

Touchstone Story #25 Brooms and Pancakes



Photo Caption: Successful Lions fundraising efforts have included pancake breakfasts and mop and broom sales.

Jim Ervin was just a few weeks into his career as a Lion in 1977 when fellow members of the Albany Lions Club in Georgia, USA, tapped him for an important job: selling brooms and mops to raise funds for the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation.

“We’d go around knocking on doors,” recalled Ervin, who became international president in 1999. “It was advertised through the radio and TV when the Lions were coming. So many people would wait until that time to buy their brooms and mops.”

Community spirit flourishes as neighbors come together at Lions fundraisers from pancake breakfasts and barbecues to fish fries and sausage roasts. Some local Lions projects have developed into full-scale national programs that raise millions of dollars annually. Consider the humble fruitcake, which entrepreneurial Lions in Australia, Canada and South Africa have turned into gold.

Selling Lions fruitcakes during the Christmas season began in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, in 1951. Initially baked at home and sold to family, friends and neighbors,



Canadian Lion fruitcakes are now produced by large commercial bakeries, packaged with holiday colors and the Lions emblem, and marketed over the Internet.

Starting in 1965 with the Lions Save-Sight Christmas Cake, Australia's program has become a cherished holiday tradition. Under the direction of the National Cake Committee, the product line has expanded to include Christmas puddings, and annual sales have grown to more than 6 million Australian dollars.

From raffles to rubber duck races, Lions have also shown a flair for special events that bring communities together and keep the fun in fundraising. Lions held a benefit elephant soccer tournament in Nepal and dressed up as Smurfs—donning blue face paint and fuzzy blue coveralls—for a canoe race in Epping, New Hampshire, USA.

Selling items that people need, such as brooms, mops and light bulbs, not to mention items that people crave, such as mints and candy bars, has been a staple of Lions' local fundraising efforts for decades.

“Like they say,” said Ervin, “where there's a need, there's a Lion.”

