Neither rain, nor hurricane’s fury ...

... nor each member’s own plight stays these beleaguered Kiwanians from resurrecting their clubs and continuing their appointed purpose of service

By Julie Carson

“Our mayor put it perfectly in saying that ‘the storm had put us back to about the year 1800.’”

That’s how Virgil Harris, a member of the Kiwanis Club of Hancock-West Harrison, Mississippi, recalls the condition of his community following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Of course, his club was just one of hundreds affected by Katrina and Hurricane Rita that summer. And the stories of members surviving, reconnecting, and moving forward to help others now abound. As for Virgil and so many others, the tales begin with people simply trying to right their lives.

“It was amazing,” he says. “It was really tough to communicate. There was no way to get around. Everyone was displaced. Businesses were destroyed, so there was no way to make a living.”
There was also no way to keep a Kiwanis club alive.

Or so it seemed. The Hancock club boasted nearly 30 members prior to Hurricane Katrina, which struck August 29, 2005.

“We lost most of our members, because many moved out of the area or out of the state,” says Virgil, who was club president at the time. “Four or five of us got together, along with (immediate-past Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee District governor) Dennis Oliver, and our first question was: ‘Do we want this club to continue?’

Well, of course we did.”

That small group began meeting about once a month on a couple of benches located behind a church in Bay St. Louis. The club’s previous meeting place, a restaurant close to the coast in nearby Waveland, was wiped out by the hurricane, which meant the club’s supplies were lost as well.

“We now meet twice a month. We haven’t fully recovered yet, but we are coming along. The camaraderie of our group is strong. We will maintain this Kiwanis club.”

Today, the club has 21 members.

“When you have disasters and one part of an area is hurt, everyone pitches in to help that part, but when 100 percent of a community is hurt by a disaster, you’re facing a phenomenal task.”

That’s how Robby Showalter, a member of the Kiwanis Club of Saint Bernard-Arabi, Louisiana Kiwanian, sums up Katrina’s destruction in the Saint Bernard parish.

“Every one of our club’s members lost their homes,” he explains.

 Aside from getting their personal lives in order, the Kiwanians were challenged with locating and making contact with the club’s 60-plus members. When a member set up a Web site called “The Parish,” word quickly spread among members who had scattered across the state and the country. A post seeking information on the whereabouts of a member would be followed up by posts about that person and how to get in touch.
“One of the first things we did as a club following the storm was to have a Christmas party for the members,” Robby says. “That really pulled people together.”

Among the projects first initialized by the club were reorganizing its sponsored Key Club at Chalmette High School, maintaining a scholarship program for students, and implementing Coats for Kids.

“Our Kiwanis club has a strong spirit,” Robby says, “and we have a saying: ‘If there’s something good happening in Saint Bernard, you’re gonna find a Kiwanian involved with it.’”

“Sheer will.” That’s how Nancy Walters, treasurer of the Kiwanis Club of D’Iberville, Mississippi, describes the manner in which members picked up the pieces to their lives and resurrected their club following Hurricane Katrina.

“Cell phones seemed to be working, so we put a big sign out in front of our business with our cell number on it,” she says. “A few Kiwanians started to stop by, then more and more came to the building. About seven of us got together early on and said, ‘If we’re going to keep this club alive, here’s what we need to do.’”

Grant money got things rolling. A Kiwanis International Foundation disaster relief grant, for example, helped the club replace T-shirts and gifts presented through its Terrific Kids program. By May 2006, the club was conducting meetings in the kitchen of Nancy and Tina’s accounting business. Prior to the hurricane, the club’s roster stood at 26; the group now is back up to 18.

“We have a close-knit group, and everyone sticks together,” Nancy says. “Sometimes we don’t get all the members to the meetings, but all we have to do is call, and they are there and ready to help.”

Though the high school was being used as a shelter, Kiwanis members kept their sponsored Key Club intact and active. And the club counts Bring Up Grades as one of its newest projects.

“We’re back as a club and helping out in our community,” Nancy says. “We’re small, but our will continues to push us forward.”
United, Kiwanis revives

Much of the credit for Kiwanis’ recovery following the 2005 hurricanes must go to local members who persevered, rebuilt, and continued to serve. But Kiwanians worldwide also were involved, donating more than US$900,000 to the Kiwanis International Foundation’s (KIF) Disaster Relief Fund following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Some clubs in the storms’ paths, unable to conduct fundraisers or to continue service projects at a time when their communities needed them most, used KIF grant monies to sustain their service commitments.

The Disaster Relief Fund always is open for donations so the foundation can respond quickly to disasters worldwide. Members from throughout North America arrived to clear debris, feed the homeless, and serve other needs. Kiwanis caravans motored into Louisiana and Mississippi, delivering truckloads of emergency supplies.

After losing more than 1,600 members who were displaced or faced economic hardship, the Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee District developed a strategic plan to recruit and retain members and build new clubs.

Kiwanis International waived dues and new-member fees for clubs in the affected area.

Orlando obscura

*While attending the 93rd Annual Kiwanis International Convention, embark on a quest to find host Orlando’s hidden treasures*

By Pam Brandon

Lively International Drive in the heart of “O-town’s” tourist attractions has a trio of favorites. Just steps from the Orange County Convention Center, [Pointe Orlando](#) features 20 movie theaters, a dozen restaurants, cool shopping, and the quirky WonderWorks. This upside-down building blew in from the Bermuda Triangle when a science experiment went awry, or so the story goes. You can try your own experiments inside this interactive playground with more than 100
hands-on ways to have fun, from an earthquake measuring a 5.3 on the Richter scale to a virtual glider above the Grand Canyon.

Also on I-Drive, Ripley’s Believe It Or Not! appears to be slipping into one of Florida’s infamous sinkholes, but the crooked “odditorium” is merely an illusion. Marvel at the bizarre collection of unbelievable one-of-a-kinds, like a Rolls-Royce made from more than a million matchsticks.

Three unusual experiences are at Downtown Disney West Side. The giant aqua-blue box dominating the skyline is DisneyQuest, an indoor, interactive theme park with five floors of adventure that combines cutting edge virtual reality and classic Disney fun. You can jump into the 3-D world of Pirates of the Caribbean and paddle down waterfalls on the Jungle Cruise.

Steps away is the captivating Cirque du Soleil La Nouba (pictured above), a dream-like spectacle featuring high wire and flying trapeze and Cirque’s opulent sets. With an international cast of more than 70 artists, the high-energy show is performed twice daily, five days a week.

For music lovers, House of Blues (right) at Downtown Disney is the ticket, with Mississippi Delta inspired cuisine, mystical folk art, and live music every night. A steady list of headliners is scheduled in the intimate concert hall adjacent to the restaurant, the same space where the world-famous Gospel Sunday Brunch draws a crowd for two shows each week.

Enthusiasts of history and theology will

If you already have experienced the headliners of Orlando’s top theme parks—Mickey, Shamu, and Shrek—and are looking for something different, head for one of Central Florida’s offbeat adventures, where the crowds are smaller but the fantasy can be just as big.
enjoy Holy Land Experience theme park, which re-creates Jerusalem and showcases traditions that take you back 2,000 years to the world of the Bible. Live shows, such as David and Goliath for kids and a musical story of Moses, and enlightening talks (“What are the Qumran Caves?”) make this an all-day experience.

Ever see gator wrestlin’ with an eight-foot amphibian? Step back to another era of theme park attractions at Gatorland (left), which opened in 1949 as a roadside attraction. You can stroll the boardwalk above the breeding marsh and see hundreds of gators soaking in the sun, or you can take a train ride around the park. Little ones love the splash park and Allie’s Barnyard where they can meet Dolly Llama and Gracie, a friendly goat.

Get out on the water and close to more gators at Boggy Creek Airboat Rides, a noisy-but-fun Florida experience. The fast boats skim into the swamps at up to 45 miles per hour. Early morning is the best time to see slim white egrets, blue herons, osprey, turtles and gators. For spooky fun, take the nighttime tour (your captain will wear a miner’s hat) to spot the glow of gators’ red eyes—lots of red eyes.

For a gentler ride on the water, head to Winter Park’s Scenic Boat Tour, a local attraction for more than half a century. The seasoned skippers have plenty of stories to tell cruising the 12-mile “Venice of America.” (“Franklin D. Roosevelt slept there,” a guide points out, “and Harry S. Truman received an honorary degree once there.”) Along the way, you’ll spot tropical flowers and plants and subtropical bird species, including egrets, blue herons, and osprey.

One for all

Kiwanians share their talents and skills to build playgrounds where all
children can play

By Judi Bailey

What’s it like to never be able to go to a playground? To be walled off from the friendships, the play? It’s not only that you can’t use the swings and other equipment—you can’t even get into the place. All you can do is sit in your wheelchair or stand supported by leg braces, looking through a chainlinked fence pretending to enjoy the other kids playing.

Approximately 6 million children in the United States alone have a disability that impedes their play on a traditional playground. Few communities have play areas to accommodate children of all abilities. But through the leadership of Kiwanians there are solutions coming to fruition. They often are referred to as “Boundless (or Barrier-free) Playgrounds” for, as Jim Cornell, a Kingsport, Tennessee, Kiwanian, says, “We do this so kids of all abilities can play together.”

Aaron for example, has multiple physical abnormalities, including a hearing impairment for which he uses an ear implant that is incompatible with plastic. So he can’t slide down plastic slides.

But in April of 2007, a day of the grand opening, ribbon-cutting style, Aaron could finally play in a milieu of freedom.

“It made the day for me,” says Betty DeVinney, co-chairwoman of the Darrell’s Dream Boundless Playground Committee in Kingsport. “Even his grandparents came. It was great to see him be able to play with his friends and the other kids.”

Through the leadership skills of fundraising, recruiting, delegating, organizing, networking, communicating, and inspiring, Kiwanians pave the way to build playgrounds for kids like Aaron.

Darrell’s Dream

One inspirational leader was Kingsport Kiwanian Darrell Rice. It began with his dream: to build a playground where all children—regardless of their abilities—could play together. Darrell led a communitywide effort to build the playground facility at the park. Unfortunately cancer took him before the project was completed. Not only strong in his life, Darrell was strong in his death: The community rallied to ensure his dream would come true.
“Darrell was a major fundraiser in the community. He knew everyone, knew who to go to to get things done,” Jim says.

Darrell belonged to the Kingsport Kiwanis club, and it was Jim who proposed the club donate US$10,000 to build the central structure of the playground and to display the names of various contributors.

Jim put his top leadership qualities to work: coordination, organization, and the ability to network to recruit volunteers for the day-to-day “grunt work,” as he calls it. Volunteers came from his Kiwanis club, Circle K and Key Club members, the high school football team, ROTC, among others. He paired volunteers with Kiwanis members to guide the helpers.

The playground was named Darrell’s Dream as a tribute to the visionary’s inspirational leader.

Upton’s Vision

The **Kiwanis Club of Santa Ana, California**’s George Upton was a communicator who listened to the needs of others. When George and other Kiwanians took a group of 23 disabled kids to breakfast, he put this skill to work by inquiring about the children’s likes and dislikes. He learned that only three of the 23 had ever been in a restaurant and only a couple of them had ever been on a playground.

So George spread the word about the community’s need for a fully accessible playground and a partnership soon developed between the City of Santa Ana and the Kiwanis club. The city’s parks department donated five acres of Thorton Park where the project would be constructed.

Right around this time, five-year member Gary Drake tapped into one of his passions. “I got this hairball idea,” he says, “to participate in The Breathless Agony to raise money for some future club project.”

This 114-mile bicycle ride with 1,200 feet of climbing was selected by GreatOutdoors.com to be “One of the Greatest Hillclimbs in North America.” Gary says the ride reminds him of the agony kids who use wheelchairs face every day. He and his wife, Laura, pursued donations to support their rides and raised nearly $15,000. The club decided to use the contributions, in conjunction with the City of Santa Ana, to
create a sport center for the Kiwanis Barrier-Free Playground, which would include a full-sized basketball court with adjustable-height hoops. The Santa Ana club had set a goal to raise $90,000 for its construction; it costs approximately $190,000 to build the court. Numerous other fundraising events were held. The club used its networking skills to access the area’s community resources.

A massive awareness campaign was launched and involved all aspects of the news media. Gary, John Karpierz, and other members contacted the business and industry sector.

“It took a lot of work to get the word out,” Gary says, “but once it got rolling, a lot of resources contacted us.”

Not only did the club meet its goal of $90,000, but exceeded it to $100,500.

A community’s gift

Kiwanians bring leadership—and take away inspiration—from every experience. Members of the Kiwanis Club of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, volunteered to help the neighboring Helena Kiwanis club build a barrierfree playground. The experience inspired them with a determination to build one of their own.

Wayne Sisk, then president of the Tuscaloosa club says, “Only four other playground sites like this exist in Alabama and it has been documented that parents will drive 75 to 100 miles so their children will have the exciting experience of playing on outdoor equipment.” Around the same time the Helena project was under construction, playground plans already were brewing in Tuscaloosa, where the thrust originated with the local United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) association. “UCP of West Alabama presented their boundless playground idea to our Kiwanis club in August of 2006,” says Donnie Grill, Division 4 lieutenant governor of the Alabama District. “Kiwanis stepped in to be a major partner with UCPWA in September 2006."

The Tuscaloosa club received a $1,000 matching grant in February 2007 from the Alabama District, and the club donated a total of $7,000 to the project. Construction of Phase I (playground and pavilion) began in August and was completed in December. Because the UCP had begun the preliminary stages of the project, members of the Tuscaloosa club focused their administrative abilities on
fundraising and coordinating volunteers.

Donnie coordinated the 150 volunteers who were recruited between August and December from organizations including a church, a hardware retailer, and Circle K club and Key Club members.

Kiwanian Jason McNeil, along with a number of others, headed fundraising by using their contacts with the area’s companies to request donations as well as material and construction expertise. Matching grants and contributions from the Alabama District, neighboring Kiwanis clubs, area businesses, and the major contributor—Nucor Steel—brought in $100,000 over the next four years.

The Kiwanians’ courageous leadership made it possible for kids to play together—and successfully—minus the barrier of physical disability. And not only are kids learning to accept one another’s differences, but they are learning to embrace differences of all kinds with understanding and tolerance—one child and one community at a time.

The reward for all this work?

As Wayne Sisk puts it: “To see a child play in a playground for her very first time and to see the tears of joy in the eyes of her parents. They cannot thank you enough.”

Old enough to play

How old is too young to play? Test your knowledge about age-appropriate playground safety.

How high is too high for a child 5 years old or younger?

- 3 feet
- 4 feet
- 5 feet
Safe Kids Canada says, “Five feet is about as high as most adults can easily reach. Do not let your young child go any higher than that.”

How old is old enough to use overhead rings or horizontal ladders?

• 4
• 5
• 6

The United States Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) reports, “Four-year-olds are generally the youngest children capable of using upper body devices such as these.”

What’s the proper slope on a slide?

• 50 degrees
• 40 degrees
• 30 degrees

The CPSC states, “It is recommended that the average incline on a slide chute be no more than 30 degrees.”

What is a common cause of playground injury?

• Hot surfaces
• Bug bites
• Lack of supervision

Some equipment materials may absorb sunlight heat, but Safe Kids Canada notes, “Many playground injuries happen when children are not watched closely enough. Stay close to your child and teach him or her how to play safely.”
Does pea gravel offer a safe playground surface for young children?

- Yes
- No

According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education, “... with children under 2, pea gravel is not acceptable as an impact attenuation surface due to the choking hazard.”

“With the Americans with Disabilities Act, the surfacing industry evolved again, as the (playground surface) product now needed to provide a firm, stable, and slip resistant footing for mobility devices to wheel across, which neither sand nor gravel would provide,” states the US CPSC, which recommends reviewing the American Society for Testing and Materials for playground equipment and surfacing standards.

**Take the challenge**

**By Andy McLaughlin**

Just what does a highropes course or juggling have to do with leadership learning? Plenty, says longtime challenge-educator Chris Niles, a [Key Leader](#) facilitator and consultant who specializes in training facilitation and programming.

Kiwanis magazine asked Niles to explain the concept of experiential training and why physical activities provide valuable leadership training for students, as well as adults.

Kiwanis magazine (KM): Define “experiential learning.”

Chris Niles (CN): Experiential learning is kind of a catchall phrase. More accurately, the type of programming we use, especially with Circle K and Key Club, is called “challenge education.” There’s a whole range of experiential education, but challenge education goes a bit beyond recreation.
KM: What makes challenge education effective?

CN: It’s the “debrief.” People who aren’t familiar with ropes courses or experiential learning see people running around and doing silly activities and think it’s all just fun and games, but there’s a real purposefulness to the design. In challenge education, you use an activity to create a certain dynamic in the group, and then you sit down and talk about that dynamic. That debrief is where the learning comes in.

KM: What’s a typical activity that would create the “dynamic” you need for a debrief discussion?

CN: A starting activity might be a group juggle. It gives you a chance to look at simple things, such as awareness of one another. You can look at group communication, because people are bound to drop at times; so, how do they deal with that? Do they blame each other? Or do they try to find a better solution?

KM: What do you hope to accomplish in the debrief discussion?

CN: If it’s an intact group—say a district board, an International board, or a class of governors—we’re going to look at effectiveness of communication and creativity in problem solving. We talk about the importance of effective teamwork, shared responsibility, and accountability. With the Key Leader program, however, we’ll use a group activity, but we’re not trying to get those students to work better together, because they’re not an intact group; they’re a set of individuals. We look more at personal decisionmaking and ethics, how they deal with stress, and leadership behaviors. But the debrief will be
more tailored to who you are as a leader and how you can improve.

KM: Why is challenge education popular?

CN: There’s a certain, well, “sex appeal” to it. It’s novel. It’s interesting. And that draws people in without intimidating them.

KM: Is challenge education better than traditional classroom training?

CN: It’s not necessarily better. Experiential is just one piece of what I think is necessary to make training truly effective. Ultimately, I think any training that has no experiential element has certain limitations. Any training that’s experiential only has some limitations. The most effective training truly is the most diverse training you can create, where you’re offering different teaching styles and different learning experiences.

KM: Are there any caveats to consider in challenge education?

CN: Absolutely—something we call “challenge by choice.” It’s critical. The philosophy is that the participant owns what’s going on. For example, “Yes, I am challenging you to fully participate, but if at any point you feel like you can’t, that’s perfectly fine. I just need you to let me know that.” That doesn’t mean you participate. Maybe I have to tweak the training so you still play a critical role in a safe way. And that’s also how we work with people who have disabilities. If I’m doing an activity with somebody who has a prosthetic leg, or they just had shoulder surgery, I need them to take responsibility for their choices. I don’t know what their level of ability may be. If they tell me, I can change the nature of the activity to accommodate their needs. So everybody plays a critical role, but everybody does so in a way they’re comfortable.
Nurturing character

A self-professed contrarian, Bobby Fong defied stereotypes to follow an uncharted path to the presidency of Butler University. There, he led the school on a rediscovery of its roots and, like Kiwanis, installed leadership and character development at the core of its strategic plan. Kiwanis International CEO Rob Parker recently met with Bobby, a fellow member of the Indianapolis Kiwanis club, to discuss leadership, education, Kiwanis. And contrarian saints.

Rob Parker (RP): As I recall, you grew up on the west coast of the United States. That had to be an interesting culture clash for your parents who were both born in China.

Bobby Fong (BF): I was born and raised in Chinatown in Oakland, California, and didn’t learn to speak English until I was in kindergarten. Chinese really was my first language even though I was born in the US. There was always this counterbalance of Chinese culture and values in equipoise with what I was learning in school and what I was encountering. I have a great admiration for individualism, for the idea of initiative, for the free market both in East and West. Even though the basis of laws may be different, the idea of justice is still important, and fair dealing was a constant. But I find myself trying to think about what it means to be an individual versus what my part is in a community.

Bobby Fong, President, Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana
I’m a contrarian. I went into (the study of) English when most people think Asians should be better at math and science. I’m a university president, and right now, there are very few Asian presidents at colleges and universities in the US. So, this has been an unexpected life even for me. But it has been a combination of both West and East, offering opportunities and shaping my values.

**R:** Do you think your background as a Chinese-American has shaped your view of leadership?

**BF:** I think so. I’m enough of an Oriental to know that however inefficient a system is, it can always be worse. A classic question in comparative cultures is to ask what would be a greater fear for you: tyranny or anarchy? If you ask a Westerner, the answer more likely will be tyranny. They don’t want somebody telling them what to do. If you ask an Asian, the answer would be anarchy, because we have experienced that when there’s nobody in control, life can be nasty, brutish, and short. Thomas Hobbes knew that three centuries ago.

**RP:** We just did a survey of our clubs in Asia, where 78 percent of the Asian respondents said leadership development was really important to them. Does that surprise you?

**BF:** There is a great sense of community in Asian culture. In the Confucius context, you always are responsible to and for someone. You cannot be a person for yourself. In general, Asians feel there are bonds that connect you to communities of work, of family, of town, ultimately of country, and those connections mean you have to acknowledge those bonds and, if possible, aspire to be part of the leadership that strengthens all those institutions.

**RP:** I was intrigued when I saw you still meet with your students once a week.
**BF:** I believe it’s not only what happens in the classroom; it’s those life-changing conversations that potentially makes the difference.

**RP:** Talk to me about that.

**BF:** When one is dealing with 18- to 22-year-olds, this is a time when their imagination for what is possible for themselves is changing. Some of them are hitting walls, and some of them are just having a love for a subject unexpectedly blossom.

We are here not only to teach skills for a job. We’re here to enable students to have a sense of themselves and how they want to behave in the world. That gets into character formation and leadership, but it has to begin with the individual students doing the self examination of which Socrates spoke: “The unexamined life is not worth living.” We’re here to help our students examine their lives. And the process may be something they learned in their classroom, but the processing takes place in these conversations.

At Berea College, we were driving a young nursing student to church when my wife just said to her: “You’re such a bright kid. Why didn’t you want to be a doctor? It stumped her cold. She said, “I never thought about that before.” Today, she’s a physician. By the same token, I once said to another nursing student: “Why don’t you take up med school?” And I got my ears torn off in a 10-minute lecture. She said: “I’m going to be the best nurse I know how.” And a few years ago, she was voted the nurse of the year in the state of Kentucky.

It is not the same dream for everybody. ... But in both cases, those were conversations that indicated to me how a sense of vocation—of just frank talking—can come out of those conversations.

**RP:** Susan Scott wrote a book called Fierce Conversations with the idea of having direct and bold conversations. I remember her quoting that while no single conversation will necessarily change a life or a marriage or whatever, it can. It sounds like those are the kind of conversations you’re talking about.

**BF:** In the world of higher education, we have to be ready to speak from our expertise, because part of why we’re teaching them is because we’re more experienced and we know more. By the same token, we’ll atrophy if we don’t allow ourselves opportunities to be surprised and taught by our students. I find myself constantly taught by both students and my own boys.
My younger son has just been accepted to Bolton College. We’re very proud of him. But I’m also proud of the way he got in. He’s a state-level runner, and the Bolton coach said, “If you come and run for me, I’ll put you on my short list of preferred candidates.” My son said, “Mom and Dad, I know I’m a good runner, but I want to play soccer.” He’s an OK soccer player, but he’s not at the level to ensure admittance. Immediately we, his parents, began talking about throwing away advantages. And he said, “Dad, you always talk to me about integrity and to be true to my word. I don’t want to run in college, and I don’t want to mislead the coach by telling him I will.”

I had to learn to back off, because my own son was coming to a sense of who he was and where his boundaries were. He did it all on his own terms, and I’m proud of that.

**RP:** After 93 years of service, Kiwanis is trying to make the leap from good to great. How do you make that leap into future greatness and still respect the past?

**BF:** It’s a matter of being able to understand or enunciate a mission that is intricately rooted to the history of your organization. Many people don’t know that Butler University was started by abolitionists and was interracial and coeducational before the (US) Civil War.

**RP:** That’s amazing.

**BF:** But it was all played down. It wasn’t part of the enduring values that animated the day-to-day functions of this place. I’ve been very fortunate to be able to help our school re-discover some of our founding values that have currency for today. People want to believe they can make a world better for their children than they found it for themselves. And I think that’s a very basic desire of people with good intentions.

**RP:** We have more than 50,000 volunteer leaders in the Kiwanis family. What kind of leadership advice would you offer these men and women?

**BF:** Butler’s strategic plan speaks to the idea of daring to lead. I believe great leadership takes courage. Good managers work with the system, but leadership is changing the system for the better. The courage to change the system and the desire to make it better are parts of the necessary makeup for a leader. It means having a great imagination and knowing that people will resist your vision. Unfortunately, the courage to create something that doesn’t exist
means many of our decisions will be contingent on knowing only some of the facts and relying on equal parts of hope, good luck, and a sense of values that this idea will be worth all the trouble.

**RP:** We have embraced a new brand promise at Kiwanis related to leadership and character development that leads to life-changing service. It is based on a servant leadership model we call service leadership. Is serving others a value you are working to instill at Butler?

**BF:** Servant leadership is the model that is so important both at Butler and throughout higher education. At a teaching institution, you measure yourself not simply by the number of books you publish, the number of awards you receive, but by what your students end up doing. I describe the vocation of teaching as being footnotes in the autobiographies of our students’ lives. And my wish for new faculty members is that they have lots of footnotes, lots of citations of what they have done.

Leadership is not about self-aggrandizement; it’s about creating the conditions for people to flourish. That’s where servant leadership or leadership for service is integral to the process of education. And I find that Kiwanis’ current emphasis on leadership for service is quite consummate with what we do.

**RP:** I recently spoke with National Football League coach Tony Dungy, and he intrigued me with this idea that he just happens to be a football coach but that is not who he is. He said he has much more important roles: as a father, as a husband, and a spiritual leader. How would you define yourself?

**BF:** I think I define myself by my family, as a husband and as a father. I wouldn't put what I do in work and make it equivalent or put it on a priority with what I do as a father and as a husband. They are two different things. Vocationally, I'm still defined as a teacher/scholar. I am a president, because I have found this is one way to expedite teaching and learning.

**RP:** In another interview, you identified people you’d love to have dinner with, and you mentioned the Apostle Paul. Tell me about that.

**BF:** I love this idea of what it would be like to interface with important historical characters. I am fascinated by people, like Paul, who say: “What I have been called to is more important than life itself.” Another person I would want at the dinner is Catherine of Sienna, the saint
who. ...

**RP:** ...Shook her fist at God? (smiling)

**BF:** Yes, she is credited with saying: “God, you shouldn’t treat your friends like this; no wonder you don’t have very many.” I like contrarian saints, people who are able to see God in the world but realize that God’s ideas and one’s own expectations of what God should do are two different things.

Desmond Tutu is a friend, and when he was here for our first commencement, he told a story of a farmer who was looking at his fields when a traveler came by and said to him, “It’s amazing what you and God have been able to accomplish with these fields.” And the farmer looked at him and said, “You should have seen these fields when God had them to himself.” His point was, God yearns for goodness in the world, but we are God’s hands and feet. And (Tutu) began pointing at some of the graduates and saying, “As God’s hands, what are you going to do? As God’s hands, what are you going to do?” He believed that apartheid in South Africa could be overthrown with prayer and love. Desmond Tutu is another contrarian saint.

**RP:** Some of our leaders are taking on the challenge—as contrarian Kiwanians—of making changes to their local Kiwanis clubs that will make them more relevant. What advice would you offer these change agents?

**BF:** I would begin with the question: What difference are you making in the lives of people, particularly those who cannot pay it back? Most people like being good Samaritans, and this idea of leadership for service is absolutely on point. What I love about Kiwanis is that it is not a question you answer in a cosmic way. ... It is something we do in our own communities. The reason the Abe Lincoln scholarship program (for youth who succeed while overcoming hardships) is so important to us in Indianapolis is we see the students. Through the interview process, we see names, faces, and histories, and we know in some way by honoring them that we are paying tribute to the accomplishments these students represent. And if we are giving nothing but hope—a sense that somebody has noticed that I do things right—we are investing in that person’s future. It means a lot.

**RP:** As a Kiwanis member yourself, what inspires and encourages you about what we do?

**BF:** I know you are familiar with the essay by Robert Putman on
Bowling Alone. We seem to be a society that is driven by special interest groups, where even while bowling, you've got to watch the television at the end of the lane rather than talk to the person next to you. One of the yearning needs is for people to fellowship and do good across ideological lines. Kiwanis represents that.

This is the only club I belong to where I’m touching people I normally would never see. At Butler I work with the chamber of commerce. I’m part of the independent colleges of Indiana. I’m active in my church.

**RP:** Those other groups are much more homogenous.

**BF:** That’s exactly right. They are organized by criteria that demand something in terms of profession or belief. Kiwanis simply says, “Would you like to be part of us? Would you simply like to help us serve? We get together. We fellowship with one another.” But then there’s a purpose beyond simply having a good time. That’s why it’s such a special organization.

**RP:** At Kiwanis we have had to make some difficult decisions to strengthen our financial position. I know you did that at Butler as well. How important is financial stability to being able to lead a change effort?

**BF:** Let me offer Butler as an example. I came to an institution that ran deficit budgets for at least 14 straight years before I came. We did a lot of painful things. We capped operational expenditures, no automatic escalators for cost of living. We essentially did salary freezes for almost two years running. ... I told our staff, “We need to hang in there together as a community. ... We’re going to get through this as a community.” We turned it around in a year and a half.

**RP:** What is the toughest obstacle you’ve had to overcome, either in your career or in your personal life?

**BF:** That’s a good question. Both of my parents were dead by the time I began college. It is not so much an obstacle. In some way, it’s maybe the reason why I’ve always had to push forward. The important question to ask is not whether what you have now is better or worse, but whether you’re making a difference, and I think I can say yes to that. Something from my basketball youth: If you concentrate on a missed basket, the odds of you making a mistake on the next play go up astronomically. You have to forget it and get on to the next play. I’m thinking of AJ Graves, our shooting guard on this year’s Butler
basketball team. He’s had a rough season. His shooting percentage has been down. But in the game against Southern Illinois University, he got the ball with six seconds left and let go from 30 feet. The ball went in just as time ran out. I learned from the coach afterward AJ was always going to take the shot. He was going to take the shot as soon as they moved to defend against him. Well they moved on him at 30 feet, but if they had moved on him at half court, he would have let it fly from there.

**RP:** Sounds like that is the kind of confidence and courage we need to build into our leaders.

**BF:** You are absolutely right … at Butler University and at Kiwanis.

**Giving, because children are in need**

*When it comes to financial planning, Iowan couple includes world’s children in decisions*

**By Curt Seeden**

It was a humbling moment—it was a Kiwanis moment—for Mary Langdon.

“I was a Key Club advisor,” Mary recalls, “and I was taking three Key Clubbers to their midyear convention. This one little gal lived in a single-wide trailer in a bad part of town. She was Hispanic and didn’t speak any English.”

Mary remembers peeking inside the door of the girl’s home to find a king-sized bed in the living room occupied by six siblings.

“So here’s this little girl in Key Club helping other kids, when, by golly, we should be helping her,” Mary says.

To help the most kids possible, Mary and Dick Langdon choose to donate appreciated stock to the [Kiwanis International Foundation](https://www.kiwanis.org/).
“We want to do as many things as we can to help children, which is the backbone of Kiwanis,” says Dick. The couple’s focus is on giving unrestricted gifts to the foundation.

“The unrestricted gift gives the people who receive the money the option of doing the most good with it,” Dick says. “For us to restrict a gift to one particular group would tie the hands of those dispersing the money from actually giving the money to where it would do the most good.”

Adds Mary: “Suppose we just wanted money to go to IDD (iodine deficiency disorders), and then Hurricane Katrina hits. Katrina was an unforeseen peril that needed to be addressed.”

The Langdons are motivated by their love of children. They have donated generous gifts through two foundations that share their interest. Mary is president of the Nebraska-Iowa Kiwanis District Foundation and Dick is president of the Scottish Rite Foundation in Iowa.

“We have many of the same kinds of goals,” Dick says. “We just both happen to be foundation presidents of organizations that want to help children and do charitable work.”

Mary became involved in Kiwanis in 1990 when her best friend, Sharon Kimberlin, invited her to the Highland Park, Des Moines Kiwanis club meeting. By 1994, Mary had become the club’s first female president, and in 1997 she became her division’s first female lieutenant governor. She was lieutenant governor a second time in 2002, the same year she became president of the Nebraska-Iowa Kiwanis Foundation.

Dick had been involved with the Scottish Rite for several years before he married Mary. With Mary in Kiwanis and the missions of both
organizations so similar, Dick also joined Kiwanis, and the couple switched their membership to the **West Des Moines club**.

“We both love children,” Dick says. “I have one daughter who has a mental disability, and I’ve been of assistance to her and our other children.”

The Langdons strongly advocate the importance of considering tax benefits when giving. Dick explains why they often choose to give appreciated stock.

“If you bought stock for US$10,000 and now it’s worth $100,000, and you give that $100,000 stock to charity, (in the United States) you get a tax deduction of $100,000 while the charity gets the full benefit of your donation,” Dick explains.

“But if you were to sell your stock and try to give the money away, because of the (capital gains) taxes involved, you won’t maximize the tax benefits.”

The Langdons also are firm believers in long-term giving and leaving legacies through estate planning. “We are very fortunate that we’re able to give,” Mary says. “You get back more than you give, and I’ve always been a proponent of that. It’s the way we live.”

**Hobby comforts children worldwide**

Don Espeland has two passions: woodworking and Kiwanis. The two pastimes came together in 1996 when he began creating wooden objects to raise money for Kiwanis International’s campaign against iodine deficiency disorders. Later, he shared his woodworking passion with fellow Kiwanians, and the **Grand Junction Golden K Kiwanis club of Colorado** began producing furniture for a hospice facility and other charitable organizations.

Most recently, however, Don read a book
about a nonprofit organization that makes wooden cars and trucks to ship to children overseas, and that inspired him to add toys to his club’s repertoire.

“I thought to myself, ‘Why can’t our club do the same thing on a local basis?’” Don says. Soon he and five other woodworking Kiwanians took up tools for the cause, and, after adding “magic wands” for girls, are leaving countless smiling children in their wake. Fellow Kiwanian Gordon Harbert of Harbert Lumber Company provides the wood.

“We distribute about 90 cars/trucks/wands per month to the police department, two hospitals, a homeless shelter, and a home dealing with (victims of) domestic violence,” Don says. “The police department uses them at accidents and scenes of domestic violence; the toys are to be given to children in serious pain or stressful situations. We also are sending a box of these toys to Iraq for distribution to children by soldiers assigned to a special affairs unit.

“This is truly a labor of love,” Don says.

President's Message

Passionate leadership

At the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California, Eva and I had the opportunity to put the final touches onto the Kiwanis International float. Though we did not handle the passion flower, there was plenty of passion among the Kiwanis-family volunteers there.
Passionate leaders make things happen. Recruiting new members brings a balance into the lives of Kiwanians who extend the gift of service to others. New clubs enrich their communities through implementation of our Service Leadership Programs. More members means more service. In all regions of the world, clubs are passionately involved in their communities: from feeding children in Colombia to supporting Kamp Kiwanis in New York. From regional pediatric hospital efforts in New England and Pennsylvania to unique marketing efforts like the Tournament of Roses parade in Pasadena. Passionate service requires passionate leaders. As passionate leaders we make a difference. To quote Past International President Bo Shafer, “100 percent of the people we do not ask to join Kiwanis, don’t join.”

Thanks again for making me so proud to be a Kiwanian, and keep sharing your story of community service with others.

**Editor's Message**

**Kiwanis is child’s play**

Most of us have fond memories of childhood and the places where both our legs and our imaginations ran wild. In a world that is increasingly harsh for children, Kiwanis members worldwide are creating environments where children are allowed to act their age. From Alabama to California and Jamaica to New Caledonia, dedicated Kiwanis volunteers are building parks, ball fields, and playground structures totally dedicated to children.

In this issue of Kiwanis magazine, you will meet some of these huge-hearted leaders who make life better for our little ones. You also will meet first-generation Chinese-American Bobby Fong, who overcame significant obstacles to earn a degree from Harvard, a doctorate from the University of California-Los Angeles, and now serves as a successful university president. Bobby, who also is an Indianapolis Kiwanis club member, follows National Football League coach Tony Dungy and theologian Crawford Loritts in our ongoing leadership series.

You also will find important information about our upcoming International convention in Orlando. Take a moment and enjoy this
annual thank-you to all of our Kiwanis leaders who are making the world a better place to be a child.

Perspective

A plea for healthy children

Oh, how well I remember my days going to elementary school in New Orleans. I attended St. Louis Cathedral School in the heart of the city’s French Quarter. My brother, Lenny, and I walked to school each morning, just like a lot of kids did back in those days of old. Oh I know, kids today take the bus to school or ride in one of their parent’s cars to class.

And after the ride home from school, what does the average child do? I’m sad to say, they aren’t being very active. Not unless you consider surfing the Internet or playing computer games “exercise.”

At St. Louis School, we had something on campus kids today take for granted. Those of you my age may remember something called a playground! They were these archaic little schoolyard accessories featuring swings, slides, seesaws, and monkey bars.

If you can remember playground equipment, you also may remember a little time-out period for the kids—a break from reading, writing, and

Richard Simmons is no stranger to Kiwanis. He has attended many International conventions. Through his contributions to the Kiwanis International Foundation, he holds Diamond Hixson level 24. He also is a recipient of the Kiwanis International Tablet of Honor for his work with children. His brother, Leonard D. “Lenny” Simmons Jr., is a member of the Kiwanis Club of New Orleans.
arithmetic. That break was called recess! Now, my favorite break of the school day was for lunch. But that’s a whole other issue. For now, I want to focus on recess, playgrounds, and the lack of either in so many schools these days.

Let’s face it, aside from home, school is where children spend most of their weekdays. That’s good, though! God knows, we want our children to be as bright mentally as they can be. But I want their bodies to be sharp too. After all, a fit mind should have a fit body to go with it!

That’s where playgrounds and recess come in. Study after study already demonstrate how dedicated physical activity plays an important role in a student’s academic success. Yet, too many countries have de-emphasized the importance of physical activity within our schools. That’s a big mistake!

Look at the facts. When I was in elementary school, there were none of the childhood ailments you hear talked about today. Today’s kids are overweight, out of shape, have high blood pressure, and are becoming diabetic at younger ages. Some of them are even taking antidepressants! So just what is going on here, huh? Right now, I am in the middle of a crusade to get physical education (PE) and recess re-established as part of the core curriculum for America’s schools. I’ve gone to Washington, DC, to speak before Congress about just how very important this is. Senator Ted Kennedy, Representative Ron Kind, and a host of other congressmen have been very helpful with my effort. Our mission is to amend the No Child Left Behind Act, incorporating PE and recess as part of the core curriculum for our nation’s elementary schools. Please visit my Web site and see what fabulous things we are doing!

The good news is that it’s never too late to improve your quality of life by making fitness and exercise a dedicated part of your life. Even better is to instill that fact into today’s children. Teach them the importance of fitness while they are young, and they will carry those lessons into their adult lives. Let’s give our kids a fighting chance.

It’s time to re-introduce playgrounds, recess, and physical education to our schoolchildren. They should be smart, oh yes. But they should be fit too! It’s not too late to turn things around for the kids. It’s just time!

I hope all of you Kiwanians will join our crusade!
Newsroom

Every-year fund is for every Kiwanian

The Kiwanis Children’s Fund is the primary source of unrestricted support for the programs of the Kiwanis International Foundation. The mission of the Kiwanis Children’s Fund mirrors that of the foundation: to assist Kiwanis International in serving the children of the world. Members who support the

Children’s Fund by making annual gifts are recognized through the Sustaining Donor program. Unrestricted gifts made to the foundation, primarily through direct mail, are considered annual gifts. Other gifts, such as the George F. Hixson Fellowship, Tablet of Honor, and Heritage Society, are not applicable to this program, as they are included in other recognition programs. Membership in the Sustaining Donor program is valid for one administrative year and is based on annual gifts made during the previous administrative year. Membership in this program requires a cumulative amount of at least US$100 in annual gifts and must be renewed on an annual basis.

Photos to use

Kiwanis clubs have a resource of professional-grade photographs to enhance their publications. A selection of low- to high-resolution downloads are available at http://www.kiwanisone.org/images/.

Convention party has a purpose

The second annual Party For A Purpose has a purpose: the children involved in Kiwanis’ Service Leadership Programs. Conducted as part of the 93rd Annual Kiwanis International Convention, the party will be hosted by the Red Coconut Club at Universal Orlando’s City Walk Saturday, June 28, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. In addition to supporting Kiwanis-sponsored programs such as Bring Up Grades, Terrific Kids, and Key Club’s “Kick AIDS Out of Africa,” tickets (US$115 each) cover drinks, dancing, and transportation. Tickets are limited and may be ordered on the convention registration form.
**Dialing gets easier**

Kiwanis International has upgraded its phone system:

- 800-549-2647 and 317-875-8755 remain the International Office’s numbers.
- Once connected, follow the recorded instructions or dial an extension number. (It no longer is necessary to also dial 1 and the # sign.)
- During any greeting, dial 0 to access the receptionist.
- Dial extension 411 to access the Kiwanis Help Line.

**Candidates for 2008 elections**

The following Kiwanians are candidates for the 2008-09 Kiwanis International Board. The election will be conducted at the 83rd Annual International Convention in Orlando, Florida, June 26-29.

**President** (elect one):

- Donald R. Canaday, Meridian Hills, Indianapolis, Indiana, club

**President-Elect** (elect one):

- Paul G. Palazzolo, Springfield-Downtown, Illinois

**Vice-President** (elect one):

- Chia “Sing” Hwang, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- Webster A. James, Goldsboro, North Carolina
- Sylvester Neal, The Valley, Auburn, Washington
- Jorge García, Bogotá, Colombia
- Joel Lee Williams, Troy, Alabama

**Region I Trustees**—United States (elect three):

- Wm. “Ed” Hutchinson, Cape May, New Jersey
- James S. Jennings, The Santa Ritas Green Valley-Sahuarita, Arizona
- Garry L. Warner, Sikeston, Missouri

**Region V Trustee**—At Large (elect one):
• Robert Vande Rieviere, Tielt, Belgium.

**Region IV Trustee**—Asia-Pacific (one to be elected at 2008 Kiwanis Asia-Pacific Convention, March 20-22, Jakarta, Indonesia):

• Tadao Oda, Sendai, Japan

**Laugh with Newhart**

There are plenty of one-name celebrities: Cher, Curly, and Sting. But there may only be one star readily recognized by two one-name titles:

• Bob
• Newhart


**Past CKI leader set for Orlando**

University of Georgia President Michael Adams will speak at the 2008 Kiwanis International Convention. Adams, who will be featured in the June installment of Kiwanis magazine’s leadership conversations, served as 1969-70 Circle K International President. During his term, he represented the Kiwanis family during a tour of Vietnam.

**Leadership guru returns to roots**

Mark Levin’s first leadership book (Membership Development: 101 Ways to Get and Keep Your Members) is in its 10th printing. His second (The Gift of Leadership) is required reading for students enrolled in a Penn State University class. It shouldn’t be surprising Levin honed his leadership skills as a Key Club officer. Levin will share what he’s learned at the 93rd Annual Kiwanis International Convention in Orlando, June 26-29.
Showcase

Giving the gift of freedom

*The Texas Ramp Project brings together Kiwanians and volunteers to ‘build freedom for the home bound’*

It’s a shame Hank Aaron already nabbed the title *I Had a Hammer* for his autobiography, because John Laine sure could have used it. If you listen to the stories John has to share, you’ll understand. After hearing how he has led hundreds of volunteers to change the lives of thousands of Texans, you’ll be ready to grab a hammer and head there yourself to smack a few nails.

John is president of the Texas Ramp Project, a nonprofit organization that brings ramps to homebound Texans.

Sure, the stories he shares all have a common thread, but they also are as different as day and night.

“Virtually every day I am touched by some person,” John says. “This past week, I spoke to a lady while she was undergoing dialysis. She had fallen twice on the front steps of her home, and the social worker at the clinic insisted I chat with Clemmie. I visited her home while she was still on dialysis. The ability to respond quickly is a hallmark of the project.

“That same week we received a call from a lady in the panhandle of Texas whose husband’s health is failing with Parkinson’s Disease. The last time he tried to take out the garbage, he
fell and his wife was hard pressed to get him back into the house. We will help this family. But it is sad to understand there is so little help available locally. There are thousands of others across the state with similar problems. Our vision statement is that no one in Texas shall lack safe access for financial reasons.”

The **Kiwanis Club of Richardson, Texas**, started the project in 1985 after members were approached to build a wheelchair ramp for a friend of a member. By the time John joined in 1989, members already had built 20 ramps. And since then, they have built more than 2,000 ramps in the Dallas area. Projects are determined through referrals from healthcare professionals.

The project spread to other cities across the state as well. To set up a city with a new ramp project, Richardson Kiwanians go through three steps. First, they visit each city and talk with people who can identify the amount of need. They then visit other Kiwanis clubs, churches, colleges, and businesses to identify volunteer leaders who can be trained in that city. They also identify funding sources in each city—anyone interested in assisting the program to get it started.

“It is truly heartwarming to see both the volunteers who come into our project and get excited about helping others, as well as the joy our clients express when their ramps are installed,” John says. “It is a personal blessing to be part of this work.”

Clients find it hard to fight back tears when describing the life-changing experience they’ve gone through after having a home ramp installed.

“They came in and basically stopped me from going insane in the house,” says one female client. “They built this beautiful, wonderful ramp for me and basically gave me freedom to come and go. And I do go.”

**Gift opens door to school for Afghan children**

George J. Jicha Sr. has saved every e-mail his son has sent home from Afghanistan. In the exchanges, father and son share updates and send wellwishes back and forth.
But one e-mail in particular has sparked a humanitarian effort that is spreading throughout the Ohio Kiwanis family. When George Sr. asked George Jr., a medical officer with the United States Army, what was on his “wish list” of things he wanted sent from home, he wanted nothing for himself. But he did have a rather large request for someone else: the children of Afghanistan.

“My son said children cannot attend school if they do not have their own supplies,” says George, past president of the Kiwanis Club of Brooklyn, Cleveland, Ohio. “His request was for us to send pens so the military men and women could give them to the children. Of course, my family responded by sending all types of school supplies—rulers, pens, highlighters, notebooks, scissors, and crayons.”

But the family project spread new wings once George, a past lieutenant governor in the Ohio District, talked about it during a division meeting. The Independence, Ohio Kiwanis club then jumped on board, mailing more than 75 boxes. Division 24 Key Club’s, led by lieutenant governor Gabbi Matthews, sent a large carton. Immediate past Ohio District governor Cindy Champer, along with her West Toledo, Ohio club, sent several boxes, including 10 stuffed with shirts.

“The important point is how many folks in Afghanistan benefited from the kindness,” Cindy says. “It is as though we are not worlds apart, but good friends in the same town helping one another.”

George agrees. “The result of this humanitarian gesture ... is that children can go to school, and they know it was made possible in a humanitarian way, with the aid of Kiwanis.”
Dag! That’s one sick skatepark in Barron*

There is a plot of land in the city of Barron, Wisconsin. Like many community parks, it has ball fields and picnic shelters. A sign identifies it as “Kiwanis Park.” There is not a sign that declares, “Welcome, Everyone.”

One is not needed. The people of Barron know that Kiwanis Park is a place of community unity. Most recently, for example, the Kiwanians and the people of Barron worked together to welcome juveniles, also known as adolescents and teens. Specifically, skateboarders.

A group of youth and adults, organized as the Barron Skatepark Association, expressed concerns for youth who do not participate in organized recreation. Kiwanians agreed to help. After organizing various fundraisers, however, the youth were frustrated by their limited success. Kiwanians insisted that the youth should be the sales force.

“Eventually, some youth gained enough confidence to present a program to any group that offered them the opportunity,” Don says. Money and pledges flowed in: US$25,000 from the Barron Kiwanis club, $8,000 from a Rotary club, $3,000 from the Wisconsin-Upper Michigan District Foundation, and $10,000 from

Translation key

Dude dyüd\ n: Fellow skater
Bust best\ vb: Performs
Session seshen\ n: Time spent skating
Dag dag\ vb: An interjection (wow)
Sick sik\ adj: Skillful
The Tony Hawk Foundation.

“This is a great example of civic organizations working together along with our city and school governments,” Don says.

The funds, coupled with Kiwanis and Skateboard Association labor, resulted in a grand opening ceremony this past September.

“The skatepark already is used almost more than we anticipated,” Don says. “We have youth from all ages and surrounding communities at the park every day.”

**Recall alerts prompt project**

“Product recall,” scream newspaper headlines. “Toxic paint,” warn television reporters. A recent spate of stories about lead-laced products sent many parents into a toychest-clearing panic. Unsure about the safety of his son’s tricycle, one Michigan father determined to trash the toy, rather than risk his boy’s health.

Rightly so, according to the Mayo Clinic.

“Children are more susceptible to lead poisoning because lead can accumulate in their nervous system as they grow and develop,” states a Mayo Clinic health article.

“Death by lead poisoning is uncommon, but dangerous levels of lead in children may cause serious health problems, including lower intelligence and poor school performance.”

Nevertheless, the boy was heartbroken at the prospect of losing his wheels. So before the father toted the trike to the trash, he visited the Kiwanis Club of Utica-Shelby Township, which was testing household items for lead content.

“Please, please tell me there’s no lead in this,”

A Utica–Shelby Kiwanian prepares to test a tricycle’s bright red paint for lead.
he begged.

Several weeks prior to the father’s plea, Kiwanis club member Kimberly Weigand heard about lead-testing devices. Always on the lookout for short-duration projects that can impact children’s lives, club members found a company in Houston, Texas, that rents spectral-based detectors.

Upon the equipment’s arrival, the club invited parents to bring in toys and other items to be tested. Over a five-hour period, members scanned more than 500 fire trucks, racecars, dishes, and at least one tricycle.

“Many parents expressed great concern about their children’s toys and in most cases were greatly relieved by negative test results,” Rick says.

Among the grateful customers were a father and his tricycle-riding toddler.

**Abused children find friends indeed**

In the eastern Caribbean nation of Antigua and Barbuda, young girls abused by hands meant to care for them find refuge at the Good Shepherd Home for Children.

Now, through the **Kiwanis Club of Wadadli**, they’ve also found friends. The club called its first visit to the girls the “Kiwanis Day of Fun.” But it was just the beginning, promises Kenfer St. Rose, club secretary.

“Our main reason for doing this project is to socialize with the children, but it also is a way we contribute to the

*A young tenant enjoys a “Day of Fun” at the Good Shepherd Home for children.*
community,” she says.

Club members played games, hosted a barbecue, and, to the girls’ delight, served ice cream for dessert.

“They enjoyed every moment of the day,” Kenfer says.

Since 1984, the Good Shepherd Home has emphasized self-reliance. Girls learn household duties, attend school and the church of their choosing, and take part in such community activities as scouting, carnival, and playing the steel pan—all in preparation for becoming self-supporting adults.

Meanwhile, the Kiwanians are helping them learn to make and keep friends.

“Some of us already have seen the girls again,” Kenfer reports. “We visited their church and had lunch with them. Two members took some of the residents out for fun, and it’s in the future for other members to do the same.”—Cindy Dashnaw

Clubhouse

Kiwanis ‘saint’ goes marching in

Photo Credit: Anne Chadwick Williams, The Sacramento Bee

Not generally one to toot his own horn, Sargent Wright recently orchestrated a drive to collect musical instruments for
When it comes to being an instrument of service, Sargent Wright knows the score. The 87-year-old member of the Carmichael, California, Kiwanis club, led a drive to replace musical instruments for middle schools in Metairie, Louisiana, a suburb of New Orleans ravaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Drumming up support from clubs in the Sacramento area, Sargent collected and delivered 125 used saxophones, clarinets, trumpets, and other instruments.

Sargent was relentless in collecting instruments, says Karen Borman, the club’s immediate past president.

“Sarge wrote letters to other Kiwanis clubs, telling them we needed musical instruments,” she explains. “At our meetings, he would remind us about the project. He also talked with churches.”

You can go home

After 48 years of self-imposed exile, Eck Spahich recently returned to his native Bosnia (“Croatian-American Serves Country, Homeland,” August 2002).

Born in Tuzla, Bosnia, the longtime member and former president of the Borger, Texas, Kiwanis club, left his homeland as a 15-year-old in 1960 to join his father in Dumas, Texas. Though he embraced his new country, Eck never forsook his homeland and longed to return. Hostilities there during Bosnia’s struggle for independence from Communist Yugoslavia, however, prevented him from going back until recently. He says he found his hometown “drastically changed.”

“Along the highways and roads,” he says, “there is visible evidence of war damage to residential and commercial properties—damaged roofs, bullet holes, broken-glass windows. The town I knew as a 15-year-old is now a city with vibrant street traffic, high-rise apartment complexes, and industry.”

During his visit, Eck was able to reunite with cousins and other family members. “I was impressed,” he says, “with everyone’s friendliness and such a nice welcome extended to me after so many years being away.”
Newest among oldest

One of Kiwanis’ newest members is among its oldest. This past January 8, the Kiwanis Club of Tempe-Nuevo, Arizona, welcomed Bernando LaPallo into its membership. Bernardo, who celebrated his 106th birthday on August 17, told the club his chief goal is helping people to stay healthy.

Students build passion for service

Within the St. Stephen’s Catholic School in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, there are 22 fifth- through eighth-grade students dedicated to do all they can to better their school, community, and nation, all while enhancing their leadership capabilities. “(Builders Club) helps them learn how to be good leaders in the community,” Bob Littler, vice-president of the Glenwood Springs Kiwanis club, sponsors of the Builders Club, told The Post Independent. “We’ve had a very successful club at St. Stephen’s.”

During its nine years, the Builders have satisfied their passion for service in many ways. As one recent example, members organized pancake breakfasts and other fundraisers to sponsor a classmate’s participation in an equine therapy program. Their Kiwanis sponsors were so impressed, they are sponsoring the youth this year.

Faculty advisor Rosario Young believes Builders Club teaches students about community service and getting involved: “They’ve been pretty prolific in what they’ve done.”

Friendliness persuasion
Who had the most influence on your decision to volunteer: family member, friend, business colleague, or neighbor?

That is a question that will be posed in a June online poll at http://www.kiwanis.org. April's question: "How do leaders best illustrate visions for the future?"

**Top 10 tips to keep your child reading this summer**

1. Use Hollywood (movies) to inspire your child to read.
2. Play a summer reading game at your library, or start your own book club.
3. Involve your child in planning your summer vacation.
4. Start a collection.
5. Visit a comic shop.
6. Read cookbooks and packaged food labels.
7. Read instruction pamphlets.
8. Read the newspaper aloud.
9. Get a magazine subscription for your child.
10. Be a reading role model.

Source: greatschools.net

**Fargo sets world record**

When the Guinness World Records updates its pancake-flipping stats and puts the Fargo, North Dakota, Kiwanis club at the top of the list, the editors should add an asterisk to the listing. After all, how many records are broken in near-blizzard conditions?

The Fargo Kiwanians fixed 34,818 pancakes in eight hours this past February to surpass the previous world record of 30,724 pancakes griddled by a Texas Lions Club in 2002. A Guinness representative was in attendance to certify the results.

Snow temporarily closed an interstate from neighboring Moorhead, Minnesota, and temperatures fell to 15 below (Fahrenheit) before the grilling was finished. Still, thousands of hungry customers showed up. “We’re officially the largest pancake feed in the world,” club president Matt Sullivan says. The fundraiser nets about $30,000 annually.
Icon reaches milestone

In Greenfield, Indiana, the name of James Bryce Stephens is synonymous with education. In recognition of his longtime career as a teacher, coach, principal, and superintendent, the community’s newest educational facility bears his name: J.B. Stephens Elementary School.

More recently, the Greenfield Kiwanian became known for another life achievement: celebrating his 100th birthday.

Club Clinic

Q The Builders Club our club sponsors is in a lull. Any suggestions on how we can get it fired up?

A. Some years ago, your Kiwanis club, the school, and the students were excited enough about service and leadership to organize the Builders Club. Recommit yourself to that original vision. Then, take a look at the present situation.

Generally, the first step is to determine if there is a weak link in the operation of the club. Too often, that weak link is in the adult leadership. Is the Kiwanis club fulfilling its responsibility as a sponsor? Are you and your fellow members attending the Builders Club’s meetings and assisting with its projects? Is the faculty advisor devoting enough time to the club? Is the school principal still interested in the program?

Without adult encouragement, student excitement can wane. If there seems to be a mood of indifference among the Builders Club members, host a reactivation party, sponsor a dance or dinner, or return the club to its service roots by planning a meaningful project, such as visiting residents at a retirement center or cleaning the trashiest street in town. Initiate a pen pal project with members of another, stable Builders Club. A Kiwanis International service bulletin offers more suggestions on how to ignite an inactive club; visit buildersclub.org.

Q Would it be proper for our club to join a newly created community council in our town?
A. If your board of directors is agreeable, there is not reason no to. In fact, it’s another way to extend Kiwanis’ reputation as a leader in leadership-development, and many clubs find this is an excellent way to build synergy within their community, multiplying their service impact.

‘Santas’ do double duty in Quito

Bob and Kay Carpenter and Joan Greene of the **Punta Gorda, Florida, Kiwanis club** were among 70 “Santas” spreading good cheer throughout Quito, Ecuador, this past December as part of the annual **Santa Goodwill Tour**. Unlike past years, though, this year’s trek took an interesting turn when they also exchanged season’s greetings there with Ecuadorian Kiwanians.

Plans for the rendezvous actually were formed during this past summer’s International convention in San Antonio, Texas, where the Parkers met Leonardo Berrezueta, then governor-elect of the **Ecuador District-in-formation**, and Jesus Ochoa of the **San Fernando, California, Kiwanis club**. During their conversation, Jesus shared that while he was in the US Navy, his Kiwanis club collected school supplies and he delivered them to the **Kiwanis club in Manta, Ecuador**, where he was stationed. The Manta club built and sponsors two schools there.

Knowing they would be visiting Ecuador during the holiday season, the Parkers swapped e-mails with their new Kiwanis friends during the rest of the summer to firm up their Kiwanis component of the Santa tour.
“At the Quito airport, we were met greeted by a delegation of Quito Kiwanians, complete with a welcome banner,” Bob recalls. “The next morning, we met with Marco Benitez, Ecuador’s governor-elect, and Lieutenant Governor Ricardo Moncayo (of the Pinchincha Division) and presented them with a large suitcase full of small gifts for Quito children. We also gave them a check for $400 from our Kiwanis club for a Christmas party for the 120 children at the schools sponsored by the Manta club.”

The trip was capped off by a visit to the Quito club’s weekly meeting, which proved to be as inspiring as it was enjoyable.

“We toured their Kiwanis building where their main project is providing dental care for poor children,” Bob explains. “They also have a mobile van doing dental care once a month for children in remote areas.”