



## **MD33 Lion of the Year Nomination**

### **William “Bill” Johnson Harvard Lions Club**

Lion Bill Johnson approached me last August with an email with the subject line “An unusual and ambitious proposal for your consideration”. There launched the Perkins Initiative, a multi-district effort to raise \$20,000 for long awaited adaptive physical education equipment for students of differing abilities at the Perkins School in Watertown. Bill was the innovator, relationship builder, project manager, and cheerleader for this successful effort. Our clubs were so moved by the true “We serve” message he communicated that the initiative raised over \$27,000. With the overage, the climbing wall was installed in February, and the tandem bicycles will be further modified to even better fit the needs of students of differing abilities.

This is just the latest, however, in Bill’s endeavors to help those less fortunate. Here are excerpts from a recent speech he was asked to give on volunteerism, which, of course, included a request for support of the Perkins Initiative above:

“Some of you are already familiar with the 20 years of volunteer contributions I have made to this town that I love, including organizing and leading the construction project to save the Bare Hill Pond from invasive weeds and stormwater contamination, in which over 6000 volunteer hours were contributed over a two year period...

a stint as Selectman where I drove the initiative for long-range capital and operational budgeting that is still the core of our planning today...

and 7 years on the Community Cable Committee to build a new facility with upgraded technology, expand services to the community, and establish a vibrant video enrichment program with the schools.

But my deepest volunteer passion is teaching adaptive skiing and snowboarding to special needs children and disabled veterans through an incredible organization at Mount Sunapee called the New England Healing Sports Association, known better by its acronym NEHSA.

When I joined the Harvard Lions Club 2 ½ years ago, one of the first things I took on was getting Bromfield students involved in the Lions State Youth Speech Contest. But what I enjoy most as a Lion is leading is the service project initiative that I introduced to the club last year – contributing not just dollars, but our personal time and talent to organizations that need outside help - giving back





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through sweat equity. Last year we spent time at WHEAT Community Connections, a community service agency in Clinton that offers hot meals, a food pantry, and referral services to those in need. We rebuilt their pantry with commercial shelving donated by Market Basket and did major interior renovations to fix ceilings, doors, and walls.

We also worked at the Transitions shelter for women and children in Devens to build them a fenced-in play area and an outside storage structure, as well as doing some aesthetic landscaping. In two months, we will be building a service dog training area at the Clear Path for Veterans facility in Devens. We typically bring 25-30 Lions together for some pre-work and then a long workday to execute these projects. We always include a mid-day picnic with the group we are serving to celebrate our collaborative effort. Besides the obvious jollies I get from organizing and leading the projects, the best part for me is the camaraderie of sharing the giving back experience with my close friends in Town.”

What Bill Johnson did not mention here, was that in 1999, he retired early to devote 20-50 hours a week to volunteering. Another example, shown in the pictures and article attached, was his engineering project for accessibility to the town beach, in which he also guided an Eagle Scout project.

In June 2017 Bill joined the Harvard Lions Club, He had been assisting on projects since his wife, Laura, joined the club in October 2012. Other than leading the Club and Zone Youth Speech contests and the Service Project Initiative he mentioned, he has not held an office or been awarded any recognition. Thus, I cannot more strongly recommend him as our 2019-2020 MD33 Lion of the year. The students at the Perkins School would certainly agree.

Yours,

*Colleen Oncay*

District Governor 33A





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Article at <https://harvardwomansclub.wordpress.com/2015/07/06/another-successful-eagle-scout-project/#more-694>

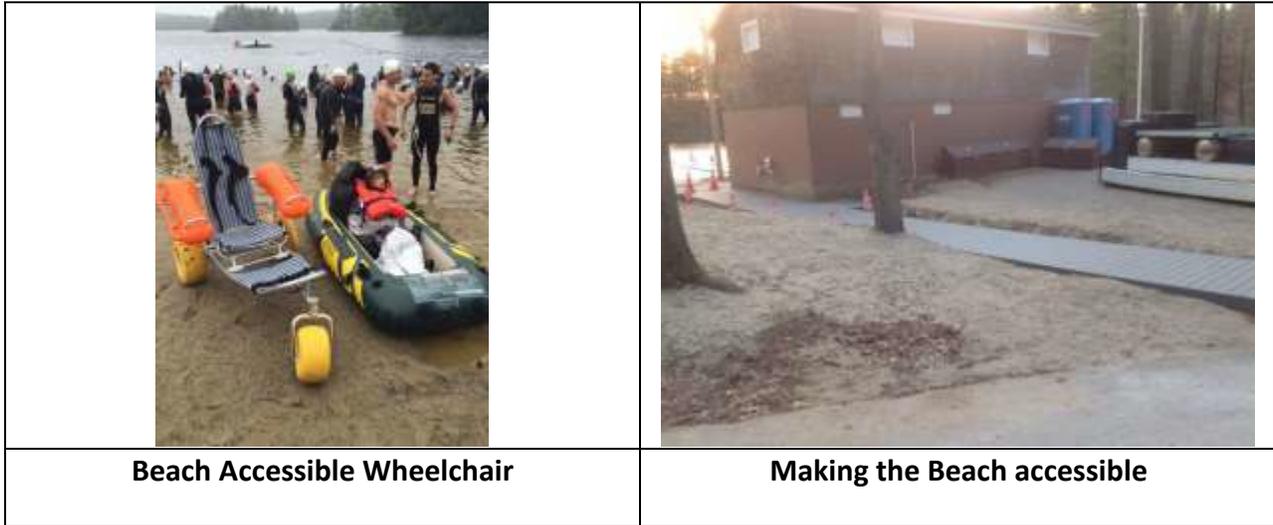


Photo: Harvard Press 10/12/2017: Doug Williams (left) and Bill Johnson prepare fried dough for the Harvard Lions Club





## COME JOIN A COLLABORATIVE DISTRICT 33A/33K INITIATIVE TO ENRICH THE LIVES OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN

The Adapted Physical Education Program at Perkins School for the Blind needs external funding support for specialized equipment to augment their core PE and recreational activities to better include their increasing population of visually impaired students with more severe physical disabilities. Their highest priority are two Duet-Plus Wheelchair Tandem Bicycles [<http://frankmobility.com/duet-vid.php>] (~\$12,000 for both) that enables these students to participate in tandem bicycle rides with their more able-bodied peers. Another high priority is a Traverse (horizontal vs. vertical) Climbing Wall [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15aLDqhKZmk>] (~\$8,000 plus installation cost) that offers a safe and adaptable space for visually impaired students, both with and without additional physical impairments, the opportunity to improve strength, balance, and tactile senses. Despite the significant revenue and endowment resources that Perkins applies each year to its core educational activities, there have been insufficient monies to fund either of these two requests from the Adapted PE program for the past 3 (Duet bicycles) to 8+ (Traverse Climbing Wall) years.

This grant initiative proposes a pooling of resources between Districts 33-A and 33-K at both the individual club and district levels to fund both requests. We are asking the 94 clubs across both districts to commit by December 15 to whatever level they can comfortably contribute through existing resources or additional fundraising, with district-level funding (Sight and Hearing Fund in District 33-A; District 33-K contributions to the Perkins Fund) covering any shortfall. The idea is to create a highly leveraged impact for smaller individual contributions and to encourage outreach and collaboration at both the club and district levels. In parallel, we would ask Perkins to commit to all installation and maintenance costs to “put their own skin in the game”. We are working to create a joint fundraising event that all clubs can participate in (stay tuned for more information in the near future), but encourage each club to pursue additional ideas on their own. We’ve created a Facebook page ([Lions Fundraiser for Perkins](#)) to communicate, collaborate and track our progress towards meeting our fundraising goals. This would be a great space for clubs to publicly post their participation. Actual monies should be sent by checks made out *Perkins School for the Blind*, and mailed to:

**Lions Fundraiser for Perkins**  
**c/o Harvard Lions Club**  
**PO Box 268**  
**Harvard, MA 01451**

To kick off this campaign, we have our first contribution from the Harvard Lions club in District 33A for \$1000! We appreciate the challenge that all clubs face to balance local requests for funding with district initiatives and the new Campaign 100 challenge from Lions Clubs International. We believe, however, that by spreading this \$20,000 challenge across our 94 clubs (an average of only \$213/club!) that we can support this very worthy initiative without significantly impacting your other funding priorities. And if we can get ALL clubs to participate at some level, it would be an incredible and unique achievement that our districts, our state, and LCI as a whole can recognize and celebrate! Most importantly, the reward for the kids themselves is huge, for without this external funding, it is unlikely the Adapted PE program will be able to offer these enhanced experiences to its students for the foreseeable future.

This initiative is being coordinated in District 33A by Harvard Lion Bill Johnson [[bill.johnson@harvardmass.net](mailto:bill.johnson@harvardmass.net)], and in District 33K by Newton Lion Margie Carney [[margie.carney@perkins.org](mailto:margie.carney@perkins.org)]. Please contact either of them if you have any questions or suggestions.

We thank you all in advance for your support.

Colleen Oncay, MD33A District Governor Dawn Rice-Norton, MD33K District Governor  
Bill Johnson, Harvard Lions Club Margie Carney, Newton Lions Club

