



Executive Director Message

“I would rather walk with a friend in the dark, than alone in the light.”

– Helen Keller



Barry Elliott
Executive Director

I continue to find the quotes attributed to Helen Keller filled with perception well beyond a person deprived of sight! This year has challenged each of us to rethink our perceptions. Family and friends have become even more significant and dear to us. As Lions, we develop close relationships with one another as we walk together, providing service to our communities.

Alabama Lions Sight has been walking together for 76 years providing vision care to residents of Alabama that could not afford it on their own. Since 1944, Lions have led the way of caring for the visual impaired. The imprint of Lions in Alabama began in local communities all over the state, but especially in Birmingham with Dr. Alston Callahan and what was to become the now UAB Callahan Eye Hospital. Here are a few highlights. Lions in the 1940's and 50's began partnering with Dr. Alston Callahan by operating on Alabama Lions sight patents free of charge in the Hillman Clinic building in Birmingham. In the 1960's the Eye Foundation Hospital was completed, and the Lions were granted office and exam spaces for its patients. In the 1970's the Lions raised the first \$150,000 of a million which was used to build the Clinic in the hospital. Lions paid for the hospital bill for Lion's patients and Dr. Austin Callahan did the surgeries free. In the 1990's when the hospital was sold to UAB, Dr. Callahan included in the contract that the Lions be granted space in the hospital in perpetuity. In 2008, the Lions and ALS raised \$70,000.00 to purchase a Pascal Laser for the Lions Clinic. The Lions raised \$30,000.00 of it in 30 days by Lions, UAB contributed \$10,000.00 and it was matched with a LCIF grant for \$40,000.00 for a total of \$80,000.00. In 2012, ALS contributed \$144,145.00 for equipment in the new Lions Clinic that was dedicated in 2014. This was a matching grant from LCIF of \$72,000.00 each. In 2017, ALS contributed \$150,000.00 for the new operating rooms of the hospital. This was a matching grant from LCIF with \$75,000.00 each.

In 2016 Alabama Lions Sight, walking together with the Lions of Alabama, began operating the Mobile Eye Clinic. Dr. Kent Daum was employed as our Optometrist to travel to rural Alabama providing complete eye care to date to more than 6,000 patients. As Lions, you are



Executive Director Message

providing eye care to the uninsured and underinsured folks in 22 counties who do not have options for care, in most cases. Recently, when visiting the clinic, Dr. Daum saw a patient, who when examined, had a shadow on her fundus camera image. His diagnosis was melanoma. He very likely saved her life! Providing eye care, glasses, and saving lives are what Lions are providing through the Mobile Eye Clinic.

For more than two years, Alabama Lions Sight has been aggressively pursuing the opportunity to screen the vision of children in every public school in Alabama. This effort has led to having the process to be changed from one agency, that has been given the state appropriation of nearly 3 million dollars each year for more than a decade. Now, anyone can bid for a proposal on a fair level playing ground. Alabama Lions Sight submitted a bid in October for the school year 2021-2022. Four bids were submitted, and the awarding bid will be announced by December 15, 2020. Lions, we will need a great deal of friends walking together to provide vision screening to the children of Alabama! That would be a great Christmas gift for the children of Alabama!

We Serve!

PDG Barry Elliott
Executive Director