

In this episode, we hear from the Past International President of Lions International and Chair of the Lions Clubs International Foundation, Douglas Alexander of Brooklyn, New York City who is speaking with Mandy Broadbent. Douglas Alexander explains the important work of the Foundation, and what some of the challenges are being faced by local communities following a humanitarian disaster, and the impact local lions members have in responding. Followed by a conversation between Samantha Boffin and Ron Lindsay from Tickhill Lions in South Yorkshire who joins us to talk about how the club raises funds to support the community and how they've joined forces with neighbouring clubs to apply for matching grants from the Lions Clubs International Foundation to increase the Lions support for very local worthy causes.

Be uplifted, be inspired. This is Step Forward and Volunteer.

Welcome to the latest episode of the popular Step Forward and Volunteer podcast brought to you by Lions Clubs British Isles.

My name is Samantha Boffin and I'd like to thank you for tuning in.

If you haven't listened before, our aim is simple. We want to celebrate the positive difference volunteering makes to communities across the British Isles and beyond. To do that, we'll be speaking to those who give up their time to help others, inspiring more people to step forward and volunteer.

In this episode, we hear from the Past International President of Lions International and Chair of the Lions Clubs International Foundation, Douglas Alexander of Brooklyn, New York City who is speaking with Mandy Broadbent. Douglas Alexander explains the important work of the Foundation, and what some of the challenges are being faced by local communities following a humanitarian disaster, and the impact local lions members have in responding. Followed by a conversation between myself and Ron Lindsay from Tickhill Lions in South Yorkshire who joins us to talk about how the club raises funds to support the community and how they've joined forces with neighbouring clubs to apply for matching grants from the Lions Clubs International Foundation to increase the Lions support for very local worthy causes.

But first, I have a favour to ask. We'd like your help in getting the word out about Step Forward and Volunteer. Tell your family, tell your friends - and if you're a Lions member, why not let other members of your club know about the podcast - and how easy it is to listen. All you need to do is either go on the website www.lionsclubs.co where you will see a link to the podcast, or you can search for Step Forward and Volunteer on apps like Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts and Google podcasts.

You can listen on-demand or subscribe so that you never miss an episode. We publish a new programme on the second Wednesday of each month, and we're really keen to spread the positivity and get as many people listening as we can.

So we hear from the Chair of the Lions Clubs International Foundation, Douglas Alexander on the important work of the foundation.

Welcome Douglas Alexander. Could you tell the listeners how the Lions International Foundation helps countries experiencing a humanitarian crisis.

So I'd be glad to, the Lions Clubs International Foundation, which is the grant giving arm of our great association. It's been in existence since 1968. And when there's disasters around the world, Lions can request grants to help in those situations. Perfect example, the recent situation in Turkey and Syria, which was devastating, over 40,000 people lost their lives. The very first day, Lions International Foundation approved what we call an MCAT grant, a major catastrophe grant an amount of \$200,000. And we reached out to the Lions in Turkey, because we do not have Lions in Syria. But we're looking to help the people in Syria as well by the surrounding countries that have Lions Clubs. And since that initial grant was given, I recently approved a \$360,000 grant for additional container housing that they will put in a village that they've set up, where people have temporary housing until their homes are restored. And that's just one situation. And in the US, recently, we had in Mississippi, had a hurricane that went through their tornado. And we approved the \$10,000 emergency grant, which you can get within 24 to 48 hours, and then an additional 50,000 major catastrophe grant to help them as well. Of course, there's much more need. But these grants, give them that money to start taking care of the immediate needs, such as the, you know, toiletries, and water and food, and clothing and things like that, to help them get back on their feet.

Thank you. When you're going into disaster areas, and you're providing relief to local communities affected by earthquakes and the aftershocks or you know, the flooding. When you're visiting what strikes you most when you go into, you know, these disaster areas?

Great question, because you can see it on television of a lot of times, but actually standing there, it's a whole different feeling, you really truly get the feel of what, what had just taken place there. Perfect example, in Kentucky, when a tornado went through there, I went to Kentucky and I stood where the candle factory which was on the news quite a bit, where a lot of people lost their lives. And to see that nothing but a slab of cement there now, but you could still smell the aroma of candle in the air. And this was several months after the incident. And just to meet a family who had just completed building their home 30 days and just wiped off the foundation, they hadn't even yet got insurance on their home. But to see lions pull up in a tractor trailer with generators and water and food to help these people. That's what we do every day, 365 days a year around the world, and more than 200 countries and geographical areas.

So you feel it really affected you then, you feel humbled, you feel that you're making a difference that you're helping people through a very difficult time.

So you're witnessing the impact made by local Lions who were responding immediately. Is there one particular thing that you could say, because you're going around each of the disaster areas, this is something that you could you know, you take away from that.

Yes, when you see the lions at work, and they're doing it from the bottom of their heart, not looking for anything in return. And one that sticks out in my mind is, it was in 2010 when Haiti had the earthquake, and the lions were there, and we were working. And you know, in the beginning, all of the service organisations are there, the Red Cross and others. But we made a commitment to the people of Haiti, that we would be there for as long as it took to

help them get back on their feet. And you see on television, the blue tarp tents that are there with the lions logo on it, and lions up restoring the medical centres, homes, schools, that's what we do.

What is some of the challenges that are faced by local communities recovering from the earthquakes as such, like we've witnessed in Turkey and other areas, you know, Pakistan with the flooding because obviously they must feel like they've got an uncertain future.

Yes, they do. But some of the difficulties is, while getting to the areas after an earthquake, you know, roads are knocked out. And so it's not always easy to get to these places right away. And the other thing is when we're giving relief, making sure that it gets to where it is needed. So it's important that we make sure that not only the funds, but the food, water, and all of those things actually get to the people who are in need.

Yeah. And what would you say to anyone asking, Why the Lions get involved as volunteers, not just locally, but as an international community?

Well, because our organisation, we have a model of simply we serve, wherever we see a need. And we have another statement out there ,where there's a need, there's a lion. And when we see a need, Lions step up to the plate, to try to make that situation better. We serve, that's what we do, every day.

And anybody wishing to donate to the foundation. Is there anything you'd like to say?

We appreciate all the help that we can get, because the need is so great out there. And the United Nations recently did a survey and they talked about the increasing disasters that are happening around the world. When you're listening to the news almost on a daily basis, you hear some situation that's affecting some part of the world, whether it's fire, wildfires, earthquakes, flooding, I was in Germany and saw some of the flooding that's taking place there. And the lions were, you know, out working to help people restore. We visited one gentleman whose bakery was completely destroyed. But they were rebuilding it, putting a new bakery in that community, and that's lions that were making a difference. And if anyone who wants to support the work that we're doing, because a lot of times we can't physically get out there to help. But we want to help in some small way by making a small donation is much appreciated. You can go to lionsclubs.org, backslash donate, and you'll be able to make a donation online.

We appreciate whatever you can do to help in situations like that. And people want to help. And what we must make sure we continue to do is let people see the results of the monies that they donate to our association. One thing we're very proud of whatever you give goes to the cause. There is no administrative piece taken from your donation. If you give \$100 for disaster relief. \$100 goes for disaster relief. And that says something about our foundation, how well it's run?

It's 100% 100% of your donation goes to the cause.

And finally, is there anything you'd like to add?

I would just like to say I have been given an awesome opportunity to serve in this position last year as the International President, and this year as Chairperson of our Foundation, to get to travel around the world. And to see how the work of lions is impacting people's lives in a positive way. I think that's an opportunity that every person should have to see that there are good people in this world. When we look at our world, there's so much turmoil going on. But I believe that there's more good than bad that takes place. And lions should step up to the plate to show that we serve where there's a need, there's a lion. And we're serving a world in need for 106 years. We're now in our second century of service. And we want to make sure that our foundation will be there for many decades and years to come to fulfil those needs. And then it could only happen by us continuing to support our foundation. So I will say to all the lions out there, thank you for your support of LCIF, let's continue to make a difference in the world and make this world a better place for all people to live. Thank you.

Thank you Douglas Alexander.

It's time now for a short break, we'll be back after this ...

Never miss an episode of Step Forward and Volunteer listen via www.lionsclubs.co or subscribe via Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts or Google podcasts.

Now we are joined by Ron Lindsay a member of Tickhill and District Lions Club, near Doncaster in South Yorkshire who is here to talk about their annual fundraising programme in support of their local community and how as a club they've joined forces with

surrounding lions clubs to not only fundraise but secure grants, successfully from the Lions Clubs International Foundation.

Hello, Ron. Hello. Hi. Now, the Tickhill and District Lions have an important fundraising programme. Could you tell us a bit about it Ron? So for instance, do you have a yearly plan or who would benefit from your support.

We certainly do have a yearly plan. Started in June-July, we have two classic car shows each year. The first one is in June each year, which we hold in our local town of Rossington. And the second one is in now within Bircotes, another township in our area, and that's held in September, we also have the Santa Sleigh at Christmas time each year. Very, very popular. So a great fundraiser for our club. We do have Christmas raffles, we have many, many, what we call race nights in various venues to help raise our funds and to help other clubs around the district like local cricket clubs, local football teams, and that sort of thing. And there are many other things. We have an Easter Egg Extravaganza, which is a great money raiser, and we have special events for fundraising as well, such as which we did last year for the Ukraine appeal, we did raise quite a large amount of money for the Ukraine last year as a club. In rural South Yorkshire, we raised about £18,500. So we did very well on that. Wow. And regarding the classic car shows, we would get lots of sponsorship from local companies, from car dealerships and bus companies, classic car builders and renovaters, they're only too pleased to sponsor. And we do produce a programme where we get lots of local advertisers. And we make a lot of fundraising out of the programme as well. So it's a great fundraiser, you know, twice a year.

So that's brilliant. So what kind of people benefit from all your fundraising?

Well, in recent times, we have a policy where we raise more money locally, and we try and donate back into the local community. Around 90% of our fundraising, goes back into the local community. But then there are other special cases such as Bluebell Wood, which we've supported in recent times, and the Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospital Trust, which we've supported with the Serenity Appeal in recent times as well. Many local individuals have the benefit of our fundraising.

That's amazing, and also as, as a club, you've been really good at raising funds to support your community with neighbouring lions as well. Am I right in that. Especially on the matching grant side of things. We've applied for two matching grants in recent times, along with Bluebell Wood, and one for the Serenity Suite for the Doncaster hospitals. The Bluebell Wood appeal, we joined forces with six of the Lions Clubs. Five from South Yorkshire and one from North Nottinghamshire that we managed to raise enough funding to apply for our first matching grant. That's fantastic. And secondly, we joined forces with a local club 12 miles away at Thorne, and we managed to raise a significant amount of money for the Serenity Appeal, to build a Serenity Suite at the Doncaster Hospital.

Wow. So the first grant that you joined forces for was for the Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Yes, I can. Yes, we've always supported Bluebell Wood for many years, we do have what we call a President's Charity. And for many years prior to this, Bluebell Wood received our

President's Charitable Award. But we have quite a large amount of funding in our club. And we had an opportunity to donate a larger amount, because we knew they were in need of certain things. Bluebell Wood was established in 2008. And obviously, by the time it came to 2018-2020 that sort of thing, they were in need of a lot of renovation. So we donated as a club £5000, and we managed to increase that to £8,350 with the support of other clubs, which then enabled us to apply for a matching grant. Now the minimum matching grant is \$10,000, which, with today's exchange rate is about £8,500. So that was pretty fortunate. They're brilliant, so we managed to renovate several of their family rooms, we put new, I'll just say a little bit about Bluebell Wood itself first. It's used for children and young people up to the age of 25 years old, for end of life care, that's what it's all about. And we've been many times with our Santa Sleigh that we've had a great time there with the children. And we could see that the rooms needed renovation. So we managed to decorate or provide funding to decorate-seven of the family rooms. Wow. And we put into the rooms as well, adjustable height sink units for the various sizes of children, you know, so they can be adjusted, several televisions, the latest state of the art televisions with all the latest programming and Netflix and all that sort of thing. And we installed children's hoists in each of the rooms as well, which is an essential feature really, to have the hoist to lift children. And we also installed an adjustable hoist on a track system in the spa room as well in the spa pool to help get the children in and out of the spa pool and spa bath. Which has special features as well with special lighting, and radio on special music and all that type of thing as well. So, yeah, that was a great thing.

Yes I mean, I've seen some pictures and they're absolutely beautiful rooms. And that, that makes a real difference actually to have both beautiful and useful rooms.

Absolutely, yes. It was a great thing to be able to do it for them, a lot of satisfaction out of doing it as well.

I'm sure. For your second application you raised money for Doncaster Royal Infirmary. And I think you also joined forces with other lions for that. Am I right?

Yes, when you apply for a matching grant, you can't do it in isolation, you have to join forces. There has to be at least two clubs involved. Right. So with the first one we have seven clubs involved in the second one the matching grant for the Serenity Suite. Two clubs involved, two very proactive, a large clubs in South Yorkshire being Tickhill and District and Thorne Rural Lions Club. So we joined forces with them to raise funding for that, we jointly managed to get together £15,100 in initially. And that with today's exchange rates equates to \$20,000. So we applied, for a grant of \$20,000. We had the benefit of the exchange rate coming back from the USA to us as well, that worked in our favour, so that when it came back it was increased to £33,475. Wow, so that was the matching grant element for the Serenity Suite. But we went on beyond that and we raised even more money. We raised another £5,100 after that. So the final sum was almost £40,000, you see, so that's a great thing.

And what is the Serenity Suite?

Well, the Serenity Suite is in Doncaster and Bassett via our local hospital is in Doncaster and Bassetlaw Trust. So, Bassetlaw is an area in North Nottingham, sure. So we straggled the border between Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, when we were there we have the benefit of all the facilities. And the Serenity Suite is a long awaited, mothers when they have the loss of an infant, it's been very difficult for them because they've been in the normal children's ward with all the other mothers who have got healthy babies. So it was essential really. Absolutely. So at last its coming to fruition it is due to be completed on June the 12th. So looking forward to that.

You've talked about matching grants, can you tell us a bit more about what that means and what the process is about then?

Yes, I could, matching grants for large scale humanitarian projects. And most serve a large population, grants are awarded between 10,000 US dollars up to 100,000 US dollars. And projects typically provide funding for capital and construction and equipment, such as mobile health units, centres for the disabled, medical equipment, and equipment for nursing homes and schools. There has to be more than one Lions Club involved when applying for a grant. And there are three meetings each year to consider all the applications. So you have to start your project at least six months in advance to go your fundraising, put it all together, put your project plan together, and then make the application itself. You have to say what the purpose is, you have to come up with a project timing plan, you have to come up with a project budget, and a timeframe for completion to satisfy the criteria. The meetings take

place in January and May and August each year. There is a procedure there to follow. It shouldn't put people off. I've done two now, I'm gonna do another one.

Yeah, it sounds like a good planning structure that's in place.

That's brilliant because you can achieve so much more with these matching grants. I mean, they have an incredible resource, aren't they?

Absolutely.

Yes, absolutely and are you planning any further applications to Lions Clubs International Foundation for any other initiatives in the future?

We certainly are, we're very proactive we're always thinking about what we can achieve. If I just explained that the Bluebell Wood initiative was for young people up to the age of 25, and said the Serenity Appeal was for families and parents in their time of loss. And to complete the next step we're looking to the older range of the community. And we're going to support John's Hospice, which is the base for end of life care. So really that's a programme that will benefit the whole community.

That's amazing. That's absolutely amazing. So it's absolutely fascinating how much can be achieved when Lions come together in the way that you've described? So have you got any tips or stories to tell on that aspect?

Absolutely, yes. What I would like to do is encourage clubs really, to work together where there are many small clubs, but if they join forces, that can achieve so much more, and share the benefit.

Yes, absolutely. It's what Lions do best. I think they work together. Yes, yes. Oh, Ron, thank you so much for sharing all the amazing work you're doing at Tickhill and District Lions. And I wish you all the best in the future for all your further fundraising.

Okay, thank you so much Sam.

That is all we have time for on this month's podcast. Don't forget you can also listen to past editions of the Step Forward and Volunteer podcast any time via www.lionsclubs.co or on Spotify, Podbean, Apple podcasts or Google podcasts.

If you would like to know more on either the purpose built Serenity Suite which is being located away from the busy main labour ward, allowing families to be together in a safe, secure and serene space, or to see how Bluebell Wood Children's Hospice has had their family rooms, soft play and hydrotherapy rooms renovated and refurbished, please go to lionsclubs.co/Public/lion-magazine/ and view the LION Magazine Autumn 2022 edition.

Thanks once again to our special guests Chair of the Lions Clubs International Foundation, Douglas Alexander, Ron Lindsay from Tickhill and District Lions and to Mandy Broadbent, and a big thank you to you our listeners as well. Take care and goodbye.