The first Kiwanis club was established in Detroit, Michigan.

Specific requirements for Kiwanis membership, including male gender, were established and inserted into the constitution and bylaws.

The House of Delegates heard proposals to amend the constitution and bylaws at each Kiwanis International convention, starting in 1973. Each year, the amendment gathered momentum but still failed.

In answer to the include-females issue, Kiwanis began to charter Kiwanianne clubs, a service group for wives and widows of Kiwanians. Within the first year, more than 1,500 women joined.

The Kiwanis International Board of Trustees introduced its own amendment to allow women to join Kiwanis, which was co-sponsored by nine Kiwanis clubs. The amendment was defeated, receiving 47 percent of the vote.

Delegates at the 72nd Annual Kiwanis International Convention voted to amend the constitution and bylaws to allow women to join Kiwanis clubs.

Lisa McCoy, currently a member of the Tyler-Rose City, Texas, Kiwanis Club, became the first woman to serve on the Kiwanis International Board.

Jane Erickson of the Bellevue-Offutt, Nebraska, Kiwanis Club became the first woman to serve as Kiwanis International Foundation president.
The face of Kiwanis International changed forever in the summer of 1987 when delegates at the 72nd annual convention voted to allow women to join the organization. It was a historic vote that changed everything. And it’s time to celebrate!

What you can do
There’s no time like the present to spread the word about Kiwanis. Get excited about making a difference. Share your club’s stories. Recruit new members. Look for all types of diversity in your membership. Celebrate where we’ve been ... and where we’re going.

Go online
Use the new toolkit celebrating 25 years of women in Kiwanis by visiting www.KiwanisOne.org/women. Share the videos, read stories about some of the first women to join the organization and download event ideas. Share at your next club meeting.

Buy merchandise
Show your pride in Kiwanis and the 25th anniversary of women by ordering special-edition merchandise through the Kiwanis Family Store at www.KiwanisOne.org/store.

Celebrate 25