

Rhinelanders Lions 85th Anniversary 1940-2025



“We Serve”

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Directors: Jodie O'Donnell, Don Thiesen,
Malisa Vinger, Sandy Mode

The Rhinelander Lions Club: A Legacy of Service (1940–2025)

Lions Motto: “We Serve.”

Founding and Early Years (1940–1950s)

The Rhinelander Lions Club was officially organized on **August 19, 1940**, sponsored by the Merrill Lions Club, with **31 charter members** dedicated to service and community improvement. The Club held its first meeting on **September 3, 1940**, and celebrated its **Charter Night** on **October 8, 1940**, at the Oneida Hotel.

Since its founding, the Rhinelander Lions Club has been proudly affiliated with **Lions Clubs International**, the world’s largest service organization. Established in 1917, Lions International now includes more than **1.4 million members** in nearly **49,000 clubs worldwide**, each united under the motto “We Serve.”

A defining moment in Lions history occurred in **1925**, when **Helen Keller** addressed the Lions International Convention. Through her interpreter, she challenged the Lions to become “**Knights of the Blind in the crusade against darkness.**” The Lions accepted that challenge, and the Rhinelander Lions Club has embodied this mission locally ever since—committed to improving vision health and aiding the visually impaired.

The **charter members** of the Rhinelander Lions Club were:

Bruce Anderson, R.A. Carlson, Norman Danner, H.T. Decker, N.C. Ehlko, Dr. Walter Gagner, Charles Gibson, Kris Gilbertson, Dr. C.P. Goossen, Lloyd B. Gullickson, H. Hanson, J. Gordon Hough, Barto Howard, Oscar W. Johnson, Dr. L.F. Kais, A.L. Lange, Edwin Lillrose, H. Lindner, Fred P. Locke, Jack McIsaac, W.L. Madson, George Moiser, Earl A. Korth, E.V. Peterson, George Richards, W.S. Thomas, Lloyd R. Taylor, Lloyd Verage, W.A. Webster, F.G. Weigil, and Ted H. Wheeler.

From its earliest years, the Rhinelander Lions played a vital role in **expanding Lionism across Northern Wisconsin**, sponsoring new clubs in **Crandon, Conover, Eagle River, Elcho–Pelican Lake, Land O’Lakes, Hurley, Minocqua, Phelps, Sugar Camp, Rhinelander Lioness, Northwoods, and the Nicolet College Campus Club and Rhinelander Leo (youth) Club.**

Over the decades, the Club has produced **twelve District Governors** for **District 27–C2**, with two members serving twice:

Dr. S.T. Donovan (1944–45), Norman S. Hoel (1949–50), Dr. Harvey Hougen (1970–71), Daniel J. Stevens (1975–76), Harold J. Knauf (1978–79), Charles P. Franz (1981–82), Edward J. Sirek (1983–84 and 1993–94), Mike Condella (1987–88) Harry Helwig (2002–03 and 2007–08), and Ed Linneman (2005–06)

The Rhinelander Lions have consistently maintained strong representation on the **District 27–C2 Cabinet**, serving roughly **ten north-central Wisconsin counties**. Since its founding, the Club has participated in every **District Convention**, and has hosted the **Wisconsin Lions State Convention** in **1946, 1960, 1976, 1986, and 1997**—making Rhinelander the smallest community in Wisconsin ever to host this statewide event.

As of 2025, the Club proudly counts **39 members**, including **eight past presidents** still actively serving. Although all charter members are now deceased, their spirit of service lives on in the projects and people they inspired.

Early Projects and Wartime Years (1941–1949)

In **1941**, one of the first community projects undertaken by the Rhinelander Lions Club was the **funding of crutches** manufactured by boys in the Rhinelander National Youth Administration program. Though modest in scale, this effort met an urgent need, as polio and other diseases had created a significant local demand for mobility aids.

That same year, the Lions began their enduring support of **Badger Boys State Camp**, selecting **Robert Rolain** as Rhinelander’s first representative—a tradition the Club proudly continues.

During **World War II**, 1942 the Lions turned their attention to the national effort, organizing programs in support of soldiers and recognizing local servicemen.

In **1946**, just a year after the war ended, the Club introduced what would become one of Rhinelander’s longest-running traditions—the **Fourth of July Kiddie Parade**. This cherished event continues to this day, delighting generations of families.

In **1946**, the Rhinelander Lions extended their support to **Camp Tesomas**, a Boy Scout camp near Rhinelander, by constructing **two cabins**—the first of many contributions to Scouting in the Northwoods. This commitment continued for decades; in **2024**, nearly eighty years later, the Lions—alongside **Trig’s** and the **family of Lion John Flammang**—donated **three Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)** to Camp Tesomas to ensure camper safety.

In **1947**, the Club embarked on its **first major fundraising project**: raising **\$12,000** to build a lodge and facilities at **Camp Birchrock**, a Girl Scout camp. Members donated countless hours of labor to construct buildings, trails, roads, and beach areas. The camp opened to young campers in **1949**, with **Lion Ray Iverson** serving as foreman of the work crew and **Lion Lloyd Taylor** chairing the fundraising drive. Camp Birchrock continues to thrive today, with the Rhinelander Lions still providing annual financial support for its operations.

From **1946 to 1982**, the Lions partnered with the City of Rhinelander to host an annual **citywide Halloween Party**, designed to provide safe entertainment for children and curb vandalism during the holiday.

Also in **1946**, the Club began its decades-long **vision assistance program**, purchasing eyeglasses for children at the request of the city nurse. That small beginning grew into a comprehensive local vision aid fund administered with the **Oneida County Health Department**, providing thousands of dollars in eye exams, glasses, and surgeries for those in need.

The Lions went on to organize an annual **Junior Health Fair**, conducting eye screenings and later expanding to full-scale vision programs across public and parochial schools. In **2017**, the Club purchased the **first Eye Spot Scanner** in the Northwoods—technology that now benefits children throughout the region. The Club continues to assist with vision screenings. In **2024 alone**, the Lions screened **869 students across seven schools**, referring **81 children** for professional evaluation.

The Club’s dedication to community health extended beyond eyesight. In past decades, members collaborated with local nurses to conduct **blood sugar testing** at shopping centers and organized **diabetes awareness programs**, further advancing the Lions’ global health mission.

Postwar Growth and Community Expansion (1950s–1970s)

The postwar years marked a period of tremendous growth and service innovation for the Rhinelander Lions Club. Fueled by optimism and civic pride, the Lions dedicated their energy to youth programs, education, recreation, and health initiatives that would shape Rhinelander for decades to come.

1950s: Investing in Youth, Community, and Vision

By **1954**, the Club turned its attention to environmental stewardship, planting **550 maple trees** along **Stevens Street** and in **Hodag Park**, creating lasting natural beauty throughout the community. Decades later, in **2013**, third-generation Lion **Bruce Carlson**, owner of Carlson Funeral Home, led an effort to commemorate his family’s 100 years in business by planting **100 disease-resistant elm trees** in partnership with local organizations—an initiative supported and assisted by the Rhinelander Lions.

In **1955**, the Club awarded its **first scholarship**—a \$1,200 grant to **James Johnson**, a Rhinelander High School student who went on to earn a **Ph.D. from Cornell University**. In **2017**, Dr. Johnson contacted the Club to express his enduring gratitude and contributed **\$5,000** to the scholarship fund, stating, “The time has come not

just to say thanks to the Lions Club, but to contribute to your fund.” The Lions have continued to award annual scholarships to graduating high school seniors ever since, helping countless students achieve their educational goals.

Over the years, the Lions have also recognized excellence in local youth by presenting **trophies to the outstanding male and female Rhinelander High School athletes**, and by supporting academic and extracurricular programs such as **Debate, Mock Trial, FBLA/DECA**, and a variety of sports teams including **football, basketball, skiing, and soccer**.

The Club has sponsored youth recreation at every level—funding **Little League baseball, Pop Warner football, youth basketball, soccer leagues, and flag football programs**—ensuring that young people in the community have opportunities for healthy growth and teamwork.

Building the Community: 1956–1960s

The Lions’ commitment to preserving local history and culture became evident in **1956**, when the Club led the **fundraising effort for the Pioneer Park Logging Museum**, relocating the building to its current site and creating a permanent home for Rhinelander’s logging heritage. The Lions also contributed to the **restoration of the “5-Spot” narrow-gauge logging train**, which remains one of the museum’s centerpiece attractions. Today, the Logging Museum is widely recognized as one of the finest collections of its kind in Wisconsin.

Also in **1956**, the **Wisconsin Lions Camp** was established in **Rosholt, Wisconsin**, offering week-long summer experiences for **blind, visually impaired, hearing-impaired, diabetic, and special-needs children**—completely free of charge. From the camp’s earliest days, the Rhinelander Lions contributed significantly, donating **two pontoon boats, an electric organ, constructing a cabin and funds for the construction of an additional cabin**, and additional support for facilities. The Club continues to donate to the Wisconsin Lions Camp each year, helping local children attend and collecting **deer hides** annually to raise funds for camp operations.

The Club’s dedication to vision and independence also led to a long partnership with the **Leader Dogs for the Blind School** in Rochester, Michigan, beginning in **1957**. The Rhinelander Lions have sponsored several guide dogs for training and covered travel expenses for visually impaired individuals attending the school. Locally, the Club has donated **Braille clocks, talking watches, white canes, special typewriters, tape recorders, and Braille magazine subscriptions** to area residents. In the 1970s, the Lions also provided **large-print editions of The New York Times and Reader’s Digest** to the local library.

In **1958**, the Club contributed funds to the **Rhineland Tomahawk Ski Corporation** for the development of **Camp 10**, a ski hill located south of the city. Camp 10 operated for many years as a beloved local destination and is now being prepared for reopening in **2025**, a testament to the enduring community spirit that helped build it.

In **1961**, the Lions hosted the popular **Aunt Jemima Pancake Days**, a cheerful and well-attended community celebration.

The 1960s–1970s: Innovation and Local Pride

From **1966 to 1975**, the Rhinelander Lions sponsored the **Hodag 50 Snowmobile Race**, one of the **first organized snowmobile competitions in the United States**. Held at the site now known as the **Hodag Country Festival Grounds**, the event attracted competitors and spectators from across the nation and Canada, boosting Rhinelander’s winter tourism economy and solidifying its place in early snowmobiling history.

Another cultural hallmark of the era was the **Belles of St. Mary’s**, Rhinelander’s celebrated **all-girl Drum and Bugle Corps (1956–1977)**, which the Lions proudly supported financially. The Belles represented Rhinelander at parades and **Wisconsin Lions State Conventions**, showcasing both musical talent and community spirit.

The Lions also played a key role in developing **Hodag Park** during this era. They funded the architect

rendering of a **master park layout plan**, constructed **three open-air pavilions**, provided **playground equipment**, and installed the **iconic Lion water fountain** that became a beloved landmark. In later years, the Club contributed **\$50,000 in 2010** toward construction of the **Babe Ruth enclosed pavilion and restrooms** near the park's boat landing—part of a partnership with the **City of Rhinelander** and the **Diamond Club**. The Lions also donated to the **Little League Association** for the construction of its concession building and made contributions to the **Hodag Water Ski Shows**, where the Club helped fund the construction of the ski ramp.

The Club has also contributed to **Westside Park**, financing lighting for the ball diamond and playground equipment.

In **2025**, nearly seven decades after their first park improvements, the Lions once again supported local recreation by donating **\$40,000** to the **Rhinelander Kiwanis Club** to help fund the new **Hodag Park Splash Pad**, a project that will serve generations of children.

During the **1970s**, the Lions contributed **\$10,000** to assist the **Rhinelander Ice Association** in building the city's **indoor ice arena**, and in earlier years donated a **skate sharpener** to the Parks and Recreation Department. The Club also sponsored the **Silver Skate Derby**, an ice-skating event that became a cherished event for several years.

Since approximately **1962**, the Rhinelander Lions have collected **tens of thousands of used eyeglasses** from community members. The original collection containers—designed by charter member **Lloyd Gullickson**—were placed in public spaces throughout Rhinelander. Today, the Club maintains **27 collection boxes**, and the donated glasses are processed at the **Lions Eyeglass Recycling Center** in Rosholt, where over **one million pairs** were processed statewide in 2024.

In **1976**, the Club introduced another beloved tradition—the **Boom Lake Ice Fisheree**. The tournament quickly became one of the premier winter fishing events in the Northwoods, attracting anglers from across the region. Even in **2020**, when unsafe ice conditions prevented fishing, the Lions held the raffle portion of the event, demonstrating resilience and community commitment. In earlier years, the Fisheree featured **tagged fish worth up to \$15,000** and spanned two full days of competition.

Community Leadership and Health Initiatives (Late 1970s–1990s)

As Rhinelander entered the late 1970s, the Lions Club expanded its focus on health, humanitarian service, and community engagement. The Club's projects from this era demonstrate an enduring spirit of compassion and leadership that continues to define the organization today.

1979: Visionary Leadership and Medical Advancement

In **1979**, the Rhinelander Lions achieved one of their most enduring legacies by establishing an **Eye Bank Substation** in cooperation with **St. Mary's Hospital**. This initiative soon became one of the **top four substations in the State of Wisconsin** for collecting and transporting donated eyes for corneal transplants and research.

Since its inception, the Rhinelander Eye Bank Substation has provided **more than 2,080 donated eyes** to the **Wisconsin Eye Bank in Madison**, restoring sight to countless individuals and advancing medical research. The Club financed the **training of nurses** for eye enucleation procedures, and members regularly volunteer to **transport corneas** via a relay system to Madison within six hours of donation—often in the middle of the night.

The Club also contributed **\$5,500** to the **Eye Bank Research Center at the University Hospital in Madison** and extended their reach internationally by donating **eye enucleation equipment** to assist with the formation of Panama's first Eye Bank.

This commitment continues to the present day, as the Club remains an active partner with the **Restoring Hope Transplant House** in Madison and maintains financial support for the Wisconsin Lions Eye Bank.

In **1979**, the Rhinelander Lions also sponsored the city's **first Lioness Club**, offering women the opportunity to serve the community under the Lions umbrella. The Lioness Club became an energetic force in community improvement, complementing the efforts of the parent organization.

Health and Wellness for All

From **1979 to 2002**, the Rhinelander Lions sponsored annual **Community Health Fairs**, organized in partnership with **St. Mary's Hospital**, later **Ministry Health Care Hospital and Clinic**. These events drew an average attendance of **1,200 residents each year**, with over **70 exhibitors** providing health information and screenings.

Attendees received free or low-cost testing for **glaucoma, blood pressure, blood sugar, tetanus immunity, and hearing**, while educational booths raised awareness on topics ranging from nutrition to diabetes prevention. The Health Fairs became a cornerstone of the Lions' public service, improving the well-being of generations of Rhinelander residents.

1980s: Responding to Community Needs

In **1981–82**, **Lion Charles P. Franz** served as District Governor of **District 27-C2**, continuing the Club's tradition of strong leadership within the state organization. Throughout the decade, the Rhinelander Lions became known not only for their community service but also for their willingness to respond to crises.

In **1986**, when the **City of Rhinelander's liability insurance** was suddenly canceled—forcing the temporary closure of all municipal recreational programs—the Lions stepped in along with others. They **took over the city's recreation programs**, ensuring that youth and community activities could continue until the city restored its insurance coverage. The action garnered **nationwide publicity**, earning the Club widespread praise for its commitment to civic responsibility.

That same year, the Lions organized the **“Journey for Sight” 10K Run**, which drew a large turnout and raised funds for vision programs, reinforcing their reputation as both organizers and innovators.

The Club also expanded its focus on youth and families during this period. Since **1984**, the Rhinelander Lions have hosted an annual **Christmas Party for Head Start children**, providing gifts, activities, and holiday joy for local preschoolers. The Club also **funded the fence at the Head Start playground**, ensuring a safe play space for children. The Head Start Christmas Party remains a beloved annual tradition.

1987: “Christmas Not Alone” — A Tradition of Togetherness

In **1987**, the Rhinelander Lions launched one of their most meaningful community events: the **“Christmas Not Alone” Dinner**, now known as the **Community Christmas Dinner**.

Originally held at the **Fenlon Hotel**, the dinner later moved to the **National Guard Armory, St. Joseph's Church, and Nativity of Our Lord Parish**, evolving from a sit-down event to include **carry-out and delivery options**.

Since the **COVID-19 pandemic**, the Lions—partnering with **Trig's**, whose large ovens are used to cook the turkeys—have offered **pickup and home delivery only**, ensuring that everyone in the community can still enjoy a traditional holiday meal. **Sonny Paszak** assisted for many years, preparing the turkeys with the same care and dedication that defined the Lions' mission.

The dinner remains **free and open to all**, with volunteers delivering meals to anyone and assisting with service. In **2024**, over **900 meals** were served—a record that reflects both community need and the Lions' enduring generosity.

Community Enrichment and Economic Support

The early **1990s** saw the Club broaden its outreach even further. In **1993**, the Lions partnered with **Downtown Rhinelander, Inc.** to sponsor the lively **Duck Races**, a community event that ran successfully for several years.

That same year, the Lions began supporting the **Oneida County Fair**, operating a **food booth** for many years and continuing to contribute financially to fair operations.

The Club also reaffirmed its commitment to local education and youth programs, expanding scholarship offerings and maintaining consistent involvement in academic, athletic, and community events during the 90s.

Ongoing Dedication to Sight and Service

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Rhinelander Lions continued to expand their work in **vision care**, **health education**, and **community improvement**, remaining a cornerstone of civic life in Rhinelander. From sponsoring sports programs to building recreational facilities, the Club demonstrated that the Lions' motto —**"We Serve"**—is more than a phrase; it is a way of life.

Modern Service and Expansion (2000–2025)

As the new millennium began, the Rhinelander Lions Club entered a period of renewal, growth, and diversification. The Club embraced new challenges while remaining rooted in the values of service, fellowship, and community betterment that have guided it since 1940.

A New Era of Inclusion and Service

In **2005**, the Rhinelander Lions Club proudly **admitted women as full members** for the first time in its history. While many of the Lions' spouses had long supported Club projects, the inclusion of women marked a significant step forward, broadening the Club's perspectives and expanding its capacity to serve.

In **2014**, **Barbara Haenel** became the **first female President** of the Rhinelander Lions Club, symbolizing this new era of inclusion. The participation and leadership of women have since proven invaluable to the Club's continued strength and vitality.

That same year, the Club began its ongoing **financial and volunteer support of the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry**, which opened in **2005**. Each month, on the fourth Saturday, Lions members volunteer to distribute food. The Club continues to contribute financially and the Lions are major supporters of **Harvest Hoedown**, an annual community fundraising event that benefits the Rhinelander Area Food Pantry. In 2025 the Lions also became supporters of RAFF's new kids program, **Hodag Monster Meals**, a monthly meal bag program for kids and teens, providing free food to help address food insecurity.

Partnerships with Frederick Place and Lilly's House

In **2010**, the Lions began providing financial support to the newly opened **Frederick Place**, a 16-bed emergency shelter serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Operated by the **Northwoods Alliance for Temporary Housing (NATH)**, Frederick Place provides temporary housing, meals, and assistance for people in crisis.

The Lions also contribute annually to **Lilly's House**, another vital local organization supporting women and children in need. Through these partnerships, the Club continues to live its mission of compassion and community care.

Environmental and Civic Beautification

The Rhinelander Lions have long taken pride in improving both the natural and civic beauty of the community.

The club has contributed to the **Avenue of Flags** on the Davenport Street Bridge and helps sponsor the **downtown flower baskets**. Twice each year, members take part in cleaning up Highway 8 from Air Park Road to Golf Course Road. The club also helped install two “**Welcome to Rhinelander**” signs, reinforcing its commitment to keeping Rhinelander clean, inviting, and community-focused.

Continuing the Mission of Sight and Health

Vision and health services remain at the heart of the Lions’ identity. The Club continues its **annual White Cane Days**, raising funds for vision programs and the Wisconsin Lions Camp. These efforts honor the tradition begun in 1925 with Helen Keller’s challenge to become “Knights of the Blind.” The Lions also support diabetes education and awareness programs, reinforcing their commitment to lifelong health.

Recognition and New Initiatives

In **2013**, the Lions began supporting **Let’s Go Fishing – Rhinelander Chapter**, an organization providing safe and accessible fishing experiences for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

In **2017**, the Rhinelander Lions were honored as the **Non-Profit Organization of the Year** by the **Rhinelander Chamber of Commerce**, recognizing decades of community leadership and service.

That same year, the Lions played a crucial role in launching the **Lights of the Northwoods**, a community-driven holiday light display in Hodag Park. The Lions sponsored the project under their **501(c)(3)** nonprofit status for its inaugural year, helping to secure funding and establish the event. Today, Lights of the Northwoods operates as an independent organization, though the Lions continue to donate and assist annually.

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The year **2020** will long be remembered as a time of global uncertainty. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, the Rhinelander Lions adapted swiftly to support their community.

The Club donated **\$1,000** to the **Nicolet College Foundation** to help students facing financial hardship and another **\$1,000** to the **Rhinelander Food Pantry**, which had transitioned to outdoor pickup service. To support local businesses, the Lions purchased **\$2,300 in gift certificates** from area shops and restaurants and distributed them to essential workers providing frontline services.

During this time, the Club temporarily suspended **Lions Bingo** and held meetings via **Zoom**, ensuring safety while maintaining fellowship and planning for continued service.

Recent Contributions and Collaborations

In **2023**, the Lions partnered with the **Seventh-Day Adventist Thrift Store** to purchase **two Mustang Ice Commander Rescue Suits** for the **Rhinelander Fire Department**, enhancing first responder safety during ice rescues. The Club also continues to make annual donations to the **Rhinelander Police Department’s Canine Unit**.

In **2024**, the Rhinelander Lions assisted the **International Ski for Light** organization during its week-long event held in Rhinelander. This remarkable program teaches visually and mobility-impaired adults the sport of cross-country skiing. The Lions partnered with **Lynn’s Catering** to prepare and serve breakfast each morning, proudly supporting this extraordinary event promoting independence and inclusion.

Fundraising, Food, and Fellowship

For more than **50 years**, the Lions’ **White Cane Days**, **Boom Lake Ice Fisheree**, and **Bingo nights** have generated funds for vital community and state programs.

The Club’s **food stands**—famous for brats, burgers, and hot dogs—have been a staple at community events

including **Ridiculous Dae**, the **Art Fair on the Courthouse Lawn**, and the **Oneida County Fair**. The Lions were even called upon for special events throughout the years, always ready to serve with enthusiasm.

In the **1980s**, the Lions operated a food stand at the **Hodag Country Music Festival**, and in **1995**, they assumed responsibility for **overflow parking**, a tradition that continues to this day. The Festival remains one of the region's premier events, supporting numerous local charities and businesses.

The Rhinelander Lions have also provided **Christmas gifts to residents in local nursing homes**, purchased **hospital equipment**, and donated items such as **wheelchair ramps, hearing machines, and hospital beds**. They contributed to the **St. Mary's Foundation** for new hospital beds and purchased an **Electronic Audiometer** to test children's hearing.

A Living Legacy

From 1940 to 2025, the Rhinelander Lions Club has remained steadfast in its mission of service. Whether funding scholarships, supporting youth and families, enhancing parks, or restoring sight, the Club's members have worked tirelessly for the betterment of their community.

Today, with **39 active members**, including **eight past presidents**, the Rhinelander Lions continue to uphold their proud motto — **"We Serve."**

When you see Lions volunteers serving food, selling raffle tickets, or collecting eyeglasses, you can be confident that funds go back into the community — supporting vision, health programs, recreation, and countless acts of kindness.

The Rhinelander Lions Club extends heartfelt thanks to all its members, partners, and supporters for 85 years of dedication and service. Together, they look forward to many more years of helping others and continuing the proud legacy of the Lions in Rhinelander, Wisconsin.

Looking Ahead to the Next 85 Years

As the Rhinelander Lions Club celebrates 85 years of service, we continue to uphold the motto *"We Serve"* with pride and purpose. The challenges of tomorrow—whether in vision care, youth development, hunger relief, or community support—are opportunities for new generations of Lions to lead with compassion, innovation, and unity.

The Rhinelander Lions remain committed to the people of our community and to the global mission of Lions Clubs International: empowering volunteers to serve their communities, meet humanitarian needs, and promote peace and understanding throughout the world.

Acknowledgments

This commemorative history was made possible through the dedication of past and present Rhinelander Lions who have faithfully preserved club records and memories. Special thanks to Lions Kris Gilbertson (former editor of the Daily News & Lions Charter Member), Himler "Doc" Grantz, Chuck Franz, Mel Hook, Don Frederickson, and Michael Romportl for their commitment to documenting and updating this history and to Jodie O'Donnell for her computer skills in formatting and proofing this document.

To every Lion who has worn the emblem, served the community, and carried the spirit of service forward —thank you for 85 years of leadership, friendship, and impact.

Rhinelanders Lions Past Presidents

1940 - J. Gordon Hough	1984 - Doug Jacobson
1941 - Norman Danner	1985 - Mike Condella
1942 - Dr S.T. Donovan	1986 - Leon Olson
1943 - Rudolph A. Carlson	1987 - Ron Palm
1944 - Ralph Keen	1988 - Harry Helwig
1945 - Eugene M. Everson	1989 - Rich Jewell
1946 - Wilburt Sweo	1990 - Dale Cook
1947 - Normal S. Hoel	1991 - Fred Sauers
1948 - Edwin Nylund	1992 - Don Jensen
1949 - Lloyd B. Gullickson	1993 - Bruce Carlson
1950 - DR. E.H. Church	1994 - Shawn Kennedy
1951 - Elmer Peterson	1994 - Charles LeHam
1952 - Edwin Wittock	1995 - Charles LeHam
1953 - Ray Iverson	1996 - Ken Cloutier
1954 - Eugen Slagowski	1997 - Gary Johnson
1955 - W.J. Taege	1998 - John Mayo
1956 - Kris Gilbertson	1999 - Ron Olewinski
1957 - Walter Hill	2000 - George Pederson
1958 - Francis Davis	2001 - Gary Dencker
1959 - Charles E. Reeves	2002 - Dick Scuglik
1960 - Harold D. Sansburn	2003 - Harry Helwig
1961 - Olav R. Enli	2004 - Jim Winquist
1962 - Matthew Koffler	2005 - Melvin Hook
1963 - Dr. E.E. Gilbert	2006 - Bill Mitchell
1964 - Joseph C. Sladky	2007 - Michael Romportl
1965 - Stanley S. Miazga	2008 - Robert Berns
1966 - Dr. Paul Lidral	2009 - Robert Berns
1967 - Owen G. Marlatt	2010 - Michael J Romportl
1968 - Edward Nelson	2011 - Michael J Romportl
1969 - Myron W. Gehrig	2012 - Donald Hoppe
1970 - Donald L. Andel	2013 - Donald Hoppe
1970 - Merlin K. Hanson	2014 - Barbara Haenel
1971 - Clyde Miller	2015 - Barbara Haenel
1972 - Gerald E. Nitke	2016 - Robert Berns
1973 - Daniel J. Stevens	2017 - Robert Berns
1974 - Harold A. Knauf	2018 - Michael Romportl
1975 - Ernie Feight	2019 - Michael Romportl
1976 - Dale Krueger	2020 - Jill Zwiers
1977 - Andrew Reichert	2021 - Jill Zwiers
1978 - Charles P. Franz	2022 - Michele Thompson
1979 - Edward J. Sirek	2022 - Donald Hoppe
1980 - Melvin Hook	2023 - Melvin Hook
1981 - Edward England	2024 - Michael Romportl
1982 - Edward Van Dervelde	2025 - Michael Romportl
1983 - Robert Carstensen	

Rhinelanders Lions Melvin Jones Recipients

The Melvin Jones is awarded from the Lions Club International Foundation (LCIF) that honors a Lion for their outstanding humanitarian service. The award is named after Melvin Jones who was the founder of Lions in 1917 which has grown to 1.4 million members worldwide. This award is the highest form of recognition and embodies humanitarian ideas consistent with the nature and purpose of Lionism.

1990 - Kris Gilbertson	2007 - Michael Romportl
1990 - Llyod Gullickson	2008 - Stan Miazga
1991 - Ed Sirek	2009 - Russ Hutter
1992 - Charles Franz	2010 - Robert Berns
1993 - Dan Stevens	2011 - Rhae Ellen Schnoor
1993 - Mike Condella	2011 - Myron Gehrig
1994 - Jim Winquist	2012 - Ed England
1996 - Olav Enli	2013 - Tom O'Rourke
1997 - Bonnie Ashby	2014 - Bruce Carlson
2000 - Hilmer "Doc" Grantz	2015 - Scott Campbell
2001 - Ed Linnemann	2016 - Sharon Linnemann
2002 - Harry Helwig	2017 - Dick Garrow
2002 - Scott Campbell	2018 - Bill Haenel
2004 - Wayne Finch	2019 - Barb Haenel
2005 - Don Ashby	2020 - Jeff Kataoka
2006 - Don Frederickson	2021 - Mary Jane Gresser
2006 - Mel Hook	2022 - Donald Hoppe
2006 - Leon Olson	

Rhinelanders Lions Birch – Sturm Recipients

The Birch Sturm Fellowship is awarded by the Wisconsin Lions Foundation in recognition of a Lions commitment and dedication to Lionism and their community. Named after Frank Birch and Clarence Sturm, the only two Presidents of the International Association of Lions Club from the State of Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Lions Foundation serves the Blind, and Visually Impaired, The Deaf and hard of Hearing, the Cognitively Disabled, and Children with Diabetes.

1993 - Dr. Harrold Kief	2012 - Don Hoppe
2006 - Charles Franz	2013 - Dick Garrow
2006 - Ed Linemann	2013 - Mel Hook
2007 - George Scholz	2014 - Michael Romportl
2007 - Roger Tooke	2014 - Marko Modic
2008 - Tom O'Rourke	2015 - Tony Cirilli
2009 - Don Ashby	2015 - Tom Gadzalinski
2010 - Fred Bloom	2016 - Bob Hext
2010 - Sharon Linemann	2017 - Rhae Ellen Schnoor
2010 - Virgil Davis	2018 - Jim Voborsky
2010 - Scott Alsteen	2019 - Tom O'Rourke
2010 - Bonnie Ashby	2020 - Don Frederickson
2011 - Harry Helwig	2021 - Bob Berns
2012 - Bill Haenel	2022 - Don Theisen

Rhinelanders Lions Ray Hempel Recipients

The Ray Hempel award recognizes and celebrates the unique accomplishments, extraordinary dedication, and service of a Lion who exemplifies the spirit of Lionism in the Club. Lion Ray Hempel was the originator of the Wisconsin Lions Camp in Rosholt in 1959. Through his remarkable vision and determination, he changed the lives of thousands of children with special needs, who have attended the Camp and his legacy continues to inspire Lions today.

2016 - Jill Zwiers	2019 - Linda Campbell
2017 - Scott Campbell	2020 - Jill McDonald
2018 - Sandy Mode	2021 - Michele Thompson

Rhinelanders Lions Knight of Sight Recipients

The Knight of Sight is awarded from The Lions Eye Bank Of Wisconsin to a Lion in recognition of their service to their Club in promoting vision awareness and Lionism. In 1925, Helen Keller met with Lions International and challenged the Lions to become Knights of the Blind as part of their mission. The Lions accepted this challenge and The Lions Eye Bank of Wisconsin located in Madison is nationally known for their work in eye transplants other vision related activities.

2010 - Charles Franz	2016 - St Mary's Hospital
2010 - Mel Hook	2018 - Tim Gengler
2014 - Ed Linnemann	2020 - Sanda Mode
2014 - Harry Helwig	2022 - Jeanne Gengler
2015 - Edward England	2024 - June Lego

Rhinelanders Lions Current Members

Bonnie Ashby	Jeff Kataoka
Cassy (Sandra Beatty)	Cynthia Kotila
Bob Berns	Mike Kusek
Jill Blake	Karen Marquardt
Bruce Carlson	Susan McCoy
Tony Cirilli	Sandra Mode
Rick Colvin	Heidi Nehls
Edward England	Danielle Nelson
John Flammang	Jodie O'Donnell
Don Frederickson	Tom O'Rourke
Tom Gadzalinski	Lon Perkin
Tim Gengler	Mike Romportl
Mary Jane Gresser	Rhae Ellen Schnoor
Barb Haenel	Don Theisen
Bill Haenel	Malisa Vinger
Harry Helwig	Robert Weibel
Mel Hook	Michael Wenke
Don Hoppe	Jill Whittaker
Deanna Jacobs	Justin Whittaker
Jacqueline Jashinsky	