial scholarships are awarded to childhood cancer warriors and their siblings. Recipients should demonstrate a strong commitment to pursuing their goals while serving others, inspired by the impact childhood cancer has had on their lives.

Applicants for this scholarship can apply by completing the UP Lions Serve Foundation Scholarship application and providing one letter of recommendation from a person of their choice. To obtain an application contact, Lion Gretchen Preston via email at: prestongretchen@gmail.com. All applications will be reviewed by the District10 Childhood Cancer Committee. Applications must be received by April 30, 2026. Award letters and checks will be sent out in May.

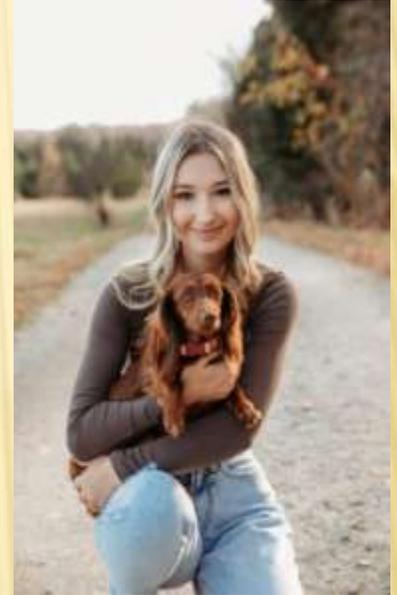
The Bruce LaBelle Scholarship has helped these childhood cancer sibling warriors pursue their college dreams-



Gracyn is earning her BSN in nursing at Bellin College.



Geno Schinderle, age 20, is almost 5 years post bone marrow transplant and is currently living his best life! He lives in Salt Lake City, Utah full time, and is a sophomore at the University of Utah studying Kinesiology on the path to become a Physical Therapist.



Harlie is pursuing a degree in Industrial and Product Design at UW Stout

District Lion Invited to Speak at United Nations Day



Our Human Trafficking and Awareness Chair, Chassell Lion Stephanie Graef is putting our district on the world stage. She has been invited by International President AP Singh to be one of the panel speakers at Lions Day at the United Nations! WOW!

Lions Day at the United Nations has a rich history. It commemorates over 75 years of partnership between Lions Clubs International and the United Nations. In 1945, Lion leaders helped develop the NGO charter for the UN. This charter made it possible for the UN to partner with Non-Governmental Organizations to promote world peace and harmony. "LDUN" emphasizes leadership, community impact, and service beyond borders. Participants can

This year's Lions Day at the United Nations 2026 will be held on March 19 in New York City. Lion Stephanie has invited District Governor Bay de Noc Lion Colleen Maki to accompany her. The pair will join world leaders in celebration of Lions Club International's global service mission in partnership with the UN. At this annual event, Lions and Leos from around the world gather at the UN headquarters to highlight how our community service contributes to global agendas. Lion Stephanie will serve to highlight the atrocity of human trafficking here at home and worldwide. Thank you, Lions Stephanie, and Colleen, for representing District 10!

Project KidSight

With incoming Lions International President Mark Lyon and Lion Lynn with PID Jenny Ware. One of the SD10 Project Kidsight cameras travelled to India for Lions Global Service week.



Northwoods AirLifeLine Report

From Pilot Jesse Bell: Fortunately we've had a slowdown in requests while both of the NWALL aircraft have been down for maintenance. At least 4 of the 10 flights we've done this year have been for children.



MARCH MADNESS MEMBERSHIP CHALLENGE

Every Club. One New Lion. One
Powerful Month.

March 1 - March 31



YOUR CHALLENGE:

- Grow your club.
- Grow your impact.

THE GOAL:

Add **ONE** new
NEW MEMBER
IN MARCH!

WHY IT MATTERS!

- More hands to serve!
- More community impact!
lives changed!



Area E leadership will recognize every club that brings in a new member during the Month of March with a certificate to show that the challenge was accepted by the club members. It will not stop in March, but it will be continued until June 30, 2026.

Just think that would add about 1,200 members to our Area.

At the end of May, the top 16 districts that shows the highest growth since December 31, 2025 will be recognized as a member of the **Sweet Sixteen of Area E**. The numbers of new members and charter members will be used to determine the districts.*

On June 30, the four districts that shows the highest growth percentage in membership and has add a minimum of one new club since July 1, 2025 will be selected as a member of the **Final Four of Area E**.

LET 'S show our TEAM Spirit in the last quarter of this Lion's Year!!!

** Actual number will be based on the percentage of new members added .*



We Serve - and in March, we grow!

Dear Lions of Constitutional Area 1 (United States and Affiliates)

This month, we're inviting every club in Constitutional Area 1 to participate in a **March Madness Membership Growth Event** by adding just **ONE new member** - One new Lion per club.

It sounds simple—but the impact is tremendous!

This month, **each club will:**

1. Identify at least three prospects.
2. Personally invite them to a meeting or service project.
3. Induct at least **ONE** new Lion before March 31.
4. Remember, they must be included in your membership roster on the Portal to count!

Let's make March fun and energetic:

- Challenging a neighboring club
- Celebrating new member inductions
- Sharing photos and success stories
- Recognizing sponsors and mentors

Growth reflects our core values of *Service, Dedication to Excellence, Integrity, Collaboration, Diversity, and Innovation*. When we invite someone to join Lions, we invite them into a global movement of servant leaders who live the motto: **Lead to Serve, Serve to Lead**.

Your community needs Lions like never before. *Let's make March memorable—with momentum, purpose, and pride.*

With Lion pride and appreciation,

PID Pat Vannett

Constitutional Area 1 Global Action Team Leader
United States and Affiliates
Lions Clubs International

PIP Brian Sheehan

Constitutional Area 1 Special Advisor
United States and Affiliates
Lions Clubs International

PID Bob Block

Constitutional Area 1
Area "E" - Global Action Leader
United States and Affiliates
Lions Clubs International

PDG Ron Reibschleger

Constitutional Area 1
Area "E" - Global Action Team Vice-Leader
United States and Affiliates
Lions Clubs International