



Jim Langham/Times-Bulletin

The sign on the side of the Venedocia Lions building represents one of the most active clubs in the area.

## Venedocia Lions Club reaches out to village

By JIM LANGHAM  
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**V**ENEDOCIA — An auctioned bedroom suit provided the financial base to initiate one of the most successful small-town Lions Clubs in western Ohio. It was 1961 when a group of 25 people contacted the organization's headquarters in Chicago to appeal for a club in Venedocia. Officials made arrangements for the Middle Point Lions Club to sponsor the young organization.

located right beside the village park. And while the primary purpose of the building is to house Lions meetings and activities, it is also available for other community organizations such as 4-H Club and various fund drives.

"We rent it for reunions all through the summer. It also gets heavy usage around Christmas time," said Koenig. "Club members took it upon themselves to build this building because they felt that it was something that they needed. It almost takes on the function of a community building."

When members of the Middle Point club came to the charter banquet, they came with more than their support for the new organization. They brought along a bedroom suit to be auctioned, with proceeds going as the first gift to the Venedocia treasury. In the end, the piece of furniture brought \$150 and the club was off and running.

"This is our 40th chartered year. We started with 24 charter members," commented Jerry Koenig, one of the leaders in the club. "Everything seemed to come together right away. There's just something about Venedocia. I don't know if it's the Welsh heritage or what.

"There's always been a closeness of the people in the club," he added. "People in this community were raised to be a close-knit family. And the club is still growing. People in Venedocia love to get involved with things like this."

In 1970, club members joined together to build their own Lions Building, an attractive and very functional structure

One of the most memorable uses of the facility was during the Blizzard of '78. The center was turned into a make shift shelter for those who were without heat or who needed a place to stay for other reason. Food was flown in by helicopter to help care for those who had need. The facility also served as a shelter for those who were opening up the roads around the community.

As the club began to grow, it became more of a source of outreach for community need. The group also reaches out to individuals with need, as well as donating to such organizations as Northwest Ohio Eye Research.

In addition, the club gives scholarships each year to two students each from the Lincolnview and Spencerville High Schools. Each year the organization gives the local 4-H Club \$10 for each member that completes a project. Last year's gift totaled \$580.

"Right now we're donating to seven different Lions organizations," commented Koenig. "That's what bonds us together, working together to help meet the needs of others. If someone has a fire, we're there in some way supporting them. We had a woman who was having a difficult time reading because of her eyes. We were able to purchase a machine to help with that."

"We've had good leadership and that has helped keep this club going the way it is," commented David Hugh Evans, one of the early members of the club. "We've been very active since the very beginning."

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"This is such a good thing for the community. Our members range in age from 28 to 85," said Koenig. "It has a good way of pulling the community together,

especially in working together for the projects. We're thankful for each person who has chipped in to help with everything we've tried to do for this community over the past 40 years."

In addition to the community building, the club also owns the shelter house at the park and a sausage trailer. During fair season, the organization sets up at various festivals in the area to sell fresh sausage as a fund-raising project. Club members have made as high as 11,000 sandwiches during one season.

If all goes well, the next major project on the horizon is constructing a new sidewalk from the village out to the Venedocia Cemetery. It is hoped that the walkway will serve as an exercise tool as well as providing a foot path to the ceme-