

KEY CLUB®

KIWANIS OVERVIEW

KIWANIS HAS BEEN SERVING CHILDREN, COMMUNITIES FOR NEARLY 100 YEARS

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – Kiwanis International is a global organization of member-volunteers working to change the world one child and one community at a time—locally and globally through Kiwanis club-sponsored activities and programs. Today, Kiwanis comprises 600,000 adult and youth members in 90 nations and geographic areas that serve children and communities worldwide.

The name “Kiwanis” comes from an expression in an American Indian language, “Nunc Kee-wanis,” which means, “We trade,” or, “we share our talents.”

The first Kiwanis club was organized in Detroit, Mich., and the group received a charter from the state of Michigan on Jan. 21, 1915, which today is considered the birth date of Kiwanis. Initially, clubs promoted business exchange between members, but before the Detroit club received its charter, members were distributing Christmas baskets to families in need. Following spirited debates between those who supported community service vs. business exchange, members adopted the service position in 1919.

Originally established as an organization for men, Kiwanis opened membership to women in 1987 and today, more than 60,000 women worldwide—nearly a quarter of adult Kiwanis members—call themselves Kiwanians.

Kiwanis became international with the organization of the Kiwanis Club of Hamilton in Ontario, Canada, in 1916, but limited its membership to the United States and Canada until 1962, when the board approved expansion worldwide. Since then, Kiwanis has spread to all the inhabited continents of the globe and three individuals from outside the United States and Canada have served as president of Kiwanis International.

Today, 250,000 adult Kiwanis members dedicate more than 6 million volunteer hours to approximately 150,000 service projects and invest more than US\$100 million annually in projects to strengthen communities and serve children. Any community need can become a Kiwanis service project, especially if it involves children.

In the United States, many clubs support pediatric trauma facilities and sponsor camps for underprivileged or handicapped children. Around the world, Kiwanis clubs support hospital doll programs, Special Olympics, reading programs, orphanages and health clinics and build schools in underserved areas.

In 1994, Kiwanis adopted its first Worldwide Service Project, a campaign in partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders (IDD), the leading cause of preventable mental and physical retardation. Kiwanis raised \$100 million through the campaign, funds now at work in 90 nations and geographic areas helping to ensure that more than 80 million children in the developing world will be born free of iodine deficiency disorder.

As Kiwanis membership has grown and enthusiasm for its service-based format has spread, Kiwanis has created additional volunteer and leadership opportunities for people at every stage. These programs include Circle K International for college students, Key Club International for high school students, Builders Club for middle school and junior high students, K-Kids for elementary school students, and Aktion Clubs, for adult citizens living with disabilities.

In Europe, Kiwanis sponsors Kiwanis Junior for adults, ages 18-35, and globally supports Key Leader, a weekend leadership development retreat for middle and high school students. The organization also sponsors two in-school programs in the United States: Terrific Kids, a student recognition program that promotes character development, self-esteem and perseverance, and Bring Up Grades (BUG), a program to recognize students who raise their grades to an acceptable range, and maintain or continue to raise them from one grading period to the next.

For more information, visit www.kiwanis.org, or call 1-800-549-2647.