

## Touchstone Story #93 Guess Who's a Lion?



**Photo Caption 1:** Jimmy Carter (left) was a Lion before becoming president of the United States.

What do former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Swiss astronaut Claude Nicollier and New Zealand mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary have in common? They have all been members of Lions Clubs International.

The service model and camaraderie of Lions Clubs is attractive to people from every walk of life including people in the spotlight: well-known athletes, politicians, television personalities, entertainers, innovators and business leaders. Lions clubs have welcomed them all with open arms. For Lions, all that matters is that people have a heart for service.

Sir Edmund Hillary joined the Remuera Lions Club in Auckland, New Zealand, in 1965, after finding out about the association from his family lawyer, Bruce Oliphant, a charter member of the club. A decade earlier, Hillary and his partner Tenzing Norgay made



history as the first people to climb to the top of the world's tallest mountain, reaching the summit of Mt. Everest in 1953.

Yet despite Hillary's fame, he was always to serve his fellow members, assist people in need and encourage others to do the same. In 1966, one of the Remuera Lions Club's activities became raising money for the Himalayan Trust, which Hillary had founded several years earlier to help people in isolated mountain regions of Nepal be healthier and economically stable. In the mid-1960s, the Lions clubs of Auckland raised more than 8,000 New Zealand pounds through lectures and tickets sales to help build the Kunde Hospital in Nepal.

Serving with Lions Clubs has been attractive to other explorers as well. The first astronaut from Switzerland, Claude Nicollier, joined the Montreux Lions Club in 1999, the same year he completed his final mission in space, servicing the Hubble Space Telescope. Later becoming an honorary member, Nicollier continues to work with Lions and speak at events.

Lions never know whom they will inspire to serve. When Jimmy Carter returned home to Plains, Georgia, in the early 1950s after a career in the U.S. Navy, he joined the Plains Lions Club, where his father had been a charter member. Carter began serving in local projects, such as blood donation and eyeglass collection programs, but gradually, he took on more leadership roles, even serving as chairperson of Georgia's multiple district council in 1968.

"Lions Clubs meant a great deal to me," Carter said. "It gave me a chance to learn about public service without holding public office."

After Carter finished his term as the 39<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. He continued his passion for service by founding The Carter Center in Atlanta to advance peace and

health around the globe. He remained a Lion, and through The Carter Center, partners with Lions Clubs to help address diseases such as river blindness and trachoma.

From the White House to the highest mountain and everywhere in between, where there's a need, there's a Lion.



**Photo Caption 2:** Astronaut Claude Nicollier joined Lions Clubs after exploring space.