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Monthly News

Lions Support 4.3 Million Cataract Surgeries in China

OAKBROOK, Illinois, USA, March 23 — Lions Clubs International has supported 4.3 million cataract surgeries in China since 1997 when it partnered with the Chinese government to improve eye health.

Lions also worked with Chinese health officials on its SightFirst China Action project to establish surgical eye units in 104 rural counties that previously had none. Current initiatives include creating secondary eye care units at hospitals in 200 less developed counties, cities and provinces and establishing eye health training courses for paramedics who work among the poor in western and northern provinces.

The World Health Organization estimates that twenty percent of those blind in the world live in China.

“The commitment by the Chinese government and the China Disabled Persons’ Federation to SightFirst China Action is a key to this successful partnership. Working together, we have increased the number of persons in China receiving surgeries annually from 200,000 in 1996 to over 600,000. This is one of our largest and most successful SightFirst programs,” said Dr. Clement F. Kusiak, chairperson of Lions Clubs International Foundation, the grant-making arm of Lions Clubs International.

LCIF’s SightFirst program is a worldwide blindness prevention initiative that has prevented vision loss for hundreds of millions. SightFirst, LCIF’s largest program, combats blindness by building hospitals and clinics, training doctors, nurses and other health-care workers, distributing medicine and raising awareness of eye disease. SightFirst fights the major causes of blindness: cataract, river blindness, trachoma, and, especially in developed nations like the United States, diabetic eye disease and glaucoma. SightFirst also supports the Lions/WHO Global Project for the Elimination of Avoidable Blindness in Children, the first worldwide initiative addressing

childhood blindness.

A team of WHO experts and representatives from LCIF, the Ministry of Health and the China Disabled Persons’ Federation undertook an evaluation of SightFirst China Action in March. The evaluators split into teams, completing work in the three provinces of Guizhou, Henan, and Liaoning. The findings of the evaluation indicated that the project’s targets are being surpassed.

Phase I of SightFirst China Action supported 2.1 million cataract surgeries. The goal for Phase II is another 2.5 million surgeries.

“SightFirst China Action Phase II has completed 88% of the 2.5 million cataract surgeries planned for 2002 – 2007 in a three-year period,” said Dr. Wing-Kun Tam, Executive Chair of SFCA. “With this level of enthusiasm and support, we know the goal will be surpassed. Even more important, training of almost 20,000 eye care personnel helps to guarantee the long-term impact of SFCA in blindness prevention in China.”

Based in Oak Brook, Illinois, Lions Clubs International is the world’s largest service club organization with over 1.35 million members in approximately 46,000 clubs in 197 countries and geographical areas around the world. Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired and made a strong commitment to community service and serving youth throughout the world. For more information about Lions Clubs International, visit the Web site at www.lionsclubs.org.

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Birthdays and Anniversaries

Anniversary
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Birthday
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Sight Conservation Day

Many thanks to the Lions who worked on Sight Conservation Day. Lion President Linda Larson, Jon Lichner, Mary Ann Barbieri, Jennifer Eisenhart