

The History of the New Freedom Lions Club 1933 to Present Day

One summer day in 1933, LIONS CLUB organizer George Anderson visited several prominent citizens in New Freedom to stir up interest in a Lions Club for New Freedom. The late Lion William S. Grove, the first president of the new freedom Lions Club and the late Lion Henry Freed then visited the Stewartstown Lions Club under the co-sponsorship of the Glen Rock and Stewartstown Lions Clubs. The Lions Club was organized on September 22, 1933, chartered December 5, 1933 with 50 charter members, and is still serving the community today.

One of the first major actives of the Club was to assume responsibility for the operation of the New Freedom Playground. Since all directors of the New Freedom Playground Association became members of the Lions Club, it seems proper for the Club to operate the playground. When the WPA came along in the late 1930's, an opportunity developed to have the playground graded. In order to arrange this, the playground was deeded to the New Freedom Borough with the understanding that the Lions Club would operate it. This arrangement is still in effect today, although the maintenance of the grounds was taken over by the New Freedom Borough in the 1970's. After grading, the club had the playground seeded, planted 100 trees and laid out a baseball diamond. Several pieces of playground equipment for children were also installed. Down through the years, a new bandstand was built, permanent electrical wiring was put up, new buildings were built and maintained, a washroom was built, and funds were provided to help build the tennis courts and softball diamond. The club continued to benefit the community in 1963 by donating \$1,000 to assist in the construction of the playground tennis courts and \$300 for grading and paving the basketball court. During the years 1967 and 1968, the Club donated over \$1,000 for the new and replacement equipment for the playground. The most recent major improvement was the complete renovation of the famous "COOKSHACK" which will continue to provide delicious food for the Club's annual carnival for many years to come.

The foremost activity of the Lions Clubs' is working with the blind in association with Lions International and the Pennsylvania State organization. The Club has presented white canes to all blind people in the community. It has paid for the eye examinations of children and has furnished eye glasses to many needy persons. The Club also supports the Blind Center of York, Beacon Lodge Camp for the Blind, and many other projects for the blind, recommended by our District Governor. In 1979, the Club supported the rebuilding program of the Wills Eye Hospital in Philadelphia by taking out life memberships in the names of all New Freedom Loins Members at that time, thus becoming the only 100% Life Club in Pennsylvania. The total gift to the Wills Eye Hospital amounted to \$7,000.

Our local schools have also come in for a fair share of interest. Some years ago an American flag was presented to the local school and, on three different occasions, raincoats and hats were purchased for the safety patrol. When Susquehannock High School was opened, Contributions were made towards the cost of uniforms and instruments for the band. The Club has supported the senior all-night party since it began in the late 1950's, the AFS program, and many other school sponsored programs. The Club was instrumental in raising the funds and sponsoring the Susquehannock Warriors Marching Band to attend the Lions International Convention in Montreal, Canada. We presently provide for six \$1,000 scholarships.

The New Freedom Lions Club is involved in supporting a great number of community clubs and projects. The Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts and several Explorer posts have been sponsored by the Club since 1934. The Club presently sponsors the local Boy Scout Troop #24 and Cub Pack #24. A building was erected on the playground as a meeting place for Boy, Girl, and Cub Scouts in 1949. Contributions, through a sustaining membership program, the the York Adams Area Council of the Boy Scouts and Camp Tuckahoe have been made over the years along with a gift of \$2,000 in 1982 and 1983 in support of the capital campaign for Camp Tuckahoe and a gift of over \$5,000 in 1988 through 2002 in support of the new Scout Service Center located in York.

In 1935, the Club sponsored the New Freedom baseball club and many years has contributed toward the support of the local Baseball for Boys program. The Club laid out the softball diamond at the playground in 1948 and continues to sponsor a ball team.

In 1940, the New Freedom Fire Company organized a campaign to raise funds for an ambulance. The Lions Club put on a minstrel show and the proceeds were donated to the ambulance fund. Currently the New Freedom Lions support the Fire Company and Ambulance Club with donations of \$2,500.

New Freedom Lions have also been instrumental in helping a neighboring community establish a Lions Club. One fall day in 1951, Lion Allen Reed and Lion Harry Bortner went to Shrewsbury to attempt to stir up some Lionism. Three Shrewsbury citizens, Frank Haven, Tyrus Young, and Earl Helfrich showed enthusiasm and assisted the Lions of New Freedom in forming a club of 45 charter members. Thus, Shrewsbury Lions Club was organized on October 27, 1952, with Frank Haven as the first president, and chartered December 12, 1952.

In 1968, the Club sponsored the beautiful New Freedom Borough Christmas Street lighting decorations costing \$2,400 of which \$700 was paid by the Lions Club and the remaining \$1700 was paid by local businessmen. Member of the Club have installed and removed the lights for the last 35 years. The Club has continued to update and replace the lights, and added decorations of a Christmas Tree near the main street and the railroad in recent years.

In 1968, the Club donated \$480 to the New Freedom Library Center and further agreed to pay for an electric typewriter and an air conditioner, amounting to a total contribution of approximately \$1,400. Continued support has been given to the library over the years. This continues to provide funds for the library in addition to the annual New Freedom Lions contributions. The Club completed the pledge of \$25, 000 to assist in construction of the new South York County Library which opened on October 25, 2003.

The New freedom Lions recognized the need for a larger community center and started setting funds aside in the early 1960's to assist in the construction of a new community center. After the celebration of the New Freedom Centennial in 1973, several of the members of the Lions Club met with key leaders of the Centennial committee and the Fire Company, who needed a new building to house their large equipment. They discussed the construction of a new community center and fire company complex to be built on the New Freedom school grounds, recently acquired by the New Freedom Borough. The Lions Club pledged \$50,000 towards construction of the complex which was built in 1974. Since 1974, the Lions Club has given well over \$150,000 to help build the community center, purchase items for the kitchen, provide heat pumps in addition to other needed items, and rebuilt several of the rooms.

Through the years, many other activities have also been carried out for the benefit of the community. Some of these include: installing street identification signs; conducting Santa Land at Christmas ; sponsoring the Red Cross Drive, March of Dimes, War and Welfare Drive, Salvage Drive in 1942, United Fund Drive, Red Cross Blood Bank, Sound System at Pleasant Acres, Students' Summer Program, Youth Exchange, and Operating a haunted house at Halloween.

In addition, the Lions provide annual donations to support Southern Community Services, Southern Coalition Fuel Fund, Southern Food Pantry, Senior Center, New Freedom, Gardeners, H.O.P.E., and Independence Day Parade.

In 1997, the Club donated \$10,000 toward the building of the Southern York County Branch Y.M.C.A.

The Club holds an annual carnival to raise money for its' varied activities. It is estimated that more

than \$1.4 million has been raised over the years and used for many activities sponsored by the Club. The carnival is run by volunteer help from the community and approximately 80% of the proceeds are donated back to the community. The other 20% is donated to support Lionism through Wills Eye Hospital, Leader Dogs, Beacon Lodge, etc. All such monies are used for the benefit of others. It is also estimated that more than \$250,000 has been earned by the Fire Company, Friends of the Library, Lioness Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Jaycees and Jaycettes, and Senior Center at the carnival and used for the benefit of others.

The New Freedom Lions Club sponsors the annual Christmas tree lighting event each year. The event gathers many community organizations to come together for this wonderful start to the holiday season. The event is held each year, the Saturday after Thanksgiving at Freedom Green, down town New Freedom. The event includes the Susquahanock Jazz Band playing and singing holiday songs, Santa coming down on the back of the Rose Fire Company ladder truck. Santa is lifted up to the top of the tree to light it up, signaling the start of the holiday season. Santa also comes down to greet all of the children of New Freedom in the gazebo. The gazebo is decorated each year by the New Freedom Gardeners club. The girl scouts of new freedom provide hot chocolate and cookies for the event. This is truly the most festive event of the year for all to enjoy.

In 2021 the New Freedom Lioness club folded into the New Freedom Lions Club. Now the club has taken over the annual Christmas Bizarre. The event is held on the first weekend of November, in the New Freedom Community Center. The club also took over responsibility to support a needy family during the holiday season. The club supplies Christmas gifts for a family through Southern York Country Social Services.