

Candy Day History

Did you know? Kansas is one of at least 15 states in which Candy Day fund raisers are held.

Like Lions Clubs, Candy Days had their origin in the state of Illinois. According to a document from the Lions of Illinois Foundation website entitled "Candy Day History," Illinois Lions began their efforts for a statewide project to raise funds for the blind and visually impaired in 1952. Their activities started with White Cane Days, with individuals who donated to the cause being given a white cane lapel pin. The city of Chicago had a regulation that allowed only five "tag days" within city limits, and the white cane lapel pin was considered a tag. As a result, Lions were not allowed to hold their activity within the city. Not to be deterred, Lions next tried providing Cracker Jacks, but the media balked at promoting a commercial project. In 1956 Illinois Lions replaced Cracker Jacks with the candy rolls we all now recognize, complete with the Lions logo. It was the "Candy Day History" that stated the following: "If imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, then Illinois Lions must certainly be blushing. Currently more than 15 states and Australia also conduct Candy Day fund raisers."

Some of you are undoubtedly asking, "What is the history of Candy Day in Kansas?" PID Gene Vogel, president of the Kansas Lions Sight Foundation, provided a folder chock full of historical artifacts to help answer this question. The most informative regarding Candy Day was the August 1973 issue of the *Kansas Lions News*. The first two paragraphs of that article are quoted below in their entirety.

"The Candy Day Program, now accepted state-wide as the major fund raising project for the Lions Eye Research Clinic at Kansas University Medical Center, is now entering its fourth consecutive year. The goal for the year 1973-74 has been set at \$50,000. Each year the response to the program has increased. With the construction of the new buildings getting under way at the Medical Center added emphasis will be given to the program. Last year Candy Day contributed \$37,375.79 to the project.

As in the past, 60% of all money raised by the Candy Day projects goes directly to the Kansas Lions Sight Foundation where it is earmarked for the Eye Research Clinic Fund. The remaining 40% is retained by the local clubs for sight conservation projects in their respective communities."

The article further stated that in 1973 the Candy Day Committee had entirely new personnel that would be under the direction of the Kansas Lions Sight Foundation; prior to that year the committee had been supervised by the State Council. A list of the eight committee members representing each of the eight districts that existed at that time was included. A name of that list familiar to many current Kansas Lions is that of PDG Tom Weatherd, of Tescott, who was vice-chair of the Candy Day Committee in 1973. Lion Tom can be seen at every MidWinter Rally and State Convention and is still taking an active part in Lions activities in his club, his district, and the state.

The conclusion from that *Kansas Lions News* article is that Candy Day began in Kansas in 1969. It got a big push in 1973 when Governor Robert Docking proclaimed October 6, 1973 as "Kansas Lions CANDY DAY FOR SIGHT." The Kansas Lions Sight Foundation, organized in 1965, began to publish informational brochures in 1970; the last brochure in the packet provided by PID Gene was dated 1986. The back of the brochure on each of the intervening years carried the same information:

"Support Lions CANDY DAY in October of each year. The LIONS of Kansas give away candy to raise funds to support their KANSAS LIONS SIGHT FOUNDATION. **Remember the Lions CANDY DAY.**"

Some of the above information may raise questions in your mind, as it did in mine. I had not heard of the 60-40 split in Candy Day proceeds. Many clubs send all proceeds from its Candy Days to the Kansas Lions Sight Foundation without reserving a portion for local projects. While October has been the designated as the preferred month for Candy Day, disclaimers in printed material say that clubs may find

other dates more convenient. Look at the dollar goal for 1973--\$50,000. That would be a lot more when translated into 2011 dollars. Are we, as Kansas Lions, raising that much in Candy Day efforts at this stage of the game?

There's no time like the present to put Candy Day into your club's activity schedule for the 2011-2012 Lions' year. You need four ingredients to cook up a successful Candy Day: a date (or dates), a location, a supply of candy, and willing Lions to serve.

Notice that I said "date" or "dates." You CAN have more than one Candy Day. While most clubs schedule a Candy Day in the fall, the timing should fit your club and the schedule of activities you have planned for the year. You can be creative about your location. Many clubs have their Candy Days at a local business, such as a grocery store or a store like WalMart. However, some clubs have their Candy Days in conjunction with activities at their local school; this is especially true in small towns.

Ideally, candy should be ordered through your Candy Day chair person. By combining orders from multiple clubs into a single order, a district can get reduced prices and prepaid postage if the order is sufficiently large. That, of course, means that delivery and/or pick up of orders needs to be coordinated. Candy comes from F & F Foods in Chicago; the website is www.fffoods.com.

Now is the time...plan a Candy Day for your club!

