Ability to make a difference

In club meetings, as well as service and fundraising projects, Kiwanians of all abilities share their special leadership talents and skills

Story by Sam Brattain; photo illustration by Renee Kean

What makes an able Kiwanian? Is it the ability to see and hear important club business? Is it the physical strength to lend a helping hand during volunteer projects? Or is it simply a kind heart, devoted to public service?

Kiwanians who live with disabilities would agree that their “disabilities” do not make them any less of a member. Members of all abilities display an amazing amount of will and determination to do whatever they can to help their communities. Their service is a testament to the adage “while no one can do everything, everyone can do something.”

Adjusting to a person’s “limitations” while also treating them like any other Kiwanian can be tricky. Different disabilities require specific needs and accommodations, which sometimes can make a person feel out of place. All members should feel comfortable during meetings and at service projects.
Here are a few examples of Kiwanians and their respective clubs—and how they overcome such challenges.

**The “Official Greeter”**

At 10:30 a.m. every Wednesday, Larry Richardson breaks from work at a production and assembly plant and begins his five-mile trek to H. D. Hotspurs, a steakhouse where the Kent, Washington, Kiwanis club meets. Other Kent Kiwanians travel much farther to attend the meetings, but Larry’s mental disability and large frame make it incredibly difficult for him to get anywhere. He relies on public transportation, but the bus makes several stops before reaching his destination. After the one-hour club meeting, Larry won’t return to work until 2:30 p.m. He works late to make up his lost time.

Though the world may seem a difficult, even cruel, place for someone like Larry, once he rendezvous with fellow Kiwanians he is right at home. The other members save a seat for him near the door so he does not have to walk far. Larry’s designated seat also puts him in perfect position to serve as club greeter. Despite completing a strenuous, lengthy journey just to make it to a meeting, Larry smiles and presents each member with a warm greeting.

“Everybody greets him as they come in for the meeting,” says immediate past club president Michele Campbell. “Some even give him a little hug.”

When Larry’s mother passed away, according to Michele, the Kiwanis club became a family to him. He never misses a meeting, and proudly wears a “K” hat decked out in souvenir pins.

**The “Official Bell Ringer”**

Unlike Larry, fellow Kent Kiwanian Steve Stovner does not deal with mobility issues, but he is challenged to participate because of his mental disability. Larry and his fellow Kiwanians remedied this by naming Steve the official bell ringer for club meetings.

It all began six years ago when, in a moment of investigative curiosity, Steve picked up the club’s gavel. He did not know what the device was until another member showed him how to gently strike the meeting bell with it.
Steve instantly struck the bell—continuously. This, he was told, is how the club opens each meeting. He enthusiastically responded, “I want to do that!”

Both Larry and Steve previously belonged to the Kent Aktion Club, in which Larry was the president. Due to a membership decline, the club disbanded, and the members were welcomed into the Kent Kiwanis club. Michele says there was some initial concern shown by some members, but generally there was no doubt the former Aktion Club members could contribute.

“People would come up and ask me, ‘Why,?’ Michele says, “and I would say, ‘Why not?’”

Larry and Steve’s presence at club functions shows Kent members the real abilities of persons who have disabilities, thus allaying their initial concerns. Michele offers this advice to other clubs: “Open your mind, open your heart, and open your arms. The reward is 10 times what you put in.”

Assessing ability, not disability

Every member of every club has different degrees of ability. That’s Ellen Jacobson’s stance.

As part of its ongoing fundraising efforts, the Kiwanis Club of Downtown Sparks, Nevada, sell bicycles to people attending the Burning Man Festival, an eight-day celebration in the state’s Black Rock Desert. Many of the event’s estimated 40,000 attendees need a means of transportation, and Sparks Kiwanians, accompanied by members of the newly chartered Reno Sparks Aktion Club, work tirelessly to sell the two-wheelers.

Through the bike program, Ellen works with many people who have varying capabilities, from those with severe brain damage to those with post-traumatic-stress disorder. Some older members cannot always keep up with the physical demands of some tasks. So, within the Sparks Kiwanis family,
jobs are assigned to members based on strengths. An older Kiwanian, for example, works as the project accountant and keeps tabs on the money. The work is not too exhausting, and the member thoroughly enjoys herself.

Everyone, Ellen says, contributes in his or her own way.

“When organizing a volunteer activity,” she says, “it is important to assess your member’s capabilities and find projects they will be able to do.”

**The necklace**

**Kiwanians in Palmer, Alaska**, conducts their meetings just like everyone else. Old business is squared away, new business is presented, and important club decisions are made. The only difference is that a hearing aid transmitter is passed to whomever has something to say. That way, Kiwanian Charlie Marsh can hear what is being said. The practice has become routine and is not given a lot of attention or thought. Charlie is hard of hearing and needs to know what is going on during the meeting. It’s as simple as that.

Charlie is a past club president, and Kiwanis has been a major part of his life. He owns hearing aids, but they only amplify the voices around him and not always the voice he wants to hear during meetings. When club president Jo Weller opens up meetings, she wears the device around her neck and passes it on to the next member who wishes to speak.

“It can be so difficult for a disabled person that some just give up, but not Charlie,” Jo says.

“It’s remarkable to see how isolated a person can become as a result of hearing loss,” Jo says. “Simple conversations become a huge effort and eventually are avoided.”

She stresses the importance of not giving up and working through communication challenges for the sake of not hurting the feelings of the member.

**Empowering the powerful**
Fundraising is not everyone’s forte, but for Dan Shafland it can be downright daunting. For most of his life, Dan has been laughed at, ignored, even accused of being on drugs—all because he stutters. So one may understand why he would hesitate to participate in fundraisers. But members of Dan’s original Kiwanis club—Thief River Falls, Minnesota—were persistent in their encouragement; so, Dan sold Halloween candy and “tickets for everything” and discovered he could talk, he could sell, and he could have fun.

“Yes, I had trouble,” he recalls, “but I was ‘making a difference.’”

Despite Dan’s impressive résumé in medical technology, employers rarely granted him job interviews, but Thief River Falls Kiwanians welcomed him and urged him to seek office, ultimately leading to a term as club president. Four years ago, he moved and again received a warm Kiwanis welcome from the Red Wing, Minnesota, club. This year, he again is a club president. “Maybe I’ll get it right this time!” he quips.

“Usually, presidents make many announcements,” he says. “I assign announcements to as many members as possible. You could say I’m adapting to my speech or empowering and training my club in leadership. Or both. I prepare written agendas for my board with ‘talking points’ from me to expedite our meetings.”

Kiwanis experiences equip members to grow in other aspects of their lives, including their careers and family lives by accentuating their abilities.

“I certainly seek no notability,” Dan says. “I just want everyone to know: Anyone—with or without a disability—can make a difference, hopefully through Kiwanis.

Voices of experience
How accessible is your Kiwanis club? Some clubs’ meetings and projects are more accessible than most, because they have learned from fellow members’ experiences and applied those lessons:

- When the **Janesville, Wisconsin, Kiwanis club** went looking for a new meeting place, they found a banquet hall that met the club’s every criteria, except one. Located in a basement, it was inaccessible to one member. “Even if no members would have had issues, we still would have rejected the location,” says club secretary Ed Pulliam.

- Members of the **Kiwanis Club of Oregon City, Oregon**, carry a food tray for Jerry Garland, who is diabetic and an amputee. “I’m very sad to say it took him dropping his tray on the floor for us to do that,” says Oregon City Kiwanian Laura Parson. “Don’t be bashful to ask how to help,” she adds.
  
  Turn up the lights, Jerry adds. A restaurant’s cozy, dim atmosphere can be frustrating to someone who has vision problems.

- On a special day in the Czech Republic, the seeing cannot see, the hearing go deaf, and the able-bodied can’t walk. The **Kiwanis Club of Český Krumlov** annually conducts **Disability Day**, during which everyone is invited to experience life with a disability. “We call this ‘Try It Yourself,’ says Kiwanian Tibor Horváth. Volunteers struggle to maneuver a wheelchair across cobblestone roads or slosh water as they pour a drink while blindfolded. “Try It Yourself also a way to give some input to local governments to destroy obstacles,” Tibor says.

**A return of service**
Katie Minetti is one of the 500 club presidents in Circle K International. A senior, she’s one of the nearly 1,900 students enrolled at the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio. But this is the story of one Katie Minetti, as told to the Kiwanis Club of Wooster. It is a story of apply lessons of service-leadership to break down life’s barriers.

“Growing up as a child born with physical limitations, I spent countless afternoons in hospital waiting rooms or struggling with bike riding, walking, or running, which came so easily to my peers. With these experiences, I was lucky enough to be the recipient of hours of service from others, and while it might have only meant an hour out of their day, that friend who stayed behind to pick me up off the ground when I fell of my bike or walked more slowly to make sure I didn’t get left behind or the volunteer who read to me while I was in the hospital recovering from surgery, I am not exaggerating when say it meant the world to me.

“I am so thankful I have been able to overcome my disability; therefore, I am driven by a desire to give back to others because I know firsthand what a difference it can make, even if that difference just affects one person. In middle school, I spent my Wednesday afternoons at a nursing home chatting with residents and participating in every imaginable arts and crafts project. In high school, in order to fulfill a 20-hour service requirement for graduation, I spent my afternoons at a Boys and Girls Club as a mentor and tutor, and I got hooked, continuing to volunteer there all four years of high school.

We didn’t have a Key Club in my high school, but the equivalent was a student group called the Community Service Advisory Board, which focused on planning service projects for the school community and publicizing our efforts. It was here that I was first bitten by the service bug. I liked being able to be a part of something and that experience taught me a great deal about the challenges and logistics of planning service projects.

“When I came to the College of Wooster in the fall of 2004, I went looking for a niche and found Circle K. A brief incident with a broken ankle deterred me from joining in the fall, but I was welcomed back in the spring. I quickly found that it an easy group to join and that it had many wonderful and fun people. Planning and attending weekly service projects connects me with the larger Wooster community, where I can see the benefits of our service efforts almost immediately. Visiting the Gault Family Leaning Center tree house library, reading to nursery school classes, and talking to the parents of kids who come in for therapy, all have been rewarding experiences. It my desire to give back in the same way that people gave to me.”
A call to Aktion

The tide of service has changed. Those who once were helped now are the helpers

By Shanna Mooney

“It is our belief that everyone deserves to take part and contribute to their community,” says Eve Pressnell-Moore, a member of the Kiwanis Club of Greenwood, Indiana, and the Gateway Services Aktion Club advisor. “Aktion Club gives to persons with disabilities the opportunity to give back to their community with service projects, hold offices, and take part in a larger organization, to make decisions for their own lives, and to have social opportunities that may not otherwise be available.”

For those reasons, Aktion Club, which is a community-service group of adults who are developmentally impaired, is invaluable. It is also the newest—and one of the fastest growing—Kiwanis International Service Leadership Programs.

Eve is keenly aware of Aktion Club’s importance because not only does she volunteer through Kiwanis with Aktion Club, but she also works at Gateway Services, a nonprofit organization for adults with disabilities. (Aktion clubs are co-sponsored by a Kiwanis club or division and an agency that serves people who have disabilities. For more information on sponsorship or building an Aktion Club, go online to www.aktionclub.org.)

“Aktion Club is important because it allows inclusion and recognizes individuals’ needs ... folks who have disabilities are given the same opportunities as every other club member,” she says. “It is something over which folks can take ownership and responsibility.”
And that isn’t something Aktion Club members take lightly. “I have learned that helping others in Aktion Club doesn’t just happen,” says Beth Santore, a member of the Aktion Club of Scranton, Pennsylvania. “It takes organization and leadership to make it work. I’m glad I have the opportunity to be a part of this program. It makes me feel good about myself. ... By doing something that benefits someone else, I feel glad that I can make difference in someone else’s life.”

“What can a person with a disability do in a service organization? The answer is anything you or I can do,” Mel Dunlap, a member of the Kiwanis Club of Elmira, New York, told the Star-Gazette newspaper.

As proof, the newly formed Aktion Club of Elmira, New York, is working through a laundry list of service projects: food bank collections, back pack program, making dog biscuits for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, collecting donations at a Salvation Army kettle drive, picking up litter during a riverfront clean up, community kitchen to feed the hungry, and more.

“(The members) came up with three pages of things they want to do,” Mel says. Several projects are checked off the list, many are in the works, and Mel has no doubt the other goals also will be accomplished. According to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Kiwanian Bruce Berven, an Aktion Club dispenses benefits in three directions: to its members, Kiwanians, and the community.

Aktion members, he explains, have fun working together with their peers.

Kiwanians feel the pride of sponsorship. “We are repaid many times over by the joy and excitement of the Aktion Club members,” says Bruce, who has worked with disability horse riding programs since the mid-1980s and building Aktion Clubs for the past five years. “One of my ‘Kiwanis Moments’ was at a karaoke night watching a 40-plus-year-old woman, standing with her father and our club president, singing Green, Green Grass of Home. She had a huge smile and was humming, because she cannot speak. She received an enthusiastic ovation from her peers.”
And the community gains the benefits of an Aktion Club’s service and along with a good dose of awareness.

Take, for example, the **Aktion Club Theatre of Mankato, Minnesota**. Its motto: “Where people, art, and community partner for a brighter and more inclusive future for all.” This club started as a theatre group because of a need.

At about the time **Mankato Kiwanis club** members began talking about opening an Aktion Club, an advocacy group was seeking to create a theater group for persons who have disabilities. The two plans intersected, resulting in the formation of the Aktion Club Theatre of Mankato. It wasn’t long before the Aktion Club members became a force of change in Minnesota.

Across the state, more than 12,000 persons are buried in institution cemeteries with only a number to identify each resting place. A group of self-advocates—persons who have disabilities and promote disabilities issues—wanted to remember the dead in a way filled with dignity. By working with the Minnesota legislature and raising funds, the advocates began replacing the numbered gravestones with markers etched with the names of the deceased.

To raise awareness for the cause, the Aktion Club performed a long-overdue memorial.

“In a performance titled *Calling Names on the Wind*, Aktion Club narrators spoke some of the names of those receiving new grave markers,” says Mankato Kiwanian Wilbur Neushwander-Frink, regional manager of The Arc of Minnesota

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**The benefits of Aktion Club**

An Aktion Club can benefit its members in many ways through service and recreational events. These activities enable the members to:

- Participate in the active life of the community.
- Provide an opportunity to contribute to the community.
- Develop mechanical, creative, and intellectual abilities.
- Develop social interaction awareness
- Improve self-esteem
- Develop leadership skills
- Achieve personal and service goals
Southwest, which provides advocacy and support for people with developmental disabilities. “We used rhythm instruments and masks, which each actor hand made. It was a very moving experience!”

No matter the project, no matter who is doing the work behind the project, no matter of ability or disability: In Aktion Club, the point is that people are making others’ lives better.

“The population (of persons who have disabilities) so often is seen in a different light than the other members of a society,” says Greenwood Kiwanian Eve Pressnell-Moore. “We have to remember that we are all people who need each other in order to be successful in life. Aktion Club brings different age groups, beliefs, and people together to work toward the same common goal who otherwise may never cross paths in this lifetime. It has been a wonderful experience to watch them change lives together.”

Casting the vision

Refuting the sports world philosophy that intimidation and domination command championships, Tony Dungy believes leaders win victories by casting and communicating a vision. This past year, his “do what we do” vision spread contagiously among Indianapolis Colts players and assistant coaches, leading them to a National Football League Super Bowl title. Soon after, Dungy met with Kiwanis International CEO Rob Parker to talk about leadership.

Audio files (coming soon):

- File One
- File Two
- File Three

Rob Parker (RP): Describe for me your idea of a servant leader.
**Tony Dungy (TD):** To me, I go back to what my parents taught me and what my high school football coach taught me: that as a quarterback, you become the leader of the team. My high school coach ... always felt that leading people and getting them to go because they want to follow you and they want to do the things you want to do, that’s the best way—as opposed to getting behind people and driving them and pushing them and saying, “we’ve got to go here.” It’s saying, “I know where we’re going, I know how to get there, and I’m going to help us all get there.” When people recognize that, they naturally want to follow you. That’s how I’ve always been trained and (those are) the kind of leaders I’ve always wanted to follow.

**RP:** In your book (*Quiet Strength*), you talk about (former Minnesota Vikings head coach Dennis Green) and compare his kind of coaching to that of a CEO. ... We tend to picture a hard-charging CEO, (but) you’ve shown that differently. What are your thoughts on that?

**TD:** I think of the person in charge as being someone who, number one, (is) very confident and knows what to do, and, number two, can instill that confidence in the people around (him/her). You develop the system so that it can function when you’re not there. To me, that’s the best kind of leader. You’re training other people, you’re developing people, you’re instilling confidence in them, and yet everyone has confidence in you. They’re looking at you to make a lot of the major decisions, but they’re trusting that (everyone is) benefiting by this—that you’ve got the good of everyone in mind.

**RP:** If you were describing how you choose assistant coaches and the people you surround yourself with, what are the things you look for?

**TD:** I think an important part of leadership is selecting or getting the right people around you—and bringing out the right qualities in people; putting them in a position where they can have success by utilizing what they do best; maximizing their strengths; and minimizing their weaknesses. That’s another thing a good leader does. He draws on the expertise of everyone and tries to maximize. One thing I learned from (former Pittsburgh Steelers head coach Chuck Noll) was that you don’t select everybody who is exactly like you personality-wise—but they’ve got to think like you do in terms of what’s important in values.

**RP:** Jim Collins wrote a book, *Good to Great*, and his premise is that the enemy of great is not evil; that the enemy of great is actually
good. What would you see as the difference between a good team and a great team?

TD: I think there’s a lot to that in athletics, and I’m sure there’s a lot to that in life. The difference between a good team and a great team is usually the details. It’s little fine points; it’s not great things. ... That’s one of my lines from the book. Coach Noll said all the time that champions do the ordinary things better than everybody else. It’s not that they do all these extraordinary things. It’s the things you have to do day in and day out: They do them better than anyone else.

RP: When you see that real skill and talent in somebody who’s not living up to their potential and working harder, what’s your reaction?

TD: Those are the toughest ones. You’re looking for motivated people. You’re trying to teach them that it is hard work for the most part. It’s not natural ability. It’s not great giftedness usually, but it’s hard work that pays off. If you don’t have people who are willing to work hard, they’re usually not going to play up to the standards you need, and you’re going to have a tough time surviving. And I think when you send that message and you reward the guys who work hard, that really helps.

RP: What about vision? What’s the importance of that—of being able to look at what the future can be like?

TD: To me, that’s probably the number-one quality of a leader: to be able to see into the future and see where you want to go and then being able to explain that vision, share that vision, and get other people to catch that vision. Many people have great vision, but they can’t take the next step and get other people to catch and get excited about their vision as well. So to me, that’s probably the most important thing: how to communicate it with enthusiasm and get other people excited about your vision.

RP: What do you do to keep people focused? And how do you recast the vision?
TD: Periodically you do have to reinforce, “Here’s where we’re going. This is the direction we’re going. Let’s look at an inventory to see where we are now. Hey, we’ve done some things that are taking us to that goal. Here are some things where we’re not quite there yet. But remember: This is where we’re going, and this is how we said we’re going to get there.”

Usually it’s at times when things aren’t going well—when there are doubts: “Maybe we have the wrong goal. Maybe we can’t get there.” That’s when we have to say, “No, this is where we said we were going, and this is how we said we were going to get there.”

RP: How would you describe what it means to be successful, Tony?

TD: To me, success is doing everything you can. Doing the very best with the assets that God gives you. And if you look at it that way, you can be a success when maybe the world doesn’t view it that way. And there are other times when you can get accolades and people say good things, but you know you didn’t do your best.

To me, it’s more, “What am I doing with the resources God gives me at this particular time?” There are times when you can only do so much. But if you do everything you can, you can always look at yourself as being successful.

Rob continued the conversation by recalling quotes from Dungy’s book and asking the coach to elaborate.

RP: From your mother: “If excellence feels like it has to be proclaimed. …”

TD: “Then that’s the doubt of its existence.”

It really means: Show what you can do; you don’t really have to talk about it. If you have to talk about it, you probably haven’t shown enough. That carries over with my team today. We don’t want to be all talk; we want to let our actions speak for themselves.

RP: “It’s all important."

TD: The little things—the seemingly not important things—are the ones that really separate the champions from the nonchampions, and so you’ve got to grasp everything.

RP: “Success is uncommon—not to be enjoyed by the common man, but uncommon people can be successful.”
**TD:** Most people are OK with being OK. And to be champions, it can’t just be OK. You’ve got to want to be great. You’ve got to want to do those things that most people could do but choose not to. It is not common to be successful. It’s much more common to be ordinary, to be just a little bit subpar, to be just OK. Trying to be the best is something that sometimes is frowned upon. There’s nothing wrong with trying to be the best. Doing it the right way and trying to keep things in perspective is important, but there’s nothing wrong with trying to be the best.

**RP:** “Do what we do, whatever it takes, no excuses, no explanations.”

**TD:** “Do what we do” is that refocusing on where we’re going and how we’re going to do it. The easiest thing to do is change when things aren’t going well. The hardest thing to do sometimes is persevere.

“No excuses, no explanations” (means) to not go for the quick fix. To not change either a goal or means but just stay the course. That’s harder to do, but usually that produces the champion results.

*Tony Dungy* is in his sixth season as head coach of the National Football League’s Indianapolis Colts. Under his leadership, the Colts won this past February’s Super Bowl in Miami, Florida, claiming the franchise’s fourth World Championship. Six months later, his memoir, *Quiet Strength: The Principles, Practices, and Priorities of a Winning Life*, topped the *New York Times’ bestsellers list for hardcover nonfiction.*

**Souped up—and ready to roll!**

*Take kiwanis.org and kiwanisone.org for test drives and discover how they can make your Kiwanis experience go ‘zoom, zoom, zoom’*

**By Dick Isenhour**

If it were a car, Kiwanis’ revamped and retooled Web site—with its member portal as standard equipment—would be a luxury model loaded with options designed to meet the needs of all who travel the information superhighway. If it were a pizza, the site would have slices for those who just want cheese and slices for those who crave a variety of toppings—even anchovies.
In other words, the new and improved Kiwanis Web was redesigned with all users in mind.

“The Kiwanis Web site now speaks to several different profiles of users,” says Angela Evans, Web communications manager. “It speaks to those who really want to dig in and read content. It speaks to those to whom you need to tell the Kiwanis story visually, in seconds. And it speaks to those people who want to interact with the site—those who don’t want to read and don’t want to scan, but do want to do some fun things, like taking a poll in which their opinion really matters.”

Above all, Angela adds, the site speaks to those who demand the latest in technology.

“Kiwanians are becoming more and more ‘techno-savvy,’” she explains. “We looked at the ‘old’ Kiwanis Web site and knew we needed to catch up with technology. The design style also needed to be updated. We wanted to be able to tell our mission visually and not rely on words.”

Log on to the Kiwanis home page and you’ll see it’s not “your father’s Kiwanis Web site” anymore. For starters:

- The home page is now a communications hub for Kiwanian and non-Kiwanian alike.
- The Club Locator feature—now called “Find a Club”—is readily visible at the top left of the page and includes a feature to map locations.
- A new calendar offers an expanded view of Kiwanis-related events.
- Headlines are found under K-News, and a separate Newsroom option includes media releases, samples of Kiwanis coverage from major publications, the Kiwanis International President’s page, and video and audio clips.
- For the first time, all Kiwanis-family programs are now represented on the home page, showing visitors the breadth of the organization.
One of the more exciting features of the remodeled site, Angela notes, is the online poll. In just a couple of clicks, visitors can register their opinions on a variety of Kiwanis-related topics. And because the poll operates in real time, polltakers find out how their answers compare with others.

“The home page has more of a marketing/public relations feel to it than before,” says Angela. “We wanted to get away from having all of the administrative resources for members mixed in with the public site. Anyone who came to kiwanis.org before and tried to figure out what Kiwanis is all about, had to wade through a lot of Kiwanis-business-focused resources, which could have been very confusing.”

That information had to go somewhere, though.

“That’s why we developed a member portal,” she says. “The portal—kiwanisone.org—is a collection of resources grouped together to help Kiwanis clubs and member be more effective service leaders.

“Eventually, all the information and resources on the Kiwanis Web site—and on the old site (http://classic.kiwanis.org/)—will be found on the portal. You’ll see marketing, public relations, growth, recruitment tools—all those internally focused things members need to know—the meat and potatoes of Kiwanis—there.”

The portal, dubbed “KiwanisOne,” will sport four primary areas:

- Kiwanis Community—a social-networking area, which features blogs; forums and chats; surveys and polls; an area where members can post photos; downloadable videos and, eventually, podcasts; and members-only news and RSS feeds. (All headlines are posted under an RSS feed engine, which means users can arrange their own personal news page and receive the Kiwanis-related news they choose to receive.)

The Kiwanis Community already is popular, Angela says, especially the downloadable resources. During the portal’s first month, for example, Kiwanis International CEO Rob Parker’s two-minute video, in which he shares his vision of Kiwanis, was downloaded more than 2,000 times. Similarly, videos from this past summer’s International convention also were downloaded more than 2,000 times.
Kiwanis Leader—a place where anyone can go to find out what’s happening in the world of leadership, especially Kiwanis’ style of servant leadership. Kiwanis Leader features CEO Rob’s blog, which he updates at least once a week, as well as his Kiwanis Insider messages, which are downloadable. Rounding out the section is the International President’s page, leadership-development resources, and a list of recommended reading.

Club Management—an area that will feature monthly online reporting and club management software modules; a subscription-based service that offers club newsletter and Web site templates; and e-mail. (Most areas should be up and running by the first of the year.)

The “coolest thing” about online reporting, Angela says, is that clubs can do a full demo and check it out. (If clubs click on Club Management, they can set up their e-mail and password to do the demo.)

Member Resources—an area that eventually will include service ideas, marketing and PR resources, club-building tools, growth-campaign resources, and Web site resources. By the end of this month, the Member Resources area will be populated with the “nuts and bolts” from the old site, Angela says.

“If Kiwanians need information, we encourage them to check out the new Web site or member portal first,” Angela suggests. “If a member can’t find something on the new Kiwanis site or member portal, though, it’s probably still on classic.kiwanis.org.”

Blind doctor feels strength of Kiwanis

*Jacob Bolotin believed in himself enough to push ahead and become the first blind medical school graduate to become a doctor. Finding Kiwanis was just the icing on the cake*

*By Kasey Jackson*

When Jacob Bolotin was 9 years old, his music teacher wrote into his school report: “Jake Bolotin, 1898 piano student. Without ability. Moderate progress, poor memory. Slow mentally.”

Jacob learned at an early age he was going to run into many obstacles in life—both figuratively and literally—and he had the physical and emotional
bruises to prove it. But he didn’t want special treatment, and he sure didn’t want to be held back by anyone or anything. He just wanted to “be of use” in the world.

But Jacob had a battle to fight every single day of his life.

Jacob Bolotin was born completely blind.

"The first day I came here," he told the assembled parents and faculty as he concluded his speech, "I walked into a wall. When I cried, the teacher said to me, 'The wall is there and you must learn to live with it.'

When Jacob gave this speech as valedictorian of his class at the Illinois State School for the Education of the Blind, it was the first of countless achievements. Upon graduation, he was determined to make a life for himself by selling items door-to-door. And though he had achieved independence and success at selling, being a salesman didn’t satisfy him. He had bigger goals.

"Papa, I want to be a doctor."

"A doctor!" Louis was incredulous.

"Yes, Papa, more than anything else in the world, a doctor."

"How?" Louis asked, bitterly. "You know it is impossible."

"Impossible?" Jacob repeated. "No, Papa. I don’t know that."

Jacob chased his dream for years. But it was a hard road. He faced hardheaded professors, rude officials, resentful students, and many setbacks. He had to accept help to read his textbooks, fill out paperwork, and study for exams. He used incredible ingenuity to get through some of

This article was written using text from The Blind Doctor, The Jacob Bolotin Story, written by Rosalind Perlman and published by Blue Point Books. Rosalind Perlman was married to Jacob Bolotin’s nephew, Alfred.

The proceeds from The Blind Doctor go to the Alfred and Rosalind Perlman Trust at the Santa Barbara Foundation. This trust funds an annual award, the Dr. Jacob Bolotin Award, which is given to blind people or organizations that have made a significant impact within the blind community.
the toughest times. During an internship at Frances Willard Hospital in Illinois, Jacob proved again that his lack of eyesight had nothing to do with how good a doctor he could or couldn’t be. When a young woman had fallen ill, and at least three other doctors had determined she had a “psychological problem,” Jacob diagnosed her with heart failure.

"Your ears caught what the stethoscope didn’t. Her doctor checked the X-rays and couldn’t believe them. You’ve taught us all a good lesson, my boy. Routine stethoscope examinations are useless to those of us with eyesight unless we listen with the ears of a blind man.”—William Lowry Copeland, MD

Jacob Bolotin became the doctor only he knew he could be. And when he was asked to be a guest speaker at a medical society convention, a talent for public speaking also was unleashed.

Word quickly spread that the blind doctor from Chicago had an inspiring, almost-unbelievable story to share about his life, and his powerful plea for a different attitude toward handicapped people had a tremendous impact. In 1922, Kiwanis International joined the long list of groups trying to snag a bit of Jacob’s time. He agreed to speak to the delegates at the International convention, and with the entire house on its feet, Jacob yet again was the star of the show.

Kiwanis clubs around the country wanted to hear his speech. Jacob’s wife, Helen, could see he was run down—too tired to travel far to share his story while still attending his patients and all other commitments. She insisted he limit his talks to the United States Midwest. But Jacob had a hard time saying ‘no’ to anyone, noting that sharing his message was yet another way to “serve others as I have been served.”

Jacob became immersed in Kiwanis. He joined the West Side Kiwanis club in Chicago and started on a project that would remain near and dear to his heart until his untimely death 18 months later. He worked with the Boy Scouts of America to start one of the first blind troops in the world, and found great pleasure working with the group, who he affectionately called “my boys”—if only for a short time.
On April 1, 1924, 12 years after graduating from medical school, Jacob Bolotin died at the age of 36, his heart unable to keep up with the incredible strain he had put upon it to help others. In his short lifetime, he touched the lives of countless patients, colleagues, friends, family members, Kiwanians, children, and absolute strangers. More than 5,000 people attended his funeral in Chicago.

**Editor's message**

Different faces, but same caring hearts

Kiwanis leaders come in many shapes, sizes, and styles, but they all share a common passion for people and a desire to make a difference.

In this issue of KIWANIS magazine you will meet a variety of leaders who are having an impact on the world while building a legacy of service to others. **Tony Dungy**, head coach of the Super Bowl champion Indianapolis Colts, is that kind of leader. Though coaching in the National Football League is what Tony does, it certainly does not define who he is. Tony Dungy is using his leadership platform to shape and mold young men into men of honor and integrity. His quiet and humble servant leadership is a powerful example that service to others also can lead to personal success and achievement.

In a similar way, **Donna and Dave Batelaan** are using their leadership platform to make a difference in their area of passion. Donna and Dave have used wheelchairs since childhood but have not allowed this—or anything else—to serve as an obstacle in their path of service to others.

That kind of leadership is a hallmark of our **Aktion Clubs**, which offer hope and opportunity to adults who live with disabilities. As you read about these everyday heroes, it is our hope that you will draw inspiration from their courage, creativity, and compassion.

Kiwanis leaders all over the world are making a difference in their communities, and we are thrilled to highlight some of what they do. If you
are aware of Kiwanis members who lead through service to others, we certainly would like to hear from you.

If it is true that leadership is “caught not taught,” then I certainly hope this issue of Kiwanis magazine becomes both infectious and contagious. Enjoy your reading.

**Perspective**

**Aktion speaks louder than words**

I was brought up in a family that volunteered for one group after another. As I got older, I wanted to follow in their footsteps and help others as volunteers had helped me. But the doors were closed, because I was labeled retarded. And then Aktion Club happened, and my world has expanded in so many ways. Finally, I am able to give back to the community that has given so much to me. That’s what Aktion means to me.

I’m not very good at art, but it was great to make a heart in honor of the theme of our club, which is “hearts in action.” On charter night, we raised US$4,700 by auctioning those framed hearts. I still can’t believe somebody paid money for something I made. That’s what Aktion Club means to me: being recognized as a part of the generous community that gave so much to us so we could give back to others.

**Kelley Kaplan**  
Charter president of the Aktion Club of Eastern Carolina, Greenville, North Carolina

When a single mother with a son, Jackson—who had severe cerebral palsy, and a permanent tracheotomy tube (like the one I had when I was born) and was being fed through a tube in his stomach—walked through our door, I remembered all the pictures I had seen of myself as a baby. He needed a special chair to keep his food down, and he was very small and underweight for his age. I was so proud to write a check for almost $400 for that chair, and he and his mom visited our picnic in June with the chair. Boy, had he grown! And all because of the chair Aktion had gotten him. That’s what Aktion means to me.
As Aktion Club members, we walked in a Cancer Survivor Walk, bowled in a bowlathon, marched in a Christmas parade, sang carols at a retirement home where we gave out handmade ornaments, rang the bell for the Salvation Army, and purchased clothes and toys for the Boys and Girls Club. All those things make me proud and put a smile on my face when I think of them.

I love making cookies and brownies for the Ronald McDonald House. When we baked dinners for guests at the American Cancer Society’s Hope Lodge, they said it made them feel so good just to have someone who cared. That’s what Aktion Club means to me.

Now, we have an ongoing project of clipping out-of-date manufacturers’ coupons to send to military bases here and in war zones, where they will be good up to six months after the expiration date. We just sent more than 10 pounds of coupons; let me tell you, that’s a lot of clipping.

And we helped fund a camp at East Carolina University for children with special needs, just like the camps I went to. But this time, I was part of the giving! That’s what Aktion means to me.

Finally, I am able to give back the kind of help, attention, and love I have always gotten from the volunteers who have helped me for the past 30 years. That’s what Aktion means to me!

My wish is for everyone who reads this to encourage their members to tell friends about Aktion Club and that our members aren’t that much different than they are. Challenge them to tell two friends about Aktion, and have them do the same. Just think what that could mean! Hundreds and hundreds of people would learn that living with a disability doesn’t mean we don’t want the same things they do: friends, role models, and people who care enough to see us for what we are able to achieve … not what we can’t. You are our best hope to narrow the gap between “normal” and “challenged.” And finally, we will be labeled as able, not disabled.

Remember: Aktion speaks louder than words. So put your hearts in Aktion, and think of what we can do! That is really what Aktion means to me.
Newsroom

Reading is rewarding

2006-07 President Nelson Tucker accepts Kiwanis International’s Gifts of Reading Award from Reading Is Fundamental (RIF) chairman emerita Lynda Johnson Robb at RIF’s annual gala this past September in Washington, DC. “To be given the opportunity to discover how to read—and to love reading,” Nelson said, “is to have been given a gift of endless possibilities. Of a brighter future. Of limitless potential.”

- RIF gala Web page
- RIF Award Speech for Nelson Tucker

IDD project lowers mortality rate

Global deaths of children under the age of 5 have fallen below 10 million per year for the first time, according to UNICEF. In a September letter to Kiwanis International, Caryl M. Stern, CEO of the US Fund for UNICEF, cited Kiwanis’ fight against iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) as one of the key initiatives in achieving this children’s health triumph. “We are extremely grateful for the historic role Kiwanis has played in saving and enhancing the lives of millions of children in the developing world,” Stern said in the US Fund news release.

Annual Club Gift sets record ... again

This past year, the Kiwanis International Foundation’s Annual Club Gift campaign set a new record for dollars raised: US$798,165. That broke the previous year’s record of $737,390. The success of the Annual Club Gift campaign the past two years allows the International Foundation to increase the amount of support it provides at the club and district level.
The Annual Club Gift campaign is the Foundation’s primary source of unrestricted revenue and is utilized to fund disaster relief, district grants, matching scholarships, and project grants. Clubs are encouraged to make an Annual Club Gift to the International Foundation out of their service budgets.

**How great is your club?**

Kiwanis magazine is looking for clubs that excel in all of the following areas: consistent growth over the past 5 years, generous giving, effective service, and fellowship. If you know a club that qualifies, submit your nomination. Deadline for nominations is December 31, 2007.

**Prepare for Read Around the World**

Begin planning now for your club’s participation in **Read Around the World**. From February 1 through March 3, Kiwanis clubs worldwide are encouraged to stage at least one project that promotes literacy and encourages children to love reading.

**Happy 93rd, Kiwanis!**

January 21 marks Kiwanis International’s 93rd birthday.

The organization originated in 1915 in Detroit, Michigan, as a business networking club but almost immediately changed its purpose to community service. Clubs celebrate the anniversary in a number of ways. Share your birthday party photos and stories online at Kiwanis In Action (www.kiwanis.org/kia/).

**RIF Award Speech by 2006-07 Kiwanis International President Nelson Tucker**

Thank you. It is an honor to be recognized in the company of Verizon, the Washington Post, and Anne Richardson. And it is an honor to accept, on behalf of Kiwanis International, the Gifts of Reading Award. Indeed, those who teach children to read, those who encourage children to love reading, and those who support programs, like RIF—those individuals, organizations, and corporations give a precious, priceless gift. You see, to be given the opportunity to discover how to read—and to love reading—is to have been
given a gift of endless possibilities. Of a brighter future. Of limitless potential.

Children in Sandusky, Ohio, are given this gift when Kiwanians there promote RIF, volunteering to read with children and helping children choose a book for their very own. Twice a month, Kiwanis members in Bexar, Texas, bring this gift to Bonham Elementary School, when they volunteer with RIF and encourage the students there to read to them. That Kiwanis members there have noticed the children’s impressive vocabularies is no accident.

And in Alabama, the Jean Dean RIF/Kiwanis program gives about 26,000 at-risk young children this gift, because of a major Kiwanis effort there to fund and support RIF.

And those examples just scratch the surface. It’s safe to say that Kiwanis, every day, supports RIF programs, providing funding, guest readers, and volunteers in communities across the nation.

Kiwanis understands the value of reading programs and especially the value RIF brings to communities. Through our own annual International program, Read Around the World, we encourage clubs from California to Calcutta to bring the joy of reading to children. During the month of February, you will find Kiwanis clubs everywhere supporting Read Around the World as they host story marathons, reading parties, book drives, and countless other activities all aimed at promoting literacy and encouraging children to love reading.

Kiwanis International’s motto is “Serving the Children of the World” and it is our goal to do no less than change the world, one child and one community at a time. And that’s why Kiwanis understands, just as RIF understands, that to teach a child to read—and moreover, to give a child the opportunity to love reading—is to give a precious, priceless gift. A gift of hope and the promise of endless possibilities. A gift that truly has the limitless potential to change the world.
Showcase

The storyteller’s story

School makes difference, feeding children’s bodies and minds

By Dave Curry
Kiwanis International President

Members of the Kiwanis Club of Las Perlas, Panamá City, Panama, shared their story of service while taking my wife, Eva, and me through the Center of Development in Curundu, Panamá. This school, funded by the Las Perlas club, feeds and educates preschool children in a poor and dangerous section of Panamá City. Every day, this school is attended by children in the area, who get a respite from some truly destitute conditions.

One girl arrived at the center severely malnourished two months prior to our visit. By the time we met her, she was healthy and very active. For some of the children, their only meal each day is because of Kiwanis.

While there, I met one of the teachers who indicated she recently was offered a teaching position at a school near where she lived. This school was in a much safer part of town, and the salary increase would have been significant for her. She declined the offer because she “felt like she was making a difference at the Kiwanis school.”

Kiwanians around the globe, like the members of the Las Perlas club, are meeting the special needs of their community. In many countries, children are being fed because of Kiwanis. In others, our Service Leadership Programs are creating future leaders who are sensitive to the needs of others. Whether we impact others through hands-on service, fundraising, leadership development, or sponsoring new Kiwanians so their lives can be more meaningful through service, we should be proud of what we do.
I have not yet met a Kiwanian who was disappointed in the sacrifice they made to do something significant within their community. It is our legacy as individuals and Kiwanians. Please take time to share our story of service with others.

**Georgia games keep special athletes on Kiwanis’ mind**

What began 24 years ago as an agreement to buy T-shirts for athletes turned into a long-term commitment from the Kiwanis Club of Douglas County, Douglasville, Georgia, to help stage Special Olympics events.

“We invited a guest speaker to our club to talk about the Special Olympics,” recalls Kiwanian John Stone, who has served as official emcee of the event the past 20 years. “They were looking for some club or person to buy the T-shirts for the participating youth. Our club agreed to buy the T-shirts, plus go to the event and help out.”

Upon arrival, John notes, the Kiwanians were taken aback: Besides the special education teachers who were there to run the events, the Kiwanians were the only volunteers.

“This moved our club to become a major supporter of the event,” John says. “From then on, we have been at all the Special Olympics—and bought the T-shirts.”

A Douglas County School special education teacher plans most of the event, John says. The school system provides transportation to the venue—generally Lithia Springs High School—for competitors. Kiwanians arrange for local leaders to be in attendance, and they obtain food and drink for the volunteer tent. Key Club members join Kiwanians at the event.

Actually, the games only need about a half dozen volunteers, but John says about a dozen of his fellow Kiwanians and as many as 30 to 40 Key Clubbers usually show up.

The competition typically draws more than 300 participants, as well as numerous guests, family members, and caregivers. Events vary from year to year. This past March, athletes participated in the softball throw, 50-yard dash, long jump, and a variety of wheelchair events, including a race, beanbag toss, and ring toss.

“Our club believes this to be a great event that serves the youth in our area,” John says. “All the competitors are winners, plus they have a day in
which they are the highlight and main event. It brings us joy to see these individuals have such a great day.”

**Santa delivers 56 years of joy**

For members of the **Kiwanis Club of Portage Lakes, Akron, Ohio**, Christmas starts in August.

That’s when members begin inspecting and repairing nearly 20 antique sleighs, which haul Santa and his sacks of presents all over town. That’s also when the club orders thousands of toys to fill the sacks.

In September, they book 20 police cars and officers to escort Santa on his December ride.

In October, they sell anywhere from 7,000 to 30,000 dozen roses to fund what has become a massive holiday project.

In November, they order new Santa beards, wigs, and suits and make sure the sound systems are in order.

In December, they sort the gifts for various delivery routes. Also in December, 15 Santas climb into 15 wheel-equipped, toy-laden sleighs and set off to deliver presents to good little girls and boys.

“It is extremely well known in the community,” says club member and head elf Scott Shookman. “We have fourth- or fifth generation children coming out to the sleighs to get a gift from Santa.”

The magic happens, of course, on Christmas Eve.
“We start at about 8 a.m. loading cars and trucks with gifts, dry running the routes to find the house addresses that will be impossible to see in the dark, and mounting safety lights and sound systems on the SUVs that pull the antique sleighs,” Scott says. “This continues until 4:30 p.m., when our club serves dinner to all the volunteers. At the stroke of 5 p.m. sharp, 15 Santas, sleighs, and nearly 300 volunteers take off to spread joy to the world!”

Hardly a silent night, as the police-escorted sleighs move throughout the community, a loudspeaker announces Santa’s arrival and calls out the names of children. Residents excitedly come running to the sleighs to collect their gift, which is either a special one dropped off earlier by the child’s parent or purchased en masse by the club.

“We deliver about 3,000 gifts that night,” Scott says. But not all of them are necessarily for children.

“In the past 25 years,” Scott says, “I’ve delivered lots of live puppies, engagement rings, a new car, more toys than you can count, and a few very excited soldiers who were happy to be home from the war and wild about being delivered to wives and parents who didn’t have any idea their loved one would be home for Christmas.”

Santa would be proud.

**Award selection reveals tomorrow’s leaders today**

Patricia T. Pintac sees the future, and it looks good.

For her country, she envisions a future “brimming with hope, happiness, and opportunities”—a time “when a child can proudly proclaim, ‘I am Filipino!’”

For herself, she sees a college degree. To achieve that goal, she already has assembled an impressive high school résumé of honors and awards, including her selection in the distinguished company of the “10 Most Outstanding High School Students” of the Cebu province.

Jointly sponsored by the **Kiwanis Club of Cebu**, Rhine Marketing Corporation, and the Philippine Department of Education, Region VII, the award program draws more than 250 applications from the province’s 30 high schools. To qualify, the students must be in the top 10 percent of their graduating class. But that’s just the beginning.
Each student takes a 2½-hour written examination, covering math, English, science, Filipino language, and general information. The top 30 test scores advance to the next round, a 15-minute interview with a panel of judges.

Panelists rate each candidate based on creativity, judgment and reasoning, emotional stability and self-confidence, and alertness. The final phase is a two-hour period for writing a 500-word essay.

Trophies, Rhine Marketing scholarships, mentoring, and internships await the winners. Add to that list the honor of associating with fellow recipients and being recognized among a distinguished list of the Philippines’ emerging generation of young leaders.

“Being an awardee and a Rhine scholar, one is immersed (in) a culture of excellence composed of individuals who continuously make impacts (on) society,” wrote University of the Philippines graduate Bryan Albert T. Lim, reflecting on his selection a few years ago. That’s when his future was just beginning to blossom as one of the Top 10 Outstanding High School Students of Cebu.

People

‘Subtle’ differences make all the difference

Donna Batelaan describes the impact she and husband Dave made on Kiwanis as “subtle.” But for Kiwanians and others who live with disabilities, sometimes subtle differences mean a sense of inclusiveness, comfort, and security that pack a big impact.

Donna and Dave, both members of the Kiwanis Club of Palm Springs, Florida, have used wheelchairs most of their lives. Donna contracted polio at age 5, and Dave was born with spina bifida. They learned early in life that if they wanted accessibility, they would need to advocate for themselves—in school, in careers, and even in Kiwanis.
“I learned the (accessibility) laws whenever they became available,” Donna says. When she finished her bachelor’s degree at the University of Illinois about 30 years ago, she notes, the school had one of the only programs that included physical accessibility for people who have disabilities. Among its offerings: wheelchair-accessible buses and a wheelchair sports program.

“That really started my advocacy activities,” she says.

For Florida resident Dave, the catalyst was sports. He became involved in wheelchair sports, played basketball, and traveled to Europe with the wheelchair Olympic team. Eventually, he helped form the Florida Wheelchair Games.

Donna notes that around this time, people with disabilities began to take action for accommodation. “There was a time period,” she says, “when people spoke for people with disabilities, but in the 70s, (people with disabilities) began to say, ‘Oh no, we can speak for ourselves.’”

She had moved to Florida, where she later married Dave, and became president of the Florida Council of Handicapped Organizations. Dave became the state director for the White House Conference of Handicapped Individuals—input from which was the basis for the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

“None of us had any money, and none of the groups (that were part of the council) had any money,” Donna says. “But in one year in Tallahassee, we passed 14 major bills.”

Now, Donna and Dave own Action Mobility Products and Services, which sells products to assist those who live with disabilities (products such as lifting equipment and elevators). They also offer ADA consulting for home
modifications and commercial businesses. And Kiwanis.

“We love to go to the International convention,” Donna says, listing Hawaii and New Orleans as among her favorites. “We love to travel all over the world.”

But when the Batelaans attended their first International convention—in Salt Lake City, Utah—they found the convention tours and some accommodations inaccessible to them. The next year in Denver, when Dave was a lieutenant governor, accessibility also was a disappointment.

So, when then-International President Nettles Brown visited the Florida District, the Batelaans arranged to speak with him and open the door to discussions on the importance of accessibility and inclusiveness.

And when Donna decided to run for district governor, Florida District secretary George Langguth and International President-Elect Steve Siemens took the opportunity to consult with her and bring the International Office and its meetings up to speed.

“George is especially sensitive and understands the laws,” Donna says. “I told him that if I was going to be in (Kiwanis), I was going to be in the organization. Kiwanis wasn’t something I had to be in—I was making it a choice, and I was not going to sit back in the corner!

“And when I came to Indianapolis (for governors-elect training), nothing was overlooked. There was nothing I couldn’t do.”

Tips from Dave and Donna

Florida Kiwanians Dave and Donna Batelaan, who have both used wheelchairs most of their lives, offer their advice:

- Remember that people who are in wheelchairs are thinking in the same ways you are. “There is a myth,” explains Donna, “that if you sit, you don’t think.”
- Don’t be afraid to use the term “walk” when you want someone in a wheelchair to accompany you somewhere.
- Physical disability does not indicate mental disability.
- Though you may be eager to assist someone who is in a wheelchair, it’s often best to wait until that individual asks for help.
- Offer any common courtesy (such as holding a door open) to someone in a wheelchair as you would to anyone else.
As governor-elect, Donna set out to make sure everyone would be comfortable during her future visits to club, division, and district events. She drafted some “ground rules” to assist:

- No buffets. Those are just impractical for people in wheelchairs, and they result in everyone feeling uncomfortable. “If they had to have a buffet, I asked to make sure there was someone on hand to get our food for us.”
- Donna would make her own hotel arrangements, since she knows best which facilities meet her needs.
- It would be completely unacceptable to carry Donna up or down steps.

“I wanted to be sure everyone would be comfortable, and we would be welcomed like anyone else,” she says. “For some, it was an education about what some of the issues are and how simple it is to accommodate those who have disabilities.”

As for International conventions, some simple changes again went a long way. Among them: leaving spaces for wheelchairs in the seating area of general sessions—instead of setting aside a single corner away from other delegates; asking delegates to raise their hands (or placards, as they did this past year) to indicate a vote—instead of asking them to stand; and tour options that are accessible.

“Subtly,” Donna says, “we made a difference.”

**World traveler envisions ‘wonderful world’**

When anthropologist, artist, and filmmaker Anne Menne learned Kiwanis International’s mission is to serve the children of the world, she knew immediately she needed to be a part of that mission.

So, in 1998, after working internationally with children for more than 20 years, Anne became a Kiwanian. The fit was perfect. And her club didn’t waste any time putting her to work.

“I wanted to be part of a larger family with similar goals,” says Anne, a member of the **Kiwanis Club of San Rafael and Central Marin, California.** “The first thing my club asked me to do was to start a **Builders Club at Davidson Middle School,** which I did. It was a great introduction to the Kiwanis family!”
But her dedication to spreading the word about Kiwanis and growing the organization certainly didn’t end there. She moved on to open the first club in Lima, Peru.

“My favorite memory was the night we officially formed the new club,” she says. “I had previously arranged with the members from California to meet at a place where I could call them the moment we officially had our 20 members in Lima. I was worried that after two years of work we still wouldn’t have the minimum 20 people required, but that night we actually had 63 members! It was fantastic to hear the cheers on both sides of the globe on the same night for the inauguration of the Lima Kiwanis club. We all feel we are a part of helping the needy children in Lima.”

Anne’s passion for helping others doesn’t begin and end with Kiwanis—it’s her life’s work. When she’s not busy with Kiwanis duties, Anne volunteers as founder and executive director of the nonprofit organization Heart of Anthropology, where she uses anthropology and art methods to design educational programs. She also invents, develops, and produces multimedia research and educational programs. All this work has had a huge impact on children and communities literally around the globe.

It isn’t always an easy road. Anne has struggled with physical disabilities her entire life.

“One reason I can do projects with Kiwanis is because, although I cannot work full time in any kind of job, I can volunteer my services part time,” she says. “Living with so much loss, pain, and uncertainty about the future for such long periods of time has given me insights into and empathy for people and cultures who have very different experiences of the world.”
She continues: “I think our future lies in collaboration and including everyone who wants to help children—men and women, rich and poor, young and old—as members of the Kiwanis family,” she says. “Can you imagine what a wonderful world we could create?”

**Clubhouse**

**Pianist makes her last stanza**

“I can’t read music,” Ruthee Cowan quips, “but God filled my heart and soul with it anyhow!”

For proof, consider that Ruthee has been playing piano for the Mount Clemens, Michigan, Kiwanis club for more than 40 years. She is part of the legion of ladies who, in addition to being pianists, served as club secretaries, bookkeepers, and helpers long before July 7, 1987—the day women were allowed to become Kiwanians (see “Celebrating 20 Years of Women in Kiwanis.”).

“I started in the 1960s,” Ruthee recalls, “playing piano at sing-alongs for the (former) L’Anse Creuse, Mount Clemens, Kiwanis club, of which my husband, Harold Cowan, became president. At that time I joined what was called the ‘Queens of Kiwanis.’ When the opportunity to play regularly for the Mount Clemens club arose in June 1977, I accepted it.”

Ten years later, after her “official induction” into the Mount Clemens club, Ruthee began accompanying her role as club pianist in many ways, including typing up the club’s songbook, serving as chairwoman of the a bake sale conducted during the club’s annual pancake breakfast, helping on the highway cleanup project, and walking in the Christmas parade.

“Becoming involved in Kiwanis activities has been a highlight of my life,” Ruthee says. “But now I am 90 years old and plan on retiring from playing the piano at the club so I can work on my family genealogy and my autobiography.”
Teen has ‘pull’ in world of fundraising

“Pull Tab Princess” lacks the panache of “Duchess of York” or “Baroness of Edinburgh,” but Jenna Dunbar likes the title just the same. Dunbar, a junior at West Valley High School in Spokane, Washington, earned the designation recently for collecting almost 1.5 million aluminum pull tabs as a fundraiser for the Ronald McDonald House. Kiwanis clubs helped.

“Let’s just say that there’s a special person in my life who has had to use the Ronald McDonald House,” Dunbar told The Spokesman-Review. “When I saw what they were able to do there to help families when they really need help, I wanted to do something.

“I figured that since I couldn’t help with the illness, I could at least help families be able to stay near their children when they really need to.”

When hearing of Dunbar’s undertaking, Spokane’s Kiwanis clubs offered to help. West Valley, Spokane Kiwanians, for example, already had experience saving pull tabs. The club presented the Ronald McDonald House a check for US$400 in 2004 after collecting 1 million tabs over a four-year period.

Dunbar’s 1-million-tab mark was set earlier this year, and the Kiwanis clubs staged a dinner this past June to celebrate. Dunbar had collected more than 1.4 million tabs by the time of the dinner, and has since raised her goal to 2.8 million tabs—the number it takes to weigh a ton.

Can You Top This?

Keeping it in the family. Gregory T. Longpre completed a Kiwanis trifecta when he was sworn in as president of the St. Joseph, Michigan, Kiwanis
club this past fall. His father, T. Gregory Longpre, was president of the club 36 years ago, while his grandfather, Eli J. Longpre, was president 36 years before that.

Quotable

“K-Kids helps me be a better leader, because it helps me do things that are right and to take care of my community. It helps me stand up to people doing the wrong things. K-Kids also helped me learn that character counts.”—Destiny Hoffman of the T.A. Lowery Elementary School K-Kids club, Shenandoah Junction, West Virginia

Club Clinic

Q Our club is in the process of forming a Builders Club. What is the minimum number of members required to charter the club?

There is no minimum number of members required to charter a Builders Club, but it is recommended that you secure at least 15 charter members—more if possible. Kiwanis clubs pay a US$460 flat rate when chartering Builders Clubs, which includes new-member handbooks, member cards and pins, club banner, gavel, gong, and officer and advisor pins. Any members added after the Petition of Charter has been submitted are required to pay an additional membership fee of $3.50 per member.

(Find more club and member resources online at www.KiwanisOne.org.)

New Clubs and Sponsors

- These clubs were organized by the sponsoring clubs listed:
  - Oldtown Salinas, California—Carmel Valley, California
  - Freeport, Florida—Destin, Florida
  - Clark County, Missouri—Kirksville, Missouri
  - Dacula Hamilton Mill, Georgia—Lawrenceville; North Gwinnett, Georgia
  - The Eastern Plains, Colorado—Pikes Peak, Colorado
  - Gorham, Maine—Kiwanis clubs of Standish, Scarborough, Portland, Standford, Westbrook, and Norway South Paris, Maine; and Port Charlotte and Punta Gorda, Florida
  - Red Mountain Mesa, Arizona—Downtown Mesa, Arizona
  - Kelowna-Business, British Columbia—Kelowna-High Noon; Kelowna-Summit; Kelowna, British Columbia
  - Wellsboro, Pennsylvania—Mansfield, Pennsylvania
- **Dulles Area (The), Virginia**—Arlington, Virginia
- **Kearney, Missouri**—Smithville, Virginia
- **Doraville, Georgia**—Druid Hills; Dunwoody; Historic Roswell; Northlake-DeKalb; Northlake Golden K; Sandy Springs, Georgia
- **Dayton, Tennessee**—Spring City; Athens; Soddy-Daisy; Fort Oglethorpe, Tennessee
- **Coconut Grove, Florida**—Miami-Latin, Florida
- **Charlotte Hall, Maryland**—St. Mary’s County; Waldorf, Maryland
- **Apache Junction, Arizona**—Tempe Nuevo; Queen Creek, Arizona
- **Nasugbu, Batangas, the Philippines**—Central Azucarera Don Pedro; Dasmariñas Cavite, the Philippines
- **Celebration, Florida**—Southwest Orlando, Florida
- **Miami Gardens, Florida**—Miami-Latin; Greater Miami Lakes, Florida
- **University City, Missouri**—Southwest County, St. Louis, Missouri
- **Belleview, Florida**—Lake Weir, Florida
- **Marble Valley, Vermont**—Rutland, Vermont
- **California Young Professionals, Los Angeles, California**—Los Angeles, California

**Kiwanis Impact**

**Shaken, but not scratched**
I just wanted to take a moment to thank Kiwanis for protecting my child from what could have been a serious injury. On Saturday, May 19, Kiwanis gave out free bike helmets to the children of Oxford County, Maine. On Sunday, my five-year-old son took his bike down a hill and his wheel hit a rock. He and his bike went over an embankment and into the back side of a camper. The camper and my son’s helmet were both severely damaged. My son was a bit shaken up but did not receive a single scratch. I’m sure with the force he hit, had he not had the helmet, he would have been seriously injured. I cannot thank you enough for the work you are doing to protect our children.—Cheryl Cheever, Waterford, Maine

Share your story

Kiwanis.org, Kiwanis International’s official Web site, is collecting stories from Kiwanis-family members and from persons whose lives have been touched by Kiwanis. Story categories are:

- **Service Projects.** How has a Kiwanis-family service project affected your life—either as a member, observer, or recipient?
● **Fundraising.** What are the secrets to your club’s phenomenal fundraising success?

● **Membership.** How were you invited to join Kiwanis? How do you recruit new members?

● **Leadership.** How has Kiwanis-family leadership development impacted your career, family, and other aspects of your life?

● **In Honor.** Do you know a Kiwanian who deserved special recognition?

● **In Memory.** Honor a deceased member with a written tribute and an optional contribution to the Kiwanis International Foundation.

*Post* your Kiwanis-family stories, or *share* your “Kiwanis In Action” photos. KIWANIS magazine also offers *photography advice*. 