

History of the Oak Creek Lions Club

Two members, Lion Lenny Weiss, the first president, and Lion Earl Nowak formed the Oak Creek Lions Club in 1958. These two charter members were joined with approximately 75 others to make the Oak Creek Lions club a leader in District 27-A1.

The club began raising funds to support community events by holding cash drawings. They were working with a small budget then, but tried to help almost anyone that came to them. As the club gained members they began to search for other ways to fundraise.

The Milwaukee area is known for it's many community-sponsored festivals. In the early '60's the Oak Creek Lions Club started their own "Lions festival." This first festival was held in the miller park area where the Armory and Oak Creek community center are located now. It was small and consisted of a portable grill; a few barrels of beer, pony rides and a Port-a-john built over a hole in the ground. The feature was a raffle; guess the weight of the pig. He was a huge hog named "Lombardi"!

Each year thereafter the festival grew. First it moved to 27th street north of Oakwood road, which was the 9 Mile Inn at that time. More rides and games were added and soon parking became a problem. The next move was to the legion grounds Post 434 on Shepherd Ave. A large tent was home for quite a few years. It covered the kitchen area, bar, entertainment and dance area. As with any major event everything had to be set-up, cleaned and stored each year. In the '70's a permanent building was erected at Post 434, which is now our home. Since then, permanent toilets, a kitchen, freezers, coolers, lighting, asphalt and a walking and seating area have been added. In 1996, a large outdoor pavilion was built. This pavilion called the "Lenny Weiss Pavilion" was named in honor of our first president. This building houses a new out door stage for dancing, a seating area, a storage area and the Lions office.

Since 1959, our festival has grown to span 5 days over the Labor Day weekend and has proved to be our most successful fundraiser. Averaging approximately \$50,000, the money raised from this festival is this clubs primary livelihood. Without this income the Oak Creek Lions club could not serve the community as it does today.

The Oak Creek Lions Club is very active in supporting both projects both internationally and locally. Some of the local projects include high school scholarships, D.A.R.E., Badger Boys State, yearly health screening programs, eye care for the needy and food baskets to name just a few. In addition to these programs, Oak Creek Lions is a leader in collecting used eyeglasses. 16,000 pair were collected in 1999.

It is impossible to list every deed done/accomplished in the past, but hopefully by reading this brief account of our clubs history you now have a better idea of what the phrase "We Serve" means to us. Please send questions and comments to Oak Creek Lions P.O. Box 211 Oak Creek, WI 53154.