

Lions

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ory of West Branch native Herbert Hoover with projects that feed the hungry.

“You continue his legacy of compassion, generosity, and action, proving that even one individual or one club can spark ripples of hope around the globe,” she said. “May you continue to be the light that guides West Branch toward a brighter tomorrow. Congratulations, West Branch Lions Club, on 75 extraordinary years. May your next chapter be filled with even greater acts of kindness, generosity, and community spirit.”

Iowa KidSight Program Manager Chelle Lehman recognized the Lions for years of vision screening for children. She noted that the club has screened more than 1,500 children.

“We’re proud to receive this award,” West Branch Lions Club President Kent Kaufman said, noting that the club found concerns in 79 children and referred them for early sight correction. “We’re excited to participate in this program.”

He also noted that the club also helped identify hearing problems in children.

Service awards

Kaufman and Treasurer Bob Hoffman presented or introduced several awards to members.



Iowa KidSight Program Director Manager Chelle Lehman presents a certificate Dec. 9 to West Branch Lions Club President Kent Kaufman for the club’s participation in the program that conducts vision screening on children. **Gregory R. Norfleet/West Branch Times**

• The Warren Coleman Honorary Award went to Gwen Hoffman, to recognize her community service and dedication to the club. Bob Hoffman, her husband, said Gwen’s contributions particularly stood out when she led the West Branch Bike Rodeo, a safety program in coordination with the University of Iowa and West Branch Parks and Recreation Department, and organizing bills for the Flags Over West Branch program, a fundraiser that places US flags around town on patri-

otic holidays.

“Thank you, Gwen Hoffman, for your contributions to our club, and congratulations on being a recipient of the Warren Coleman Award,” B. Hoffman said.

• The Melvin Jones Fellowship was presented to two members: Sherry Kolpin and Greg Humrichouse.

Kolpin was recognized for her work that brought the Lions together with non-members to raise money for the group’s Legacy Project: Building

four new pickleball courts at Cubby Park.

Kolpin chaired the committee, coordinated subcommittees, planned fundraisers, worked with the city leadership, found donors, and applied for grants. With her leadership, the group reached it \$150,000 goal in about a year.

“Sherry has kept a cool head, smoothed ruffled feathers, stayed focused on the big picture, and represented the West Branch Lions in the best possible light,” B. Hoffman said. “Our board is pleased and amazed that we have raised so much in far less time than we anticipated.”

Kolpin also chaired the 75th anniversary event and will serve as the group’s next president.

Humrichouse was recognized for his many hours of service. The club secretary “fulfills the duties of that office to the fullest extent.”

“He keeps our members fully informed about club events, West Branch community events, and Lions District 9EC events,” B. Hoffman said. “When I see district officers at meetings, they – without fail

– will comment on how active the West Branch Lions are and how Greg consistently files reports on our activities.”

Humrichouse also serves as the Lions Zone Chair and is active in district activities.

“To many people in West Branch, Greg is the face of the Lions. ... One of his best leadership qualities is that when Greg brings a project idea or request to the club, his attitude is not, ‘Why don’t you do this?’, but ‘How can WE get this done?’”

‘Great partnership’

Main Street West Branch Vice President Jay Cooper represented the economic development group, thanking them for a “great partnership” over the years, like running Christmas Past’s street fireplaces so visitors could make s’mores.

“We look forward to continuing our partnership with the Lions Club,” he said.

Warren began the evening with a bit of perspective about the world in 1950, like ending World

War II just five years earlier (September 1945) and getting close to the start of the Korean War (June 1950). He noted that the Governor of Iowa was William S. Beardsley, a Republican.

Warren also looked up Cedar County’s population in 1950: 16,910. In 2020, it was about 18,500.

“So, we haven’t grown a whole lot,” Warren half-joked.

However, he said the 1950 population of West Branch came in at 769 souls. The 2020 census put the town at more than 2,500

“Now there’s some growth,” he said.

And, the Iowa Hawkeyes football team was part of the Big Nine Conference, finishing the season with a 4-5 record.

Lane added to that, noting that the 1950s were a time of poodle skirts, saddle shoes, slicked-back hair, leather jackets, and wing-tipped shoes. Color TVs were recently invented, the average home cost \$7,500, a gallon of gas cost 27 cents, bread cost 14 cents, a dozen eggs cost 52 cents, and the average income was \$3,300 a year. The Lions International had about 400,000 members in 27 countries in 1950, which has grown to more than 1 million members in more than 200 countries.

‘Salute’ to service

The evening’s program included letters from International Lions Club President A.P. Singh and U.S. Senator Charles “Chuck” Grassley.

“Congratulations on your club’s 75th anniversary!” Singh wrote. “This anniversary is an opportunity for your club to celebrate the incredible work you have accomplished and focus on the new opportunities ahead. Your commitment to kindness has made your club a vital and vibrant part of your community and has helped Lions International remain a global leader in service for more than a century. ... And thanks to you, we will continue to make the world a better place for all people.”

Grassley also offered his congratulations and offered a “salute” for the club’s service to West Branch. He also noted that he met with the Lions back in 2014.

“Your commitment to the West Branch Lions Club strengthens not only West Branch but the entire state of Iowa,” the senator wrote. “I am grateful for your example and the positive impact you make each day. Please know that your efforts do not go unnoticed. From flying flags over West Branch to celebrating holidays and patriotism, to the annual Hoover Prairie Runs, as your U.S. Senator, I am pleased to send my best wishes on yet another extraordinary occasion.”

Disclosure: This reporter is a member of the West Branch Lions Club.

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