



## Norwich Lions Club Lions Melvin Jones Fellowship Presented to Lions Stephen Flanders and Nicolaas Bekker

Gary De Gasta



Lions Nico (left) and Steve (right) helping ready a Lions Club camp for summer.

**June 7, 2022 Norwich:** At its end-of-year dinner, the Norwich Lions Club bestowed its highest honor for the 2021-2 club year on members, Stephen Flanders and Nicolaas Bekker. Lion Steve was recognized for having developed the club website to be a source of publicity, recruitment, and memorializing the club's activities. In addition, Steve was instrumental in setting up on-line vehicles for the club's Meadow Muffins Contest and its Silent Auction. Lion Nico was recognized for updating and digitizing the club's financial policies and procedures, and for developing a framework for the club's community grants program. Tom Broughton, Past International Director (PID) of Lions Clubs International, presented the awards.

The Melvin Jones Fellowship reflects the backbone of Lions Club service. The award is presented to those who donate \$1,000 to the Lions Clubs International Foundation or to people for whom a donation was made by others. The Norwich Lions Club bestows this honor on those who have made a notable contribution to the advancement of the club or its activities. The fellowship memorializes the legacy of Melvin Jones, who developed Lions Clubs International as an international service organization.

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## Stephen Flanders biographical background



Stephen Flanders receives award from PID Tom Broughton, as wife, Janet, looks on.

Lion Steve is a retired research and supervisory civil engineer, who worked for the U.S. Army's Cold Regions Research and Engineering Laboratory for 30 years. After retirement he served on the Norwich selectboard for seven years. After retiring from the board, he became active as a Norwich trails volunteer and with the Norwich Lions Club.

In his Lions Club activities, Steve has enjoyed volunteering with his peers on the Norwich Fair, vision screening of school children, helping getting the Lions Club Camp for deaf children ready for operation, and leading the assembled club members in song at meetings. His individual efforts have focused on developing the club's website, taking pictures of club activities, taking the club's Meadow Muffins and auction fund-raising activities on line, and chronicling the club's activities.

Steve met his wife-to-be, Janet, while in college in Cambridge, Massachusetts—he was attending MIT and she Boston University. Upon graduation, they moved to Hanover where Steve attended the Thayer School of Engineering and Janet entered the travel business, which became her life's calling and the gateway to their travels to every continent and upon the seas. Steve remains active in all-season outdoor activities, including hiking, cross-country skiing, bicycling and sailing.

Now in his seventies, Steve has sold his airplane and sailing catamaran, but retains his road bike. He supports his fellow seniors by organizing a local hiking group, called the Granite Grannies, delivering meals on wheels, and assisting Kendal residents. Steve and Janet enjoy their Norwich home, surrounded by grounds that reflect Janet's life-long dedication to gardening.

## Nicolaas Bekker biographical background



Nicolaas Bekker receives award from PID Tom Broughton, as wife, Lauren, looks on.

Lion Nico is a vice president of Ledyard National Bank and branch manager of its site in Norwich. Prior to coming to the Upper Valley, he followed his University of Amsterdam master's degree training in Film and Television Studies at the Santa Barbara Film Festival in California, followed by entering banking in Connecticut. He has extensive experience in volunteer service, as a past Rotary Club member, serving on the board of the Hartford Area Chamber of Commerce and as a vice president and treasurer in the Norwich Lions Club.

As a Norwich Lion, Nico has pioneered new fund-raising concepts, including the club's recent Raffle Extraordinaire. As Finance Committee chair, he organized and led an initiative to regularize a community grants program with a schedule, application process, set of criteria for prioritization of applicants, and reporting process. He succeeded Lion John Lawe as treasurer, upon John's passing, and updated the record keeping and reporting of that position.

Nico met his wife, Lauren, in his native Netherlands in 2002 and followed her to her home town of Santa Barbara, where they married. Her career brought the couple to the Upper Valley, through a position at Dartmouth College. Together, they have restored an 1800s vintage home in Bradford, Vermont, which they share with a peaceable menagerie of eight cats.

## About the Norwich Lions Club



Lions Clubs International (LCI) is the world's largest service organization comprising 1.4 million members belonging to 48,000 Lions Clubs in 200 countries. LCI was founded in Evansville, Indiana in 1916 by William Perry Woods and subsequently evolved as an international service organization under the guidance and supervision of its secretary, Melvin Jones for whom the Fellowship is named.

The Lions motto is "We Serve". Lions Club initiatives include vision, hunger, the environment, pediatric cancer and diabetes, international relations, environmental issues, and many other programs.

Since it was Chartered on June 4, 1954 the Norwich Lions Club (NLC) has proudly served Norwich and surrounding communities. The NLC recently expanded some of its service to include the Town of Hartford. The NLC belongs to Vermont's Lions District 45 (State of Vermont).

The first Norwich Lions Club Melvin Jones Fellowship recipient was Lions Past District Governor Phil Wheeler who was honored in 1991. Since then, the Fellowship has been awarded to 39 members and prominent community members, including: Red Logan, Dr. Joe Grant, Ray Royce, Jay Van Arman, Dr. John Lawe, Henry Scheier, Demo Sofronas, Dr. "Rusty" Bernal, Dr. Rob and Laurie Sabatelle, Donna Wheeler, Harjit Rakhra, Cheryl Brush, Fran and Gary De Gasta, Brion McMullen, Debbie Van Arman, Mel Aaron and Peter Stanzel.

The NLC usually meets on the first and third Tuesday of the month in the Community Room of the Norwich Public Library at 6:30 pm.