

## HISTORY OF LIONS IN TEXAS

At the first meeting of Lions Clubs in 1917, one of the first tasks of the Directors was to divide the U.S.A. into districts for their organization and administration, and to appoint a District Governor over each. There were nine districts created nationwide. Texas was one district with 12 clubs and 360 members. These twelve clubs make up the Founders Clubs and are as follows: Abilene, Austin, Beaumont, Dallas, Fort Worth, Houston, Paris, Port Arthur, San Antonio, Temple, Waco and Wichita Falls.

The Austin Founder Club is the oldest club in Texas, with continuous service since January 18, 1916. At that time, Texas was District 4 but in 1921 it was changed to District 2 at the International Convention. District 1 was assigned to Illinois in honor of Melvin Jones and Texas was renamed District 2 due to having the most clubs and members. Oklahoma was a close second and was named District 3. This was the method that all seventeen districts were renumbered.

In 1930, the District 2 Convention was held in the Texas Senate Chambers. Melvin Jones advised that Texas should divide into five districts; 2T, 2E, 2X, 2A and 2S. At that time someone stated "This divides the work of Texas, but Texas will never be divided." In 1942, District 2S was divided into S1, S2 and S3. This brought the total number of Districts in Texas to seven. In 1947 District 2T was divided into two districts: 2-T1 and 2-T2. In 1948, the Texas Lions Camp for Crippled Children was proposed and, in 1949, it was chartered. In 1958, a third District was added to District 2T bringing the total number of Districts in Texas to nine. At the convention in 1959, Texas was divided into fifteen Districts. During this time, the Past District Governors Association was formed. At the convention in 1959, District 2-S5 was added bringing the total number of districts to sixteen which we still have today.

During the 1970s and '80s, the Texas Lions Hall of Fame was established and the Texas Lions Foundation was chartered. Also, in 1982, Texas Lion E.J. "Ebb" Grindstaff from Ballinger, Texas was elected President and started Drug Awareness and Diabetic Research and Awareness Programs. There have been a total of seven Lions International Presidents from Texas, the last one being Jimmy Ross from Quitaque in 2006-07. Texas Lions have been there from the beginning carrying out our motto, "We Serve." It is a privilege to be a part of such an organization; yes, ***IT'S GREAT TO BE A LION!***