



The Fairbanks Snowmobile Fun Lions Club in Alaska, USA, encourages family fun by staging snowmobile races for children.



Members of the San Francisco Veterans Lions Club share a common bond in service to their country and to their community.

## SPECIALTY CLUBS // The Club for Lions with Shared Interests

No matter what the circumstance, if there is a need, there is a Lions club to meet that need. A fast-growing alternative to the traditional Lions club model, specialty clubs are attracting new members with shared interests.

In contrast to standard clubs, which draw from a cross section of their communities, specialty clubs bring together Lions with common interests or similar circumstances. Some clubs focus on helping people with diabetes. Other clubs focus on professions, such as educators or law enforcement workers. Groups that meet regularly can now serve their communities with others who already share common interests with Lions specialty clubs.

There are clubs for veterans, environmentalists, snowmobile fans, professional women and people with shared cultural backgrounds. There is a ballroom-dancing club in Hawaii. And there are cyber clubs that meet and conduct club business primarily online, with members connecting around the world.

Lions have been forming specialty clubs for decades. The Anchorage Benton Bay Athletic Lions Club in Anchorage, Alaska, USA, was chartered in 1984 to support local college and youth sports. The growth of specialty clubs has accelerated in recent years as societal shifts put more demands on people's limited free time. Specialty clubs offer a flexible format that lets Lions accommodate today's volunteers in a way that fits their ever-changing lifestyles.

Just as with any newly-formed Lions club, specialty clubs need to be sponsored by existing clubs and go through a charter process. Like Lions everywhere, the members get together to perform service projects and help others, but often the projects reflect the specialty club's area of expertise.

The El Paso Executive Women's Lions Club in Texas, USA, offers mentoring and computer-skills training to disadvantaged young women.

Similarly, in Middletown, Virginia, USA, a group of elementary teachers, concerned about children missing preschool education, formed the Middletown Children First Lions Club. The club works with three- to five-year-olds to help them prepare to be successful in kindergarten. The club's Little Lions Preschool classes have made a big difference in children's readiness. Parent Chrissie Sison said her daughter Annalise "really enjoyed every minute" of her time at Little Lions and, thanks to the Lions, "Annalise just loves school," she said.

