



“The Mighty M”

Newsletter of Lions District 202M New Zealand

APRIL 2026

Welcome to this edition of “*The Mighty M*” your monthly update spotlighting activity and engagement across our district.

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 - ❖ Skin Cancer Screening Volunteers needed.

FROM THE DISTRICT GOVERNOR’S DESK “TOGETHER WE ROAR – THE MIGHTY 202M”



ARTICLE 8 – A MIGHTY MONTH & A MIGHTY FORUM *“Celebrating Service, Learning, and Leadership Across 202M”*

Lions of the Mighty 202M,

March has been nothing short of **flat out** – but what an incredible month it has been! It’s been a privilege to not only host our own event but also to travel across the country attending other District Conventions and strengthening connections within Lionism.

I had the pleasure of attending the **District E Convention in Christchurch**, themed “*The Jester’s Revenge*”, followed by **District F in Riverton** for what was truly *a whale of a convention*, and finishing at the **District J Convention in Dunedin** with their *Blue and Yellow Convention*.

Each district showcased their own unique style, energy, and commitment to service – something we can all be proud of as Lions across New Zealand.

But without a doubt, the highlight of the month was **our very own Mighty M Forum on the Kāpiti Coast** – and what a success it was!

We were honoured to welcome Lions, guests, and District Governors from across the country, alongside our **International Director Graeme Wilson**, Council Chair **Pam Harvey**, and visiting District Governors from multiple districts. The Forum truly reflected the strength of connection within Lionism.

A huge thank you to our venues **Te Raukura ki Kāpiti, Kāpiti College, and Southwards Car Museum**, who helped bring this event to life, along with our sponsors and supporters.

The Forum officially opened with **Kapiti Coast Mayor Janet Holborow**, followed by a powerful **Flag Ceremony led by PCC Terry Hemingsen and students from Kapiti College** – a fantastic and meaningful start to the weekend.



Our **guest speakers were outstanding.**

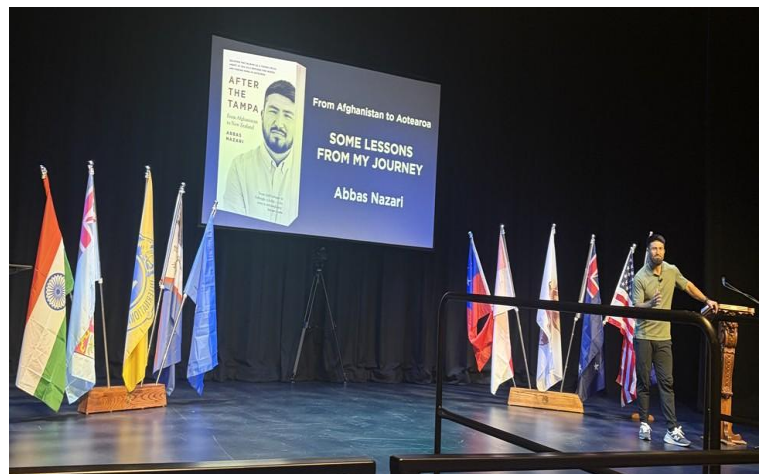
We heard from **Brendon Nichols**, who spoke openly about his time in the Australian SAS and the challenges he faced afterwards. His honesty and vulnerability set the tone for the Forum.





On Saturday, **MP Tim Costley** opened the day and shared insights into his **Missing Wingman Trust**, followed by **Abbas Nazari**, whose journey as a displaced person to New Zealand was both powerful and inspiring. The Q&A sessions that followed these speakers were incredibly engaging, and the connection between all three speakers was clear – resilience, purpose, and mental wellbeing.

This aligned perfectly with our Forum's strong focus on **Lions International's newest global pillar – Mental Health and Wellbeing**. As highlighted during the Forum, mental health affects **one in five New Zealanders**, and Lions have an important role to play in supporting awareness, connection, and community-level support.



The Forum also delivered a wide range of **interactive workshops**, giving Lions practical tools and ideas to take back to their clubs. These included:

- Using **AI in Lions Clubs** (with Jared Kreft joining via Zoom)
- Youth programmes across the district
- LCIF and service funding opportunities
- Vision and sight initiatives
- Leadership and succession planning
- Disaster relief and "Putting the Fun into Lions"

It was fantastic to see so many Lions engaging, learning, and already putting these ideas into action.



Saturday evening at **Southwards Car Museum** was a highlight – a fantastic dinner, awards, and entertainment, all tied together with the fun **"Letter M" fancy dress theme**. A great reminder that Lions know how to celebrate as well as serve!

We also took time on Sunday for a **Remembrance and Rededication Service**, honouring those Lions we have lost over the past year – a special and important part of our time together.

In terms of awards, a huge congratulations to **Aotea Railway Lions Club**, who took out **Top Club and a Club Excellence Award** – an outstanding achievement.



It was also a great honour to present **International President's Medals** to **Alice McDonald and Rex Bullard**, recognising their exceptional service and dedication to our district.



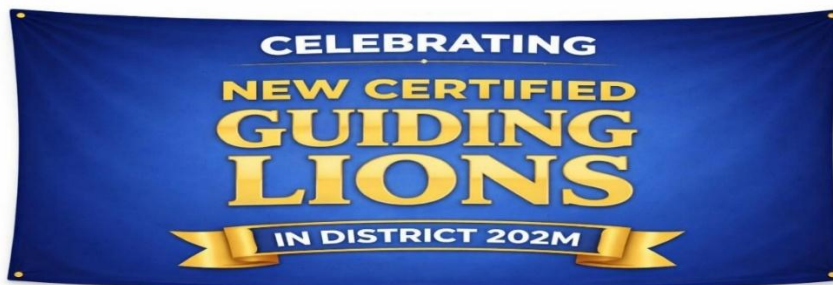
There are simply too many people to thank individually, but I would like to acknowledge our **Forum Committee**, and in particular our **Convention Chair, Adele Van Vlerken**, for the incredible work behind the scenes. The planning, organisation, and passion that went into this event were second to none. To everyone who attended, supported, presented, volunteered, or contributed – **thank you**. This Forum truly showcased the very best of the Mighty 202M.

Let's take the energy, ideas, and connections from this event and continue building stronger clubs, stronger communities, and an even stronger district.

Cheers

Leon Downes

District Governor 202M 2025–2026.



District 202M is proud to recognise and congratulate a group of dedicated Lions who have successfully completed the **Certified Guiding Lion Programme** in November 2025.

This important programme, offered through Lions Clubs International, equips experienced Lions with the skills and knowledge to mentor and support new and existing clubs. Certified Guiding Lions play a vital role in strengthening club leadership, improving member engagement, and ensuring long-term sustainability across our organisation. Their guidance helps clubs grow, adapt, and continue making a meaningful impact in their communities.

We warmly congratulate the following Lions on achieving this significant milestone:

- Warren Harland – Carterton
- John Forbes – Dannevirke
- Debbie Beuth – Gisborne
- Steve Paddock – Greytown
- Carrol McMillan – Hastings
- Jo Cameron – Karori
- David & Carol-Anne Skjellerup – Mana
- Anne Richardson – Silverstream
- Rex Bullard – Waikanae

We also acknowledge and thank those who had previously completed the Certified Guiding Lion Programme:

- Ian Lewis – Aotea
- Alice McDonald – Karori
- Paul Williams – Napier
- Simon Williams – Waikanae
- Murray Pringle – Waikanae

These Lions represent the strength, leadership, and commitment that define the Mighty 202M. Their willingness to step forward and support others ensures that our clubs remain vibrant, effective, and focused on service.

Congratulations once again to all recipients—your leadership will make a lasting difference across our district.



At the 202M Forum, those that attended the presentation by PCC Tobias Hipp, on LEHP, gained an understanding as to what this programme is all about.



WHAT WE NEED NOW IN DISTRICT 202M

The journey to bring children's vision screening to New Zealand began during Tobias Hipp's training to become a District Governor. As part of a team project focused on the theme of **vision**, Tobias discovered that Lions in Australia were running a successful **children's vision screening programme**. The more he learned, the more he saw the incredible potential this initiative could have for New Zealand.

A turning point came when the team connected with **Irene and Martin Braddick** from Australia, who generously shared their time and expertise to demonstrate exactly how the programme worked. This was the true beginning.

In 2023, Irene presented the programme at the **District 202D Convention**, sparking strong interest among attendees. She later visited the **Howick Lions Club in District 202K** to provide a hands-on demonstration, and from there, enthusiasm for the programme continued to grow.

Recognising the potential nationwide impact, the **Council of Governors** voted to adopt the LEHP Children's Vision Screening Programme as a **National Project**. The motion was passed — opening the door for **every District in New Zealand to get involved when they're ready**.

The newly chartered **Hawera Lions Club** invited Irene and Martin to conduct a training session, which had a **marvelous turnout of 22 interested attendees**. This created an exciting opportunity for on-the-job training, with three pioneer schools stepping forward: Kaponga Primary, St Joseph's School Hawera, and Marfell Community School New Plymouth. The screenings were a great success — and as a result, **we now have certified screeners in New Zealand**.

What began as a simple training project has grown into a national initiative, driven by passionate Lions and dedicated volunteers, all working together to help Kiwi kids see a brighter future.

We now need to bring this to our District.

Therefore, we need a District Co-ordinator.

Please have a look at the link below for more information:

<https://lehp.org.nz/>

If you are keen, please contact:

PDG David Skjellerup : 202m.gst@lionsclubs.org.nz





ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS MONTH IS HAPPENING IN APRIL

Protecting Nature. Creating a Sustainable Future. Lions care for the Earth we all share. We are committed to protecting the environment and promoting sustainability.

Environment Our initiatives include:

- Tree planting and community garden projects
- Recycling programmes and litter clean-ups
- Beach clean-ups
- Environmental education for schools

Small changes lead to big impact — for our planet, and for generations to come.

But have you considered E-Waste as your Environmental Project for April this year.

ZONE BUZZ – HAPPENINGS

LONG-SERVING LION STEPS DOWN

Kapiti Pakeke Lion Peter Cresswell has decided that, at age 90 and after more than 25 years' involvement with the Annual Combined Lions Book Fair, the time is right to step down as Chair of this much-loved Kāpiti project.

"I initially became involved in this Lions project in 1999," said Lion Peter, "and since that time I have worked alongside some marvellous people. "I am very proud that together, we have raised nearly \$1 million for charities and others across the Kāpiti Coast"

"It has been a joy and a privilege to serve the community," he added, "as only a good Lion can."

Over the years, Peter and his team have sorted and stored donated books in a remarkable variety of buildings and locations throughout the region. These have included farm buildings,



private homes and garages, a house awaiting demolition during the Kāpiti Expressway development, the old Raumati swimming pool, and—most memorably—a chicken shed in Valley

Road, which unfortunately resulted in a large number of books being discarded due to damage.

"Each year it has become increasingly more difficult to secure suitable sorting and storage facilities," he said. "However, I am delighted that the Council, working together with Lions, is

keen to help resolve this issue, as it is committed to seeing the project continue into the future."

New Chair Lion Warren Biddington of the Kāpiti Lions Club said, "Peter has done a tremendous

job and leaves behind an extraordinary legacy. His departure leaves very big boots to fill."

Pictured above at the recent "Mighty M Forum is DG Leon presenting a Certificate of Appreciation to Peter for his work with the Book Fair.

MARTINBOROUGH LIONS DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION SPARKLES THROUGH THE YEARS



Last month Martinborough Lions, former Lions, fellow Lions from other clubs, and friends of the club and its members gathered for a night of celebration.



"The Diamond Jubilee was a very successful evening being enjoyed by those attended," says current club President Max Stevens.

"Our 60 years of service and fellowship was celebrated by past and current Lionesses and Lions who were joined by members from other Wairarapa Clubs," adds Max. "It gave us an opportunity to reflect on the history and the achievements of the club, and to appreciate the support provided by Lions

International. Whilst our moto "we serve" is taken seriously, we do it with fellowship, lots of laughs and fun."

Tracy Nyhan agrees: "It was a great celebration that reminded us of the long term commitment made to the Martinborough Community. To provide financial and fellowship support to our local residents. We should be proud of the vision our founding members had and that 60 years on we can strive to live up to that."

Joe Howells comments: "What a night—an unforgettable celebration of 60 years of the Martinborough Lions 'extraordinary service, reflecting countless hours, unwavering commitment, and immense generosity poured back into the community; truly a milestone worthy of the legacy they've built—Martinborough Lions really do rock!"

Sue Mudford reflected on the event: "Great to talk to people with such positive and sometimes amusing memories of both Martinborough the township and the Lions Club."

David Gibbs loved reconnecting: "I enjoyed catching up with former Lions."

Derek Wilson noted it was "an excellent evening that summed up all aspects of the club."

Jaquee Reid enjoyed the company: "A lovely evening full of memories, and friends to share them with!" John Taylor summed it up like this: "Great food, venue, speakers, guests and social Lions get together. Good excuse to get dressed up like the occasions of many years ago. A fun evening. Thank you to the event organisers!"

Dean di Bona emphasised the club's service: "In an age of unprecedented need, Lions Martinborough continues to serve the community from helping the food bank to sending school children to outward bound. Our members always look to help when called upon."



And there was cake. President Max and David Kershaw cut the cake - their fathers were both charter members of the club 60 years ago - very fitting.

GISBORNE LIONS

Mighty 202M Forum Congratulations to:

Gisborne Host Lions President Gwen Lemaire and Gisborne Wainui Lions Club President Peter Beuth for their Certificate of Recognition Service Award presented by DG Leon Downes, for work on flood damage victims in Te Araroa East Coast.



Building Mighty 202M Lego Team Gwen Lemaire, Cilla Britt-Montaperto, Peter, and Debbie Beuth at the forum function.



202M District Governor Elect Debbie Beuth





5 March to 7 March 2027 District 202M Forum

Tairawhiti – Gisborne

Reignite Your Lions Spark.

2VDG WARREN HARLAND'S VISIT TO WAIROA LIGHTHOUSE LIONS

12 MARCH 2026



2VDG Warren Harland (right), together with Charter President Jane O'Sullivan (left), presented Charter Members Heather Walker, Avril Lewis, and Sue Brown with their 44 Years of 100% Service Awards.

Charter Member Sylvia Hall was also recognised for achieving 44 years of 100% service; however, she was unable to attend the presentation.

CARTERTON LION'S LECTERN



Does any other Lions Club have a lectern like this one. Carterton Lions is the proud owner of this one. It was made by the late Keith King of Kings Joinery in Carterton. He was a member of the Carterton Rotary Club.

In 1972 the Carterton Rotary Club presented it to the Carterton Lions Club. It is believed that the carved lion on the front of the lectern stared life as a corbel in the hallway of an old house that was demolished. The lectern was recently used at the 202m Forum and generated a lot of interest.

GLOBALLY LIONS ARE SHINING A LIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our Mission – is to raise **\$100,000** to purchase Modular Sensory kits for Mental Health use within the Wellington Hospital Foundation area. A very special thank you to those clubs that have answered the call and made some funds available for this project. We have a way to go to reach our target, can you help.

Have you as a club completed a project to raise awareness of the growing distress among our young people. Has your club raised some money to contribute to this fund.



Wellington
Hospitals
Foundation

Lions can help with advocacy, supporting wellbeing initiatives, reducing stigma, help with

awareness and just being there to support, listen and help navigate the available services. Thinking about our recent disasters, were there Lions on the ground to help, does NZ have a mental health preparedness system in place?

Anybody who attended the recent Forum will have heard the powerful messages delivered by our guest speakers and would not be able to ignore the growing need for awareness and these kits in our hospitals and the community.

Did any of you go back to your clubs with an idea of how you could help.

Calling on all Lions Clubs to help with this project and make a difference to someone's life.

WAIPAWA DISTRICT LIONS Nuts and Bolts of Community



Waipawa District Lions Club celebrated the life of Foundation and Life Member, Murray Stephens, at their social meeting on Thursday March 19, by blessing a seat in his honour at Nellie Jull Park in Waipawa.

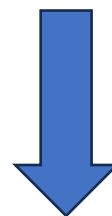
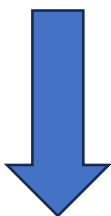
The seat looks toward the back of Waipawa Butchery, which Murray owned after buying it from his father Jock, and then selling to the current owners on his retirement. Murray continued to attend Lions events for as long as possible before his death in October 2024, passing a month after his lovely wife Helen.

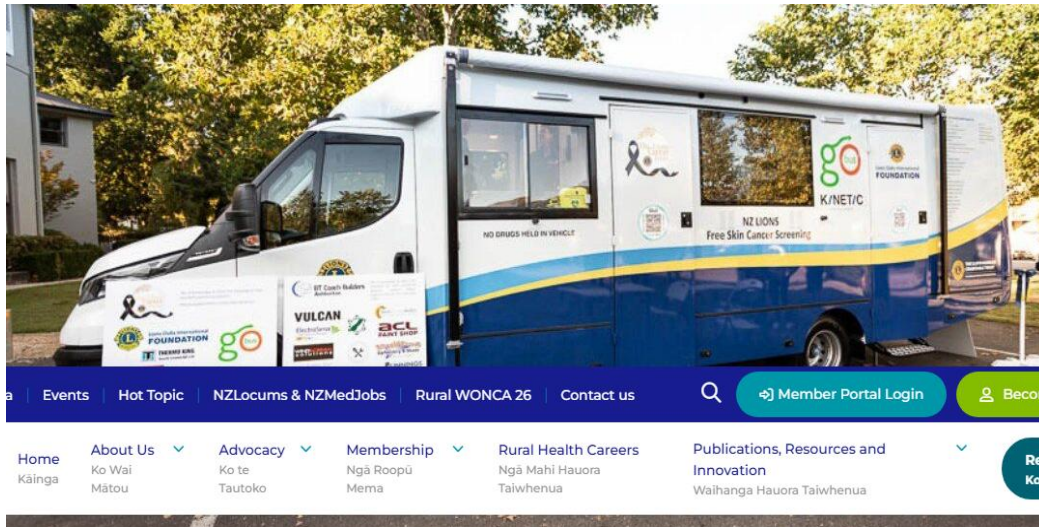
WE SNEAK IN A CHUCKLE

REALLY PLEASED TO GET A FULL TANK OF GAS FOR \$50 TODAY. IT WAS FOR THE LAWNMOWER, BUT I'M TRYING TO STAY POSITIVE.



**Calling Skin Screening Volunteers –
Join the Lions Cancer Trust Mobile Bus
in Rural NZ**





The Lions Cancer Trust Mobile Skin Screening Bus is travelling across Aotearoa, bringing free skin checks to rural communities — and they're **looking for volunteer clinicians to help make it happen. GPs, nurse practitioners, and dermoscopy-trained nurses** can donate just a day or two of their time each year to have a huge impact on people's lives by helping catch skin cancers early.

Melanoma has long been called New Zealand's "hidden epidemic." With some of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, the need for accessible early detection is pressing — particularly in rural areas, where distance, cost, and a "she'll be right" attitude often delay people from seeking care until it is too late.

To meet this challenge, the Lions Cancer Trust launched its first Mobile Skin Screening Bus earlier this year, inspired by a programme that has been running successfully in Australia for nearly 25 years.

The New Zealand service began with its inaugural clinic in Hanmer Springs in March and is now travelling to rural towns and districts around the South Island.

The model is simple but effective: hosted by Lions Clubs or community groups, the bus provides free skin checks by qualified medical professionals. If a suspicious mole or lesion is found, patients are referred back to their GP for further investigation.

The aim is not to replace primary care but to reduce the barriers that stop people from having a check in the first place.

[email Janet Walmsley, at admin@lionscancertrust.nz](mailto:admin@lionscancertrust.nz) to get involved.

Janet Walmsley, who coordinates the bus's operations, says the service has already revealed the need it is meeting.

"Farmers are notorious for leaving things until the last minute," she says. "We know that if melanoma is caught early, treatment is far less invasive, less costly, and outcomes are significantly better. The bus is about making those first checks easy and accessible for people who otherwise might never book one."

Cost is a major barrier. At many practices, a full skin check costs upwards of \$100, while private providers charge significantly more. For rural families juggling rising living costs, that makes preventative care a low priority. The Lions bus removes this hurdle by offering the service free of charge.

The first two clinics, held in Hanmer Springs and Lincoln, screened 58 people. Of those, 24 were referred back to their GP for further checks, a referral rate of around 41%. By comparison, the established Australian programme has referral rates of 21–27%.

Among the first screened was Paul O'Connor, Chair of the Lions Cancer Trust and the driving force behind the initiative. He admits he would not otherwise have pursued a private skin check. His screening led to two biopsies, later confirmed as basal cell carcinomas, followed by minor surgery at his local GP practice.

"Paul's story really validated everything he had believed and worked so hard for," says Walmsley. "It showed the bus could make a genuine difference, even from day one."

Since Hanmer Springs, the bus has been building a calendar of visits to A&P shows, Field Days, and community events. Next month, it will cross Cook Strait for its first North Island tour, with the long-term vision of having one bus based on each island.

But while demand is strong, the service faces a critical challenge: finding enough qualified clinicians to staff the bus. Volunteer doctors, nurse practitioners, and nurses with dermoscopy training are essential, but not always easy to find.

"Some clinics and skin centres worry about losing business," Walmsley explains. "But the reality is that these are people who would not have had a skin check otherwise. GPs actually benefit, because patients are then referred back for follow-up treatment."

To keep the wheels turning, the Trust is calling on suitably qualified skin screeners to donate a day or two of their time each year.

"If someone volunteers just one or two days, that can make an enormous difference," says Walmsley.

"The bus will move around the country, so the time commitment is small—but the impact on people's lives is huge."

A national database of screeners is being developed to make rostering easier. The Trust is also encouraging communities to invite the bus to local events and help host its visits.

With a second bus soon to be in production and growing community interest, the Lions Cancer Trust Mobile Skin Screening Bus has the potential to become a fixture in rural health outreach. Its success, however, depends on two things: communities opening their doors, and clinicians volunteering their skills.

For rural New Zealand, the bus represents more than convenience, it represents equity. By removing barriers and catching cancers early, it brings lifesaving care closer to home.

If you are a GP, nurse practitioner, or dermoscopy-trained nurse interested in volunteering, or if your community would like to host the bus, please [email Janet Walmsley, at admin@lionscancertrust.nz](mailto:admin@lionscancertrust.nz) to get involved.

Chair of Trust comment.: *"As at Jan 2026 10 months of operation, more than 700 screenings have been performed, that is on average 70 per month, and 26.7% have been referred to their GPs for further investigation"*

GOT SOMETHING TO SHARE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF "THE MIGHTY M"?

From Editor Terry

Zone Chairs and club members—your stories are the heartbeat of "The Mighty M"! Whether it's a successful fundraiser, a standout Lion, or a moment that made a difference in your community, we want to share it across the district. Please send your contributions (MS Word format preferred) to:

202M.Editor@LionsClubs.org.nz **Deadline:** 25th of each month.