



Let's Remember Service Begins With Each of Us

Our members and our clubs are the backbone of our organization, and carry on our heritage of service.

We don't just serve, we serve with dedication and passion because we have compassion for others. Lions care about other people. Whenever possible, we lend a hand to those in need – not just through our multitude of service projects, but in our day-to-day activities.

WE SERVE because we comprehend that we have a responsibility to be of service to others. Compassion is trying to understand someone else's circumstances along with a willingness to reach out to them. Just feeling sorry is not compassion, and it's not the Lions' way. We look at the world from the other person's perspective, rather than our own.

Apart from our multitude of projects, it is also important to keep in mind that even small gestures, at the right time, can mean the world to someone. Making yourself available for someone to talk to, being patient, sharing what you've learned from overcoming similar problems, running an errand, or giving someone a ride, are just examples of what you can do.

It's not difficult to show compassion. All you have to do is listen to other people and be sensitive to their needs. You can bring a smile to a stranger. Hold a door open. Let someone in front of you when in line. Help carry packages. There is no act too small to be helpful.

When we show compassion, we help alleviate someone's suffering. It's that simple. Remember – the more you put in, the more you get back.

Celebrating Our Service – Join the Lions World of Service Photo and Twitter Relay

If you tally up the acts of service and kindness by our 1.35 million Lions in 46,000 communities where clubs exist, the impact is enormous. Few organizations could match what we do. But can the world see how we serve day in and day out?

Lions Clubs International NEVER sleeps. Like runners in a relay race, Lions Clubs around the world pass the baton of service from one club to another as we circle the globe each and every day.

To celebrate our around the clock and around the world dedication, there will be a special section on the LCI web site where Lions can post photos of their service activities.

But even as we celebrate our dedicated service, I'm challenging Lions this year to expand our impact, putting special emphasis on illiteracy.

Expanding Our Impact – Join The Reading Action Program

Education is the key to unlocking human potential. The acquisition of skills and knowledge enables people to overcome poverty, disease and other social ills. It empowers communities and gives individuals the confidence needed to shape their own future. The volunteer sector plays an important role in providing education –viewed by many experts – including the United Nations – as one of the root causes of the cycle of poverty.

As a former educator, married to a career teacher, I place a high value on education and I consider the ability to read as the foundation to an education. It is a gift Lions can give to children and adults around the world.

If you can read this sentence, then you are not only literate, you are considered highly literate. The basic definition of literacy worldwide is the ability to write your name, and read at a 10 year old level. Yet even using that basic definition, nearly one billion people worldwide are illiterate. That's 26 percent of the world's adult population, or one out of four people of reading age.

But illiteracy isn't a challenge just for developing regions. Even in the United States where I am from, one in seven persons can barely read a billboard sign or a recipe, which makes them functionally illiterate. Twenty-one million in my own country can't read at all.

To reverse the situation we need to reach more children at risk. According to the Gates Foundation, children develop the skills they need to succeed in school and life, during their first five years. Many children lack basic language and behavioral skills—such as knowing letters and colors, following directions, getting along with others, and exhibiting impulse control. Unfortunately, when children start behind, they often stay behind, leading to an achievement gap in elementary school and beyond.



*“The more you
read, the more
things you’ll know.*

*The more that you
learn, the more
places you’ll go.”*

Dr. Seuss, author of children's books



Lions Can Help Through The Reading Action Program (RAP)

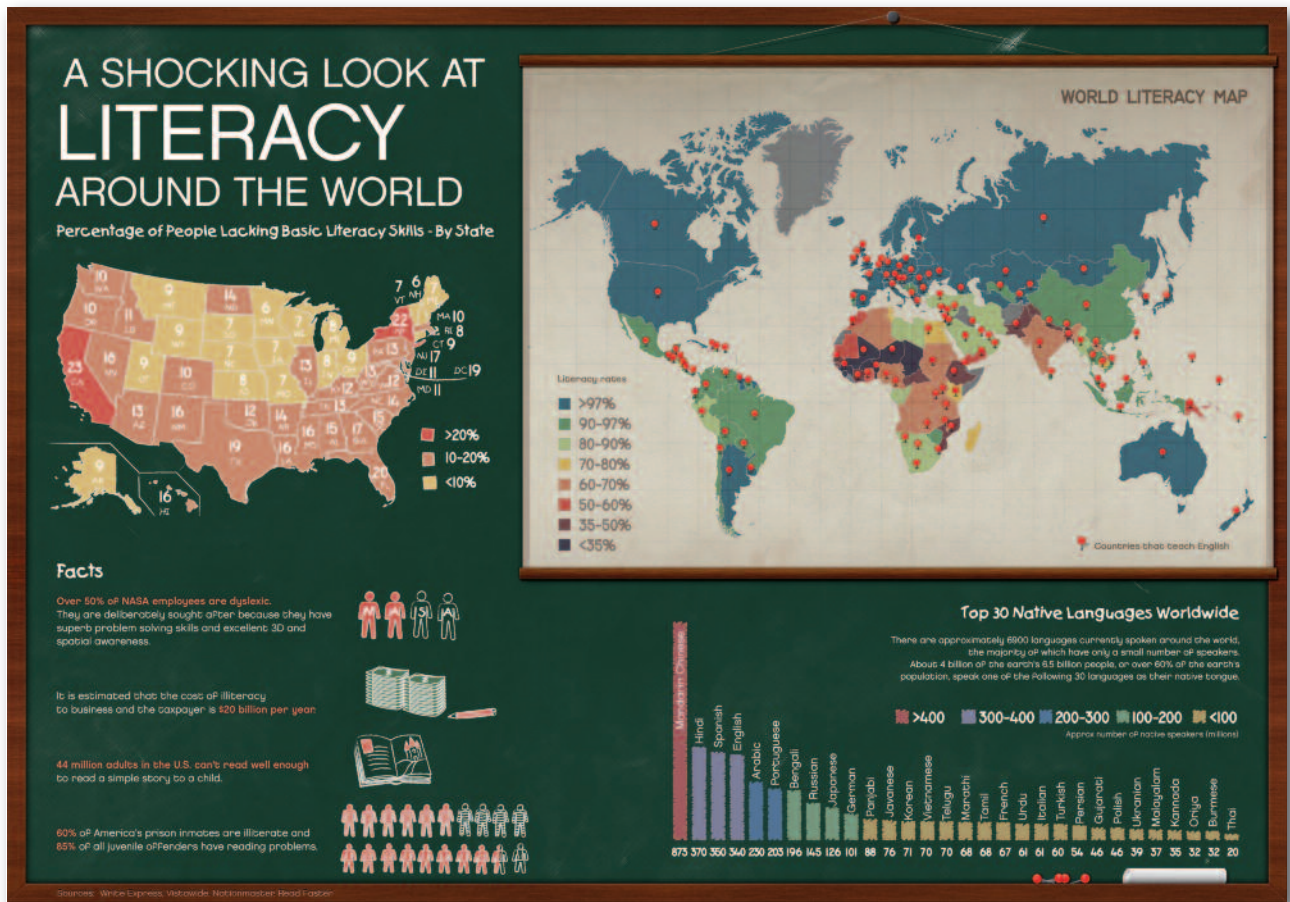
So Lions, are you ready to expand our impact by jumping on board the Reading Action Program?

There are many ways Lions can help in their respective communities. Consider the following:

- Developing after school reading programs
- Reading to children at local libraries
- Contacting your local school and asking how you can help
- Donating books and/or computers to your local school or library
- Volunteering as tutors through a local school
- Working with local literacy experts and agencies
- Working to promote braille literacy

(See the Reading Action Program guideline for suggestions and ideas)

Or, perhaps your club can come up with its own program. However you choose to approach the problem of illiteracy, be pro-active, not reactive.



Reading Action Program Awards

Each club that documents a reading or other literacy activity through the online service activity reporting system will receive a specially designed “Reading Action Program” club banner patch.

Each district governor whose district achieves at least 50% club participation in literacy programs will receive a “Reading Action Program” award to commemorate their success.

In addition, artwork will be available on the LCI web site that will enable clubs to download diplomas and bookmarks for clubs to present to students and adults that participate in club sponsored literacy programs.