



Lions Clubs International

# BRINGING LIONESSES INTO THE FAMILY: GUIDE TO LIONESSE INVITATION

Great new members have experience, commitment and a reputation for setting goals and accomplishing them. A great new member embraces community service, teamwork, hard work and the value of putting others before oneself.

Looking for great new members?  
Consider Lionesses.

Since their official recognition in 1975, Lionesses have served faithfully. Women were first granted membership as Lions in 1987, and the Lioness auxiliary program was dissolved in 1991 when Lions Clubs International determined that Lionesses could be better served by the association as Lions.

In recognition of the value of Lioness membership, Lions Clubs International instituted the Lioness Bridge Program in 1996. Some 5,000 Lionesses took advantage of the opportunity, becoming Lions when their clubs made the transition into full-fledged Lions clubs. Still, many Lionesses remain.



## UNDERSTANDING LIONESSES: EDUCATION IS KEY

While conversion for some Lionesses was a natural response to the new opportunity for women, many Lionesses chose a different path: they either continued serving under the guardianship of a parent Lions club, or they relinquished their affiliation with Lions. Both of the latter groups expressed feelings of abandonment and disregard; for some, it was enough to call it quits.

That's why LCI created this guide.

As you speak to Lionesses today, it is important to learn from the past and approach the topic with sensitivity. While it's important that we learn from the past, it's equally important that we look to the future. With that in mind, we need to focus on the positives and the opportunities for Lionesses in Lions. Lionesses have the opportunity to become full-fledged Lions and gain increased autonomy. They can benefit from the rights and privileges of Lions membership. They can vote and take advantage of new leadership opportunities. And most importantly, they are part of our Lions family, they share our enthusiasm for helping others and they know what it means to be a Lion. We need them!

Before you approach Lionesses about conversion, read through the following tips and messaging from LCI. Use the tips to help conduct your outreach effectively and use the messaging as a model for building your communications.

## TIPS

### 1. Know your LCI history

The organization was founded in 1917, and its membership was exclusively male, like most service club organizations of its time. As Lions grew, women – particularly Lion spouses – embraced the Lions mission of service and began forming auxiliary clubs. Because of their success, Lions Clubs International developed the Lioness Program and emblem in 1975, officially recognizing and supporting the auxiliary program.

The Lioness Program continued to grow until 1987 when the International Board of Directors amended the Lions Club Constitution to admit both men and women. Lions Clubs International continued supporting the Lioness Program until 1991, at which time it was determined that Lionesses could be better served by the association as Lions.

Recognizing the value of Lioness membership, Lions Clubs International instituted the Lioness Bridge Program in 1996. Some 5,000 Lionesses took advantage of the opportunity and became Lions when their clubs made the transition into full-fledged Lions clubs.

To further encourage Lionesses to join the Lions family, LCI initiated the Lioness Fee Waiver Program. In 1999, and from November 30, 2001 to June 30, 2003, Lionesses paid no charter or entrance fees when joining Lions. Lionesses also had the opportunity to take advantage of the women's entrance fee waiver from November 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004.

### 2. Become familiar with the Lioness Bridge Program

The Lioness Bridge Program makes it possible for Lionesses to honor and acknowledge their proud past while enjoying all the rights, benefits and privileges associated with Lions club membership. By joining a Lions club, Lionesses receive credit for their Lioness years of service, which count toward Chevron Awards. Lionesses also receive a distinctive Lioness-Lions Pin to recognize their past service. And, if a Lioness joins a Lions club their spouse or other family member in their household belongs to, they pay only half international dues.

Lionesses can also start their own Lions club and use "Lioness" in their club name. By starting a new club, Lionesses can hold meetings at their convenience and choose projects and activities that interest their members. Not all members joining the Lioness Lions club need to be former Lionesses.

Lionesses can even start a club branch and continue working alongside their sponsoring Lions club, but still hold independent meetings, elect their own officers and facilitate their own projects. Only five members are needed to start a club branch. Plus, Lionesses in a club branch can still take advantage of the Family Membership Program if family members belong to the parent club.

The *Lioness Bridge Program Brochure* (MKLP-1) outlines the information above and includes the benefits of Lions membership and the *Lioness Conversion Program Form* for submitting years of Lioness service. Download or request copies for distribution from Lions Clubs International ([memberops@lionsclubs.org](mailto:memberops@lionsclubs.org)).



### 3. Understand your local community

How many Lionesses and Lioness clubs are in your area? Are the clubs old or new? Does your area actively promote Lioness membership? Why are Lioness clubs an attractive option? How do the Lionesses feel about Lions membership? Are they aware of, and open to, the opportunity to become a Lion? Does your area have any converted Lioness clubs? For what reasons did these clubs convert? Are there Lioness Lions who could share their testimonies of conversion?

Understanding a community, and its challenges and opportunities, is crucial before approaching both Lions and Lionesses. Your analysis will help you assess your community, develop an action plan and prepare to address questions with sensitivity and insight. For example, in some parts of the world, Lioness clubs continue to be promoted as an option for individuals that have limited time and resources. Where this is the case, it may be more beneficial to begin by approaching your multiple district leadership to influence and mobilize the root promoters rather than initially targeting Lionesses directly.

### 4. Promote change as needed

Offer flexibility. Be open-minded. Minimize protocol. Lower unnecessary dues such as requiring payment for dinner meetings. These are all examples of the ways clubs, districts and multiple districts may need to change in order to be attractive and welcoming to Lionesses.

## MESSAGING

Messaging is a way of communicating information that is meaningful to your audience in order to mobilize action. When talking to Lionesses, it is important to convey why they matter, why being a Lion is meaningful and beneficial to them and how they can join. The following messaging points can help guide your outreach and start your conversations with Lionesses:

#### 1. We need you!

- You share our enthusiasm for helping others and serving the community.
- We need your capable hands in order to carry out more quality Lions service.
- We need your ideas, your strength and numbers, your leadership and experience to make Lions stronger.

In 1987, Lions began inviting women into the association for a reason. Lion Deidre Schaefer from Australia explains:

*This movement has acknowledged your rights, removed discrimination and inequality and acknowledged your past history and achievements, now take up the challenge to join and help keep this great, active, powerful body alive. In doing so, you reduce the pressure on others, and you will help to make a difference by being able to vote and develop policy, especially that which is relevant to women.*

By inviting Lionesses to become club members, Lions gain new ideas, added strength from a larger membership base, new potential leaders, new friendships and a new perspective on the needs of our communities.

**Offer flexibility.**  
**BE OPEN-MINDED.**  
*Minimize protocol.*



## 2. Being a Lion opens new opportunities

- You have the ability to do more by gaining the strength of the world's largest service club organization.
- You can share your voice by being a voting member of Lions Clubs International.
- You can shape the future of Lions by taking on leadership roles at the zone, district, multiple district and international levels. LCI has numerous district governors and international directors who were once Lionesses.
- You can apply for special LCI and LCIF grants.
- You can gain access to leadership training and development opportunities.

As Lions, Lionesses will join the 1.35 million members dedicated to making our communities better and serving others. In addition to making Lionesses feel wanted and welcomed, it's important to emphasize that there are numerous opportunities within Lions for Lionesses to serve, grow and lead.

## 3. Your commitment is fully recognized through the Lioness Bridge Program

- Your years of service as a Lioness transfer and count towards earning Lions Chevron Awards.
- You will receive a distinctive Lioness-Lions Pin to recognize your past service.
- You have the ability to earn other awards for service activities, leadership and excellence in numerous categories as a Lion.

The Lioness Bridge Program offers Lionesses the recognition they deserve for their years of service, and their Lions membership will provide them with additional recognition opportunities for years to come.

## 4. There are membership options to fit your needs

- **Join an existing club**  
Lionesses have a special opportunity to join one of the 46,000 Lions clubs making a difference worldwide. And, if they join a Lions club that their spouse or other family member in their household belongs to, they pay only half international dues.

### • Start your own Lions club

Starting a new club will enable Lionesses to hold meetings at their convenience and choose projects and activities that interest their members. They can charter a Lions club with the use of "Lioness" in the club name to distinguish their club and recognize their many years of service.

The following is needed to charter a Lioness Lions club:

- 20 or more charter members (Lionesses, former Lionesses and other like-minded community members)
- A sponsoring club, zone, region, district cabinet or district committee
- Completed charter application and report of charter members
- The current Lions district governor's approval
- Appropriate charter fees and certification forms

### • Form a club branch

Lionesses can also continue working alongside their sponsoring Lions club by forming a club branch. This allows them to hold independent meetings, elect their own officers and facilitate their own projects. Only five members are needed to get started. Plus, Lionesses in a club branch can still take advantage of the Family Membership Program if family members belong to the parent club.

## ONE FINAL TIP

### Select the right person for the job.

Not only is it important to know *how* to communicate to Lionesses, it's equally important to determine *who* will communicate with Lionesses. Assess the individuals or groups that you would like to approach, and then carefully consider who the best Lion to communicate the message is. Consider a former Lioness, a female leader or an individual sensitive to the history and needs of your local Lionesses. Lionesses are important members of the service community, so it's important that you send the right person for the job.