**Summary**

**History of the Denver Lions Club**

The Denver Lions Club was chartered on June 26, 1917 making it one of the worlds’ first Lions Clubs. Later that year, the Denver Club sent delegates to the first convention in Dallas where Lions Clubs International was founded. Melvin Jones, the Chicago businessman who had the idea of converting business clubs into community service clubs, led the International Association for over 40 years. The hope was to attract a diverse range of men of all occupations and backgrounds interested in civic betterment.

Lions Clubs multiplied rapidly across the United States and internationally and continue to do so, reaching an all-time peak in 2016 of 1,410,605 members in 46,912 clubs in 205 countries. After the 1991 breakup of the Soviet Union, communities in many Soviet Republics established Lions Clubs. The inclusion of women as full members by the International Association in 1987, also pumped up the numbers -- and the looks and behavior of many clubs. Earlier the Denver Den had a Woman’s Auxiliary, and the International Lions Club created a Lioness Program in 1975. Leo Clubs for high school and college aged youth were established in 1957.

The International Association chose as a motto **“We Serve.”** Denver charter member Joseph Schwartz designed the Lions lapel pin now worn by members all over the globe. The Club held its Tuesday meetings in the now gone Albany Hotel at the corner of 17th and Stout Streets, five blocks from the Denver Den’s current meeting place. Members receive the Lions Magazine, a monthly launched in 1918, and now published in print and digitally in 20 languages worldwide. The Denver Den began publishing its own newsletter in 1923. After trying out *The Mile High Roar, the Den-Ver-Den* and *The Roarer*, the Denver Club settled on the current name – *Roarings* for the weekly bulletin.

Lions found their major cause at their 1925 International Convention when Helen Keller, the famous blind champion of the blind, gave an unforgettable speech challenging the Lions to become “the knights of the blind in the crusade against darkness.” Inspired Lions Clubs thereafter made sight conservation and service to the blind their main community service.

As Helen Keller had urged, sight conservation remains the main mission of the Denver Den. With support from other Lions Clubs in Colorado and Wyoming, six million dollars was raised for the Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Institute on the Anschutz Medical Campus of the University of Colorado. Today that Institute, with a faculty and research staff of 76 professionals, serves more than 95,000 patients a year, and conducts state-of-the-art eye research.

The Lions commitment to internationalism led them to partner in 1945 with the newly formed United Nations on worldwide eye health programs such as SightFirst. On the home front, Lions crusaded, beginning in 1930, to get white canes to the blind after one Lion noted that blind folks had trouble crossing streets. By 1956 every state had passed white cane laws. Lions launched White Cane Day to educate the world about blindness and how the vision impaired can live and work independently and become community assets.

Lions’ sense of humor and camaraderie is exemplified by the tradition of having “Tail Twisters” who promote practical jokes, and reprimand and fine members for infractions such as not wearing their lapel pin, arriving late or allowing their cell phone to ring during meetings or just about any other reason the Tail Twister can invent. The Denver Den took to tail twisting from the very beginning. One of their most memorable pranks was to ship a railcar of snow to the1924 International Convention in Omaha. There they cooled off delegates with a snow ball fight in July.

The Denver Den has a myriad of community programs over the century of service: a Boys Club House in Morrison (1920), the Milk Fund (1921 to 1961) for malnourished schoolchildren, donating candy to the Denver Santa Claus Shop for underprivileged children, providing members as bell-ringers for the Salvations Army’s Christmas fund raising, building the Eisenhower Chapel (1957) on the second floor of the Denver Club Building, supporting Savio House, a residential care facility for needy boys, supporting Channel 9 television’s 9 Health Fair since its 1980 beginning, supporting the Rocky Mountain Lions Eye Bank since1982, building the Rude Park Day Care Center and various play grounds, and collecting used eyeglasses.

In 1952, the Denver Den created the non-profit Denver Lions Foundation to facilitate fund raising and charitable giving. Since its creation the Foundation has given away an estimated $2.5 million. Expanding its missions beyond eye care, the Denver Den added three more priorities: Social Services, Youth Services and Hearing Conservation.

The Denver Den starts its second century in 2017 by continuing to honor the Lion’s motto **“We Serve.”** Today, the Lions Club of Denver convenes the second and fourth Tuesdays from September to June for a convivial lunch of civic-minded men and women. We meet at Maggiano’s restaurant in the Pavilions on 16th Street in downtown Denver. This lively gathering has fun, but also explores, and discusses an awesome range of community causes. A featured speaker discusses a wide range of topics, focused on a community need, or Lions’ related matters.