

Lions Club receives hefty eyeglass donation

New York Power Authority donates lenses to Tuckahoe-Eastchester Lions chapter



Photos/Charlie Johnson

Members of the local Lions Club pose with Jenifer Becker of the New York Power Authority, which sponsored an eyeglass drive last month.

By CHARLIE JOHNSON

STAFF REPORTER

town@hometwn.com

On Nov. 23, members of the local chapter of the Lions Club, bearing balloons and accompanied by their iconic antique car, met outside of the A&P on White Plains Road to receive a large donation of eyeglasses contributed by employees at the New York Power Authority (NYPA) during a weeklong drive.

The drive, held from Nov. 16-20, was at the suggestion of Jenifer Becker, chief sustainability manager for the power authority, which has an office in White Plains. At the end of the week, Becker's co-workers had found approximately 350 old pairs of glasses to donate to the Tuckahoe-Eastchester Lions.

Like all other governmental entities in the state, the NYPA was encouraged by the governor to participate in a recycling event in honor of New York Recycles Day, celebrated each year on Nov. 15. There being no Lions chapter in White Plains, Becker contacted David Zimmerman from the Tuckahoe-Eastchester group, the closest chapter, about the NYPA drive.

The International Association of Lions Clubs has been engaged in working for the visually impaired since its inception, one of its prominent activities being collecting used eyeglasses to be reused by needy people around the world. Glasses received by the local chapter are specifically given to organizations that in turn send them to visually-impaired people in South America. "We collect over 20,000 used pairs of eyeglasses per year," said Lion Frank Cuomo.

William Falco, the club's eyeglass chairman, discussed the process of handling donations. The most valuable donations are those with minor, repairable scuffs or those lenses which are simply outdated prescriptions for the original owners. Collected glasses, he says, are "cleaned up,

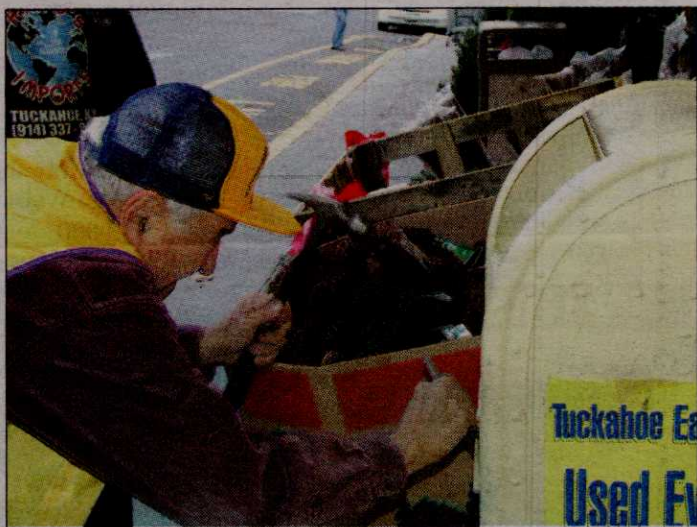
read prescriptionally and given to the poor and needy."

Becker was very pleased that her organization was able to connect with the Lions to improve lives while also preventing waste. "They were obviously very appreciative, which was fantastic," she said. "We would certainly be open to partnering with them again."

Although as Falco said, "Sight for the blind is one of our main missions," the local Lions serve the community in a variety of ways. Other groups sponsored by the Tuckahoe-Eastchester Lions have included the Little League, soccer leagues, local libraries and the Tuckahoe Police Department, to whom the Lions recently gave a defibrillator. "There's about 30 organizations that get a check from us," said Cuomo.

The selection of the A&P as the location to receive the NYPA donation was due to the fact that two Lions eyeglass drop-off boxes are on site outside of the grocery store. Opening these two eyeglass receptacles revealed over 100 additional pairs of eyeglasses, donated by community members, bringing the day's total up to around 450 pairs.

In addition to the two containers at the A&P, members of the public can drop off their old glasses at several other locations in town including the Walgreen's on White Plains Road and the Food Emporium in Bronxville. The Lions also accept used cell phones in their drop-off boxes at these locations.



Lion William Falco takes desperate measures to get at donated glasses.