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**S.R.V. Lions ‘Leo Night VI’ Showcases Students' Community Service**

The community service activities of students at three area schools were showcased recently at the Saddle River Valley Lions Club’s sixth annual ‘Leo Night.’ Presenting information about their service projects were student leaders of Leo Clubs from the Northern Highlands Regional High School in Allendale, the Cavallini Middle School in Upper Saddle River, and Mahwah High School.

Leo Clubs are school and community-based service organizations modeled after and chartered by Lions International since 1967. Now constituting an international network of over 7,000 clubs in over 145 countries, the ‘LEO’ name is an acronym for its motto: Leadership, Experience and Opportunity.

The Leo Night program, originally created to give Lions a chance to meet and interact with the Leo Club members and their faculty advisors, has become an annual Lions Club tradition. Many wearing tee-shirts bearing the official Leo Club logo, student representatives from each school addressed the Lions membership using PowerPoint presentations. In addition to giving information about their current and completed projects, students also shared their plans for the coming months. Examples of projects undertaken by the Leo Clubs included eyeglass collection drives in support of the Lions’ own efforts as well as fundraising efforts on behalf of various causes relating to health and vision.

In his opening welcome, Saddle River Valley Lions president Dr. David Verducci urged all of the club members and guests present to be inspired by the example being set by the Leo Club leaders. “These are young people,” Verducci said, “who on top of all their other school-related responsibilities and activities, academic and otherwise, still manage to find the time to work in service to others.”

Bernice Reesbeck, in her role as a Leo Club faculty advisor, discussed her feelings about the school’s club. “The Leo program here at Northern Highlands is now in its fifth year and students sincerely appreciate the opportunities the club offers.” This sentiment was echoed
by Highlands student Ally Neuendorff who explained that being a Leo “has helped me to better understand the world around me.” Cavallini Middle School Leo Club president Matthew Reichert, agreed, saying that “my club’s service projects have really helped me to grow as a person.” Matthew’s father, Christopher Reichert, is a past Lions Club president.

Lion Eugene Baskayan, the chairman of Saddle River Valley’s Leo Committee which oversees the student groups’ activities, expressed similar feelings stating that “these student Leos demonstrate what the spirit of Lion-ism is all about and this is reflected in the rapid growth of the student organizations.” He said that “the number of students now participating in our Leo Club program is now more than 130 and continues to grow.” He emphasized that “the commitment of our Lions Club to the Leo program is stronger than ever.”

Responding to inquiries about their future plans, student Leos spoke about a variety of projects under consideration, including continuing an established partnership with Habitat for Humanity. Students also shared their plans for volunteering at the annual Lions Carnival in May and said they are looking for novel ways to raise money to fund their club’s activities. In outlining ambitious project schedules, the students all expressed their eagerness to follow through on their commitment to quality service activities and to maintain close communication with their Lion sponsors throughout the school year.

One of the evening’s highlights for those present was hearing about why they chose to become Leos. Club member Maryam Skairek, a senior at Northern Highlands, appeared to sum up the feelings of all the students remarking that she joined the club “because I believe that community service is really important. So becoming a Leo just seemed to me like a great way to help others. It makes me feel good!”

In closing the evening’s program Verducci congratulated and thanked the Leos for their efforts on behalf of those less fortunate. He expressed “how proud we Lions are of these students,” and went on to say that the “Leos clearly understand both the true meaning and value of service to others. It makes us feel very positive about the future.”

To learn more about the Leo Club Program, visit the Youth Programs section of the Lions website at www.lionsclubs.org. For information about the Saddle River Valley Lions Club, go to the club’s Facebook page, or view its website at www.SRVLions.org.

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N.B. The photos below are shown here solely for identification purposes. High resolution JPEG files are attached to the email that included this press release.

I. Photographs

Photo 1 of 2 - Leo Night VI Participants

Pictured here are members of the Saddle River Valley Lions Club and Leo Club members & faculty advisors from Northern Highlands Regional High School in Allendale, the Cavallini Middle School in Upper Saddle River, and Mahwah High School.

Photo 2 of 2 - SRV Leo Logo

This custom designed logo was created to celebrate the community service efforts of the Saddle River Valley Lions Leo Club program.