Postcards from your next family vacation

Some families have all the luck. Some families have mega-superstar Mickey Mouse as their neighbor. For them, sunshine is a 365-days-a-year phenomenon. When they plan their family holidays or excursions, they already are there—where most families want to go for rest, relaxation, and rejuvenation: Orlando, Florida.

This year, your family is in luck. The 93rd Annual Kiwanis International Convention is in Orlando, June 26-29—the perfect venue to combine an exciting Kiwanis experience with an equally exciting family vacation.

To whet your appetite for a Sunshine State adventure, Floridian Kiwanis-family representatives send you postcards from their favorite hometown destinations.

P.S. Hope to see you in June!

Rainforest Café

“It’s just fun—lots of fun—to go there (Rainforest Cafe)! I really enjoy the ‘thunderstorms,’ and the decorations are awesome! They make you feel like you are really in a rainforest.”—Corrina Little, 17, granddaughter of Bill and Carole Rushing, Kiwanis Club of Titusville, Florida
**Sea World**

“I love seeing all the animals at Sea World, but even more than that, it’s fun to ‘hang out’ there with my family!”—Leah Little, 15, granddaughter of Bill and Carole Rushing

“I love the Shamu Show and especially getting to pet the dolphins!”—Corrina Little

“SeaWorld is so cool! We like to go to all the shows and see the animals perform. We really like to go and watch the penguins too, but most of all we like the SHARKS!”—Avalon Middle School Builders Club member Chris and Kelly Schmitt

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**Restaurants (Everglades Restaurant at the Rosen Centre Hotel)**

“We love to come to Orlando to eat, because there is such a wide variety of restaurants here. No matter what your taste, you can find it in Orlando!”—Linda Filichia, Kiwanis Club of Titusville, Florida

“Linda and I are both big shoppers, so we usually work in a shopping trip when we come to Orlando to eat. There are so many malls, as well as restaurants in the area that we can easily spend a whole day entertaining ourselves!”—Bill Filichia, Kiwanis Club of Titusville
Walt Disney World

“Though we live in Orlando, we always find time to go to Walt Disney World as a family! Our kids literally have grown up with Mickey, Minnie, and all the other characters. And, no matter how many times we go, we always find something new and exciting to do!”—Darla Schmitt, Kiwanis Club of East Orange County, Florida

John F. Kennedy Space Center

“We learn so much every time we go to the Space Center, and it’s fun too! We usually get to see a real astronaut and learn all about the (NASA) space program. The IMAX Theatre is really cool; it makes you think you are really in outer space!”—Dave Schmitt, Kiwanis Club of East Orange County
Disney’s Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground

“Each time we visit Fort Wilderness as a family, it brings us closer together. We easily forget the hustle and bustle of everyday life and just sit back, relax, and enjoy nature. We look forward to the evening activities. We camp there too, and the kids always have a blast!”—Dave Schmitt, Kiwanis Club of East Orange County, Florida

Cocoa Beach

“As long as we’re near the water, it doesn’t matter (where we go). We both like swimming in Disney pools, because they’re neat, but you can’t beat going to Cocoa Beach either. The beach is the best place to play catch, and we like to try and surf too.”—Timber Key High School Key Club member Mike Schmitt and Chris Schmitt

So much to see, do, enjoy

As you plan you family vacation/Kiwanis International convention agenda, consider these other Orlando-area attractions:

- **Richard Petty Driving Experience**—Call shotgun as a passenger or take command of the wheel of a 185-mile-per-hour NASCAR-style racecar.

- **Universal Studios**—Ride a couch with the Cat in the Hat, swing from the rooftops with Spider-man, and meet other big-screen heroes at this movie theme park.
- **Discovery Cove**—Splash with dolphins or go scuba diving through a coral reef at this interactive marine park.

- **Wet ’n Wild**—With a claim as the United States’ “first true water park,” Wet ’n Wild boasts 30 acres of slides, flumes, surf, and sun.

- **Sky Venture**—This is as close as you can get to skydiving without jumping out of an airplane.

- **Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art**—Color your vacation with a viewing of the world’s most comprehensive Tiffany collection, as well as other 19th and 20th century artwork.


- Golf—Tee off on one of the area’s 168 golf courses, including signature holes designed by Jack Nicklaus, Arnold Palmer, and Tom Watson.

**Faithful leadership**

*A conversation between Crawford Loritts and Kiwanis International CEO Rob Parker*

When Crawford Wheeler Loritts Jr. was growing up in a blue collar section of Newark, New Jersey, he had no way of knowing that one day he would speak to thousands of people in stadium events and millions on radio. He had no idea he would have a chance to counsel and pray with National Football League Super Bowl champions, United States senators, and men and women of influence around the globe. As a black man growing up in the shadow of the civil rights movement, he never dreamed he would be a published author of five books, the pastor of a large church, and a mentor to other leaders.
I had the privilege of spending some time with 

him in late 2007 to explore some of his thoughts on what it takes to be a great leader. With great passion and enthusiasm, he shared his views on what it takes to lead others and how he believes that God both calls and equips people to lead. Following is a

small portion of these interactions with a man who has spent his life intentionally building leaders and who knows what it takes to lead.

**Rob Parker:** At Kiwanis, we have been talking about how important it is for leaders to be able to communicate a clear and compelling vision. Would you agree with that, and what are your thoughts on the importance of vision?

**Crawford Loritts:** Vision is everything. There’s no such thing as leadership apart from assignment. Leadership is not a position. Leadership is a verb. If there’s no movement, there’s no leadership. If there’s no task, there’s no leadership. If there’s no assignment, there’s no leadership. By its very nature, leadership is not a corner office with a big desk and nameplate. That is not leadership. Leadership is always about going somewhere. This is where vision comes in. The vision, that’s the target. It is what you see. It’s what gets you up in the morning. It is what makes you pound the table and weep. And if a leader doesn’t feel that, if it’s not worth a sacrifice, then it’s not worth trying to communicate. You have got to be absorbed with the vision. There’s so much that’s nonverbal about leadership. A leader communicates passion with body language and presence, and with their eyes and with all their nonverbal communication … that’s what helps make vision compelling.

**RP:** We also place a lot of emphasis at Kiwanis on leading by serving others. Can you share your thoughts on servant leadership?

**CL:** Well, basically leadership, in a sense, is all about serving. So when you say “servant leadership,” it’s the demeanor, it’s what the leader looks like, the humility of the leader, their identity … not a strategy. Some servant leadership language we use is to affect the bottom-line. And so it’s more of a strategy, a quid pro quo: If I treat you a certain way then I’m going to reap some dividends. But genuine servant leadership comes out of authentic humility that says as a leader my role is to invest in you, and I don’t have to sacrifice my commitment to making you a better person for the objective and the goal. They both can be accomplished.
**RP:** When you think of servant leaders you have known, who are some of those people, and what were they like?

**CL:** Some of those people are more well-known than others. In the Christian circles in which I’ve operated, probably Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, is the epitome of a servant leader. He had the uncanny ability to tap into the gifts, talents, abilities, purposes of the people around him, and to leverage that and to give them a platform, and there was a certain joy and delight he had in doing that. He was the kind of guy whom you always felt better for being in his presence. You felt privileged to do something that he asked you to do because it wasn’t self-serving; it was a noble thing he wanted to get accomplished. And he didn’t lead with himself, he led with a cause. He was pretty incredible. Another one would be Joe Stowell, former president of Moody Bible College. Joe had that same thing about him. You genuinely sensed that when you were in his presence he really cared about you and he wanted to use what he has to make you a better person. These guys were surrounded by loyal people, because people love to be around others who genuinely care for them.

**RP:** Do you believe people are born leaders, or is leadership something that can be learned?

**CL:** I think we all need to be concerned about developing our ability to lead in relationship to the responsibilities we have. However, I do think there are unique positions that require more than just skill. It requires a sense of innate ability that either you have it or you don’t. Let me give you an illustration. You can teach kids with average hand-eye coordination to be a fairly decent baseball player. But there comes a time where no amount of time in a batting cage is going to help a kid bat any better. There are certain things you cannot coach and cannot teach, like when to swing. And I think that’s true at certain levels of proficiencies and skills. There are some people, no matter how many seminars you send them to, no matter how much training you give them, how many books they read, there is a certain innate sixth sense a leader has to have that makes all that stuff natural; that you can’t teach. Some of it is natural and some of it is learned.

**RP:** What leadership qualities are attractive to others?

**CL:** People are drawn by character; they’re drawn by transparency and also by trust. They are drawn to people whose purposes are bigger than themselves. Great leaders lead by this greater sense of purpose, and they’re constantly learning, they’re constantly growing; they’re constantly developing. People also are attracted to leaders who listen well and who really care about the people they are leading. I also think a leader has to be
the composite picture of the destination. As the leader, you have to be the picture of that reality so people can decide if they want to go there with you. It’s not just what you say; it’s all about who you are. That is what makes you believable. That makes people trust you.

**RP:** We have about 600,000 members in the Kiwanis family, and it’s all volunteer-led, so we need about 50,000 leaders every year in our system. What kind of things would you tell people who have been given the responsibility to lead and what kinds of things would you either caution them about or encourage them with?

**CL:** First, I would say never use people for anything other than the mission. A smart leader matches the goals and passions of the people with the mission so there’s a sense of ownership from the beginning. And secondly, think of ways of empowering and serving them. You know, true leaders never ask anybody to do anything they are not willing to do themselves or they have not done. And I think that should be the calling card as they go about looking for leaders to recruit and get involved and to develop them. I also think the cream rises to the top and leaders will naturally come to the surface. Be on the lookout for people who naturally take initiative. Who leans toward responsibility, not away from it? Who shows up, who are the consistent ones? Look for those people who have a good track record, and sometimes it’s not as hard as we make it. But you also have to be careful. There are people who want to do things, but just because you want to do something doesn’t necessarily mean you can do it. I also like to create opportunities to test people, to see what they really bring to the table. You learn a lot about your leaders when they have to deal with a crisis.

**RP:** Do you see a difference between those who are gifted as managers and those who are gifted to be leaders?

**CL:** Managers are motivated by the orderly implementation of process. Typically speaking, when there is a problem, and there’s a directional thing that needs to be solved, a manager will come up with another system to get it done, while leaders will lead by movement and direction. Leaders are not afraid to take strategic steps in an unknown direction because that’s ultimately the solution. They’re a little bit bored with repetitive processes. I really think from a gut level that is the difference between a leader and a manager. And sometimes we put highly skilled, proficient managers in positions of leadership and they end up tearing up the organization because what’s really needed is not more processes, but actually more clarity of thinking and strategic direction.
**RP:** We have made the case here at Kiwanis that conversations are absolutely critical for leaders to be able to share a vision that people can buy into. Talk to our leaders about the importance of leadership communication.

**CL:** Rob, next to vision, communication is everything. I had a friend tell me: “Crawford, when you feel like you’ve talked about it so much that you don’t want to hear it anymore, then you are getting close. That’s probably when you are just beginning to communicate.” I thought that because I said it a couple of times people must understand it. But the job of any leader is to figure out how people hear things, especially those folks who are closest to you. So you need to study the people who are closest to you and figure out how they hear things, how they understand things. Try to speak to them in their language. Then, double-check to make sure they understand. I want people who are progressive followers. You have to create an environment where people can ask you and challenge you and push you. We need to have a free-flowing ability to get questions answered and not have organizational structure that’s cumbersome. Sometimes our structure hinders our ability to communicate.

**RP:** Do you believe our society is experiencing a leadership gap?

**CL:** I feel there are two things that have happened over the past 30 years that are hurting the emergence of leadership. One is the breakdown of the family. I think the home is the incubator for everything that takes place in the world and in society, and with the breakdown of the family, it has caused this whole uncertainty and insecurity, and men don’t know how to be men, women don’t know how to be women. There’s something missing in our lives. This is just my observation. I think with the breakdown in the family has come this sort of a fear and insecurity and the inability to take risks, to take charge, because leadership is based upon certainty, courage comes out of confidence, and people who don’t know who they are tend to either lead with power or position or they shy away from responsibility. So I think that that is a big issue. In the Western world especially. Secondly, I think what has happened is that we have not celebrated leadership the way we ought to. We talk more about consensus and more about management, and so I think there is this collective group-think here where we’re not encouraging people to take risks. With that said, I am still remarkably hopeful. I see some of these young guys and gals coming to the scene who are doing some pretty incredible things, and I just think we need to encourage them.

**RP:** I know we talked about pride being one of the challenges leaders face, but as you think back over the life you’ve lived, what are the things you’re proud of?
CL: One is, I’m glad I didn’t quit. You know, success is the next step after you feel like quitting. So, I’m glad I didn’t quit. The privilege of speaking at different events and seeing people’s lives changed is incredibly gratifying. The opportunities to serve on boards of organizations that I feel deeply about and help them translate vision to reality has been extremely rewarding. Then I look at my family, what God has done with our kids, and the impact they are having. ... Two sons who are gifted church leaders, two amazing daughters, and five beautiful grandchildren. The privilege of serving as a pastor and influencing lives ... the radio program, the books, speaking to millions of people through the years: It’s just been gratifying. But no leadership assignment has been more important than my call to be a husband and father of character and integrity.

Her new role: lifesaver

A Kiwanian’s first experience as a Kiwanis International Foundation Trustee

By Lynn Seeden

Lori Bryant sat in a room on the second floor of the Kiwanis International Office in Indianapolis, and there she saved the lives of 100 children.

As a new Kiwanis International Foundation Trustee, Lori and her fellow grant committee members meticulously doled out nearly US$75,000—funds from Annual Club Gift, Skip-A-Meal, Disaster Relief, and the Kiwanis Children’s Fund donations—to help children around the world. One of those grants will rescue impoverished children in Haiti, some who live on the streets.

“I never dreamed I could actually, personally, save a life with a donation,” Lori says. “This experience absolutely changes my perspective of Kiwanis. I have gone from helping with a school reading program in my very comfortable community, to saving 100 little lives. This changed my heart.”
Kiwanis magazine asked Lori, a **Puyallup, Washington, Kiwanian**, to give her personal account of what it was like to participate in choosing the grant recipients.

Here are her words:

“First, I wanted the money to go to needs, not wants.

“All of us were looking carefully for requests that were directly related to children, for forms to be filled out correctly, and we wanted to see deep, deep Kiwanis responsibility and commitment for the projects.

“And as I read through the requests, it became very easy to decide which ones were just wants. Then we came across a few requests that were very important children-based needs.

“Two requests came to my heart immediately.

“One was the boots and shoes for the 600 children. That was from Des Plaines, Illinois, where they had been doing this for years and years. They needed to expand the program.

“They asked for $4,714.50.

“They give families vouchers to get boots and shoes for the first of winter. The whole committee loved that. We immediately agreed to fund that grant.

“That was an easy one. We were all quite pleased with ourselves.

“But the other one was one we kept passing over.

“It was from a fellow from Haiti who we did not understand what he was saying. The translation was so difficult.

“What did ‘seams for children’ mean? What was ‘wheat for professors’? What did he mean by ‘stripped children’? What was he asking for?

“We read it and read it, and some of us—myself included—didn’t want to work that hard at understanding this. We’ll deal with that one later, I thought.

“When we came back to the request from Haiti, foundation staff member Connie Anoskey asked if she could give us some insight.
“She explained that ‘stripped kids’ was exactly that. These were street children—orphans—who were truly, absolutely stripped of everything. This man wanted to build a school for these children, giving them clothing, education, food, love. He would go out and choose the healthiest children from the streets.

“Wheat for professors’ was food for the teachers. ‘Seams for children’ was clothing.

“Then Connie told us she has worked with this man, David Latour, for three years, as he got his application in order. He’s had to wait for three years to help these children, I thought.

“One problem was he didn’t have a Kiwanis club sponsoring this project. He asked Connie how to start a Kiwanis club. Last year—get this—he started a Kiwanis club in Jeremie, Haiti, just to save these children.

“Latour felt his new Kiwanis club could take in 150 boys and girls for $47,000.

“We immediately gave this man everything we could, which was $20,000. Honestly, we would have given more. We simply didn’t have more funds to give him.

“The children are in poverty because of (the effects) of unemployment and drugs. Some don’t have parents. I was sitting there thinking to myself, ‘We all want to go in there and fix it. But maybe we can go in and educate 100 little children. Maybe that changes it.’

“I wasn’t prepared when I joined Kiwanis that I could change the world. I knew I could help my community.

“Now I’d like to go meet these children in Haiti.

“I can actually see those little faces. Wouldn’t it be great if some of us Kiwanians could spend a week down there helping the new Kiwanis club with this project? And to be partnered with this man? David Latour absolutely changed what Kiwanis is: It’s no longer a meeting; it’s helping children.

Information: John Sloan, Executive Director, Kiwanis International Foundation: 317-217-6155.
Read on

Kiwanis’ month-long Read Around the World is only an introduction to the rewarding experience of literacy education

By Nicholas Drake

Once upon a time, the ability to read was considered somewhat superfluous to one’s overall worth. It really mattered not if you could grasp the dramatic flourishes of a William Shakespeare play or the high adventure of an Alexander Dumas story. Neither was going to bring home the bacon. Reading was a luxury afforded by those with too much time on their hands. To be literate was to be part of an elite class.

No more. Today one can ill afford to be illiterate. While the Information Age has besotted us with new media marvels like podcasts, cell phones, streaming video, and movies on demand, it’s also given us e-mail, instant messaging, news crawlers, and blogs. The former requires listening and watching. The latter takes an ability to read. After all, it’s no good IMing your friends if they fail to understand your pithy prose. In one fell swoop the digital revolution has made reading a requirement for social and business success.

Kiwanian leaders have long understood the importance of reading. Since its founding in the early 1900s, Kiwanis has shared innumerable books with children far and wide. Some clubs founded their own reading projects. Others teamed up with well-known national programs. Regardless of the method, Kiwanians have demonstrated strong leadership in local reading initiatives for nearly a century. And that tradition still is going strong.

“Many believe the greatest gift we can give a child is the ability to read,” says Catherine Farley, a member of the Rochester Sunrisers, Minnesota, Kiwanis club, which helped create a Read Around the World project with local school district professionals. “I couldn’t agree more. Reading allows a child to learn, build confidence, grow independent, and ultimately succeed.”

Read Around the World is a Kiwanis International-branded service program designed to encourage Kiwanis members to boost children’s reading skills. The program runs from February 1 to March 3 and can include young children as well as elementary school students. Of course, any time is a
good time to share stories with kids. While the official kickoff observance lasts just one month, many clubs participate in reading projects year-round.

Catherine and 50 of her fellow Kiwanians from the Rochester area take their Read Around the World project into elementary schools for the duration of the school year, with heavier emphasis during winter months. So successful is the project that the members are joined by an equal number of non-Kiwanians, bringing the total number of readers to 100 volunteers.

“There are three parts to this project,” Catherine explains. “First, we listen to children in grades one through five as they read aloud books based on their ability levels. Second, volunteers collect used books and organize book drives so students can take books home to read. Third, we promote a ‘Drop Everything and Read’ night. The idea is for children, parents, grandparents, primary caregivers, and others to drop TV, computer games, and so forth to read for one hour on a single given day of the year.”

- Such promotions largely are designed to pique interest among adult readers. Of course it takes a lot more than one hour a year to teach a child to read. Indeed, it takes long-term commitment. Catherine tells of one student who struggled with reading in the third grade.

- “Spencer couldn’t read a full sentence aloud,” Catherine says. “He stuttered a lot. He would ask teachers not to call on him to read in class. So we kept working with him. Three years later he’s reading with me, and I notice he’s no longer stuttering. I ask him about reading in class. He says no. I suggest he read a poem from his favorite book, *My Man Blue*. He’s says no again, but I can tell he’s interested. Poems have a flow he can follow much easier. However, he thinks his classmates will make fun of him for choosing to read a poem. He’s in fifth grade now. So we get his teacher to make poetry reading a class assignment. Spencer is the first to raise his hand. He gets up, reads his poem, and upon finishing puts his fist in the air and says, ‘Yes!’ He did it. Three years of working with him and he can finally read aloud.”

The Rochester Kiwanians receive a lot of positive feedback about their Read Around the World activities. Jefferson Elementary School principal Ron Pederson called the project, “the simplest, most innovative motivational reading tool to come along in years.” A mother of one child said, “This is an excellent program. Because our daughter considers the books homework, we read a new book every night. Her reading level increased dramatically.” In addition, the International Reading Association and Southeastern Minnesota Reading Council recently honored Catherine with a Celebrate Literacy Award.
Read Around the World began through a Kiwanis International collaboration with First Book and Reading Is Fundamental. Nearly a quarter of all Kiwanis clubs currently report participation in the program. Materials are available in Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish languages.

Wil Blechman, 1990-91 Kiwanis International President, believes Read Around the World can be a catalyst for not only enhancing children’s lives but also Kiwanians’ commitment to long-term literacy projects.

“The program provides an excellent opportunity to market the importance of literacy and encourage Kiwanians to be involved by creating a project emphasizing literacy during the period of February 1 to March 3,” Wil says. “Read Around the World by itself serves as a good advertisement for supporting reading programs for children.

“A large part of the success of any Kiwanis program depends on the appropriate provision of education about the substance of the program. If Kiwanians truly recognize the value and absolute need for children to grow into literate adults, I have to believe more and more of our members will be willing to enter into long-range efforts. This program will have no long-term effect unless Kiwanians involve themselves with literacy projects for children over a period of time.”

Among a long list of roles in a career of supporting children, Wil is director of Docs For Tots Florida, president of the Florida Association for Infant Mental Health, and a consultant to the Departments of Health and Children and Families. He stresses getting young children involved in reading before they start school.

“It would be good if more emphasis was placed on the preschool age group,” Wil says. “This is an age range when interest in books can develop or be inhibited, and can have long-lasting good or negative effects.”

The doctor also cautions not to go it alone. He says Kiwanians need to recognize that there are other groups also involved with literacy, some for profit and some not for profit, and collaborations with one or more of these groups may leverage Kiwanis’ collective results tremendously.

“First Book, Reach Out and Read, and Reading Is Fundamental are at least three groups Kiwanians have worked with to the benefit of all,” Wil says. “We should be partnering with libraries and identifying master teachers in reading to help us assess our efforts and results.”
Alix Harper is co-chairperson of the Youth Services Committee for the **Kiwanis Club of Miami Beach, Florida**, which hosts the Easy Reader Program for two elementary schools. She believes parents can help children thrive in school through ongoing reading activities.

“Research shows that if a parent or caretaker reads to his or her child for at least 30 minutes a day, then the child has a greater chance of succeeding in school,” Alix says. “As Kiwanians, we are role models for children in our communities. Some children have made it clear that their parents do have time to sit down with them and read. Children love opportunities to read with adults. It’s also an opportunity for adults to show children how important reading is in our own lives.”

At least 25 Kiwanians participate in the Easy Reader Program the second Tuesday of every month at noon. South Pointe Elementary School has welcomed club members for several years. There are plans to add two more schools to the list.

Lori Gold, president-elect of the Miami Beach Kiwanis club, was skeptical about the merits of reading programs before attending a Kiwanis International convention, where a reading expert changed her mind.

“I thought reading to kids was a feel-good project for Kiwanians and that it did not teach reading,” Lori explains. “After reflection and hearing a presentation at a Kiwanis convention by a woman from the Fred Rogers Foundation, I changed my view. We value the children. We value reading. Therefore we want them to value reading.”

Glenda Deplazes is secretary of the **Kiwanis Club of Devils Lake, North Dakota**. Her club began an early-morning reading program in 1998 when local school district business manager Scott Privratsky, also a Kiwanian, asked fellow members to read one day a week during the school year to students at Prairie View Elementary School and Sweetwater Elementary School.

“There are currently 40 Kiwanians who volunteer to read to children on Wednesday mornings from 8 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. before school starts,” Glenda says. “Many parents need to drop off their children early at school so they can arrive to work on time. The Devils Lake Public School System implemented an early morning reading program in the school libraries.
“The program gets positive reviews from all involved, including parents, teachers, students, and school administrators. It give students exposure to many volunteers varying in age and occupations, all the while engaging them in a positive morning activity.”

Past International President Wil Blechman is pleased by the number of Kiwanis clubs showing leadership in supporting reading projects.

“It is obvious clubs are indeed involved significantly,” Wil says.

When asked about the books from his childhood, Wil reacts with surprise and then some obvious glee at the fond memories of reading as a kid.

“You really think I can remember back to the 1930s and 40s?” he says. “I don’t recall ages, but I do know I loved a book called The Castle of Grumpy Grouch. I assume I was in elementary school with that one. As I got older I remember The Hardy Boys, Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, and The Mysterious Island.”

**Leaders are readers**

It should come as no surprise that many of today’s innovative leaders are eager readers. These forward-thinking book lovers are motivated to seek out new approaches, apply fresh ideas, and use an author’s energy to fuel their own fires—simply by reading the words on a page.

Successful Kiwanis leaders understand the benefits of reading in their professional and personal lives. Some come from homes where reading was valued and encouraged. Others say experiencing someone else’s journeys through the written word motivates them to reflect on their own life purpose and the impact they have through their leadership responsibilities. Still others seem almost wistful as they reflect on the significance of reading in their lives.

“Through reading you acquire an understanding that is necessary to advance both personally and professionally,” says Walter Sellers, Past Kiwanis International President and a member of the Kiwanis Club of Xenia, Ohio. “As you read, you gain insight. Looking back, I wish I had read more.”
Reading books and articles about leadership development and trends keeps Kiwanis leaders on top of their game. They regularly read about topics such as communication, motivation, vision, planning, and attitudes. They seek out books by authors such as John Maxwell and Jim Collins. They even branch out to read about issues outside of their professions to know “what’s out there” beyond their own discipline or industry, says Kristin Skarie, president of Teamworks and a member of the Kiwanis Club of All Ohio eMedina.

“I consider reading about leadership an essential part of one’s responsibility as a leader, facilitator, educator, or volunteer to stay fresh, aware, and curious,” says Kristin, who also serves as a facilitator for Kiwanis’ Key Leader program. “Reading encourages critical thinking, exploration of one’s own views, and opportunities to connect with others. There is common ground in having read the same book—maybe not enough for world peace, but enough to create more understanding and appreciation. Readers become more open to people with different viewpoints.”

Leaders who are hungry for wisdom, knowledge, and insight open books about—and by—leaders of all ages, professions, and backgrounds.

“I think leaders need to have voracious appetites for learning through reading,” says Jane Erickson, Kiwanis International Foundation President and a member of the Bellevue-Offutt Kiwanis club in Nebraska. “Leaders need to be open to new ideas and concepts and need to have their own ideas validated and sometimes challenged. That makes you stronger in what you do.”—Karen Trent

Reading program touches hundreds of thousands of children

When Kiwanians in the Alabama District started a reading program in 1990, it instantly became a favorite project. And now, more than 1 million books and hundreds of thousands of happy children later, it’s an absolute grand slam.

“Kiwanians in Alabama—and some in Missouri and Nebraska who long ago began to partner with us—enjoy giving books year after year,” says Cathy Dean Gafford, director of the Jean Dean Reading is Fundamental (RIF) program. “Hundreds of thousands of at-risk young children have benefited because Kiwanians care enough about them to give time and money to meet their early literacy needs.”
The Jean Dean RIF/Kiwanis program has given books to more than 350,000 children and their families. The program targets at-risk children, ages 0-5. Every child in the Head Start program in Alabama receives books, along with children in state-sponsored daycare, housing projects and daycare homes, low-income and special-needs daycares, and some primary schools the Head Start program feeds.

Cathy, a member of the Kiwanis Club of Opelika, Alabama, says the program is “truly a Kiwanis-family project.”

“More than 80 percent of the Kiwanis and Golden K clubs in the district have participated for 17 years, as do a lot of our Circle K clubs, Key Clubs, and some Builders Clubs,” she says. “The Kiwanis International Foundation also has been a part of our project, by providing us with district foundation matching grants.

“We currently provide more than 25,000 at-risk young children a year with more than 75,000 quality, age-appropriate books, and we are deeply involved in tying up a $190,000 capital campaign to provide the program with a permanent warehouse and office space.”

When a project continues to grow such as this one has, it can become difficult to personalize it for the children. But Kiwanians continue to meet and hear stories about children whose lives definitely were touched by the RIF program.

“This year, the first young people we served will be old enough to graduate from college,” Cathy says. “We know some of them. We also have been fortunate that some of these children from around the state, now young people in a major university close by, come to help us in the Jean Dean RIF/Kiwanis RIF Building, because they recognize the name of the program that—many years ago—gave them books and an appreciation for the ‘fun’ in the fundamental skill of reading. High school and elementary school students also have volunteered for that reason. It is pretty exciting to realize our dream of giving these at-risk children hope of doing well in school and life is reaching fruition—and that the plan will continue to develop each year as more children grow up with educations instead of illiterate with no books in their homes.”
Literacy by the numbers

- 37% US 4th-graders who already read below “basic” level on a national reading test.
- 9 million Canadians ages 16 to 65 below “desired” level of reading proficiency.
- 3,000 vs. 20,000 Respectively, listening vocabularies of beginning US kindergarten students from a low-income family and from a middle-income family.
- 50% Canadians with the lowest level of prose literacy proficiency who engage in civic activities.
- 80% Canadians with the highest levels of prose literacy proficiency who engage in civic activities.
- 40 million US adults who can’t read a simple story to a child.
- 10 million US teens who reach 12th grade without learning to read at a basic level.
- 0 Degree of change in Canadian literacy performance between 1994 and 2003.
- 19% US 8th-graders who report they read for fun on a daily basis.
- 799 million adults worldwide are illiterate.
- 6.4% decline in illiteracy among African women.

United States statistics from Reading Is Fundamental; Canadian statistics from National Adult Literacy Database. International statistics from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.—Nicholas Drake

Editor's Message

Reading truly is fundamental

When I was a child, I loved to read. Books had the power to transport me back in time, take me to a new country, chart new waters, and meet interesting people. My favorite place to read was in a very tall tree overlooking our home. From this vantage point, I could observe the activities of our family and our neighbors down below, while exploring the limits of my young imagination through the powerful medium of reading. That rich exposure to books at an early age was a priceless gift that continues to pay dividends for me as a husband, father, grandfather, and Kiwanis leader.
Kiwanis has a long history of involvement in supporting literacy, distributing books, reading to children, and advocating for an educational head start for children under the age of 5. This issue of Kiwanis magazine highlights some of those efforts, and the people who lead the way. If it is true that leaders are also readers, I am sure you will enjoy these stories of Kiwanis members making a difference through literacy.

Our leadership interview series, which so far has featured writer, author, and teacher Meg Wheatley (October) and National Football League Super Bowl Champion coach Tony Dungy (December), returns with an inspiring conversation with a leader from the faith community. Crawford Loritts Jr. has spent his entire life building and developing men and women of character, integrity, and faith. An accomplished speaker, teacher, pastor, and author, Loritts offers a glimpse into what it takes to lead in a world that is struggling to find leaders to solve the challenges of this generation and the next.

In these pages you also will find information on the 2007-08 International Convention to be held in Orlando, June 26-29. Eight thousand Kiwanians and guests from all over the world are expected to join us for a magical time of education, fellowship, fun, and, of course, food. Don’t miss this chance to be a part of this annual renewal of the Kiwanis spirit!

Your wonderful response to our December 2007 issue, which highlighted the amazing efforts of our Kiwanis members who serve children and adults with disabilities, was very encouraging. I trust you will find hope and inspiration tucked into this issue as well.

Enjoy your reading.

Newsroom

Make One Day twice as nice

The Kiwanis family of clubs hopes to see double during this year’s observance of Kiwanis One Day, set for Saturday, April 5.

“We really hope at least twice as many Kiwanis-family clubs participate this year than last year,” notes International President Dave Curry, “and that clubs use their clout as service leaders to encourage their neighbors to join them. More clubs and people participating means more communities and children being served.”
Kiwanis One Day unites Kiwanis and its family of clubs—Kiwanis Junior, Circle K, Key Club, Aktion Club, Builders Club, and K-Kids—with their communities for a day of service like none other. A lot of good work gets done on Kiwanis One Day, but its primary purpose, notes Kiwanis International CEO Rob Parker, is to build awareness about the value of service.

“Obviously, Kiwanis One Day projects don’t carry the same life-changing impact as many of the long-term projects our clubs undertake,” Rob says, “but we hope that over time it will grow into a huge entry point or introduction to Kiwanis for people who don’t know us.”

More than 600 Kiwanis-family clubs participated in the inaugural Kiwanis One Day this past year. Among them:

- The **Kiwanis Club of Woodland, California**, joined by Key Club and Aktion Club members to paint picnic benches at the Nelson’s Grove YMCA Day Camp.

  “We just went looking for something that needed to be done and volunteered our services,” notes club member Mark Vale. “The project was ‘financed’ by a paint store that contributed more than $800 worth of paint and painting accessories. We only had to supply the manpower.”

- The **Kiwanis Club of Pocomoke City, Maryland**, kicked off the first phase of its “Create a Park” program, planting shrubbery in a vacant lot it is developing into a park. The club’s sponsored K-Kids, Builders, and Key Clubs worked side-by-side with the Kiwanians.

  “We were proud to join our Kiwanis-family members for this special One Day of service,” Barb notes. “The spirit of camaraderie we enjoyed in doing something for our community was gratifying for our members.”

- In a One Day collaboration between the **Kiwanis Club of Bainbridge, Georgia**, and the **Circle K club at Bainbridge College** members cleaned a one-mile stretch of highway near the college, toting away
more than 300 pounds of garbage. After the garbage was picked up, they sorted it into trash and recyclables, with the latter taken to the recycling center.

To increase visibility, One Day volunteers are encouraged to wear Kiwanis gear while participating in Kiwanis One Day. They also can share stories and photos of their Kiwanis One Day experiences online. Log on to www.kiwanis.org, and select the Kiwanis Impact option from the menu on the left side of the page.

Kiwanis International also offers Kiwanis One Day resources. Click on the Service Project option of that same menu; then, select Kiwanis One Day.

93rd Annual Kiwanis International Convention
Orlando, Florida
June 26-29, 2008

Loritts to speak at 2008 convention

Crawford Loritts is a man on a mission. For nearly 40 years, Loritts has traveled the globe delivering a message of hope and inspiration to a world that is in great need of both. Scheduled for the 2008 International Convention Fellowship Breakfast, he is a frequent speaker for professional sports teams, including three National Football League Super Bowl champions and the National Collegiate Athletic Association’s Final Four Chapel. Loritts has spoken to gatherings of senior military officers at the United States Pentagon and is a regular speaker at Promise Keepers men’s conferences. He and his wife, Karen, are featured speakers at Family Life’s marriage and parenting conferences and serve together at an Atlanta-area church where he is the senior pastor.
Loritts also hosts Living A Legacy, a daily radio program heard on 330 outlets worldwide. Come hear from a man with unbounded energy and a passion for service to others. Regardless of your personal faith, you will be inspired by this man who believes our personal legacy is determined not by great acts of charity or public acclaim, but by how we live our daily lives.

**Muppet-land’s Maria to visit Kiwanians**

Maria! Millions of children worldwide have met a woman named Maria. They know her as Gabriela’s mom, Luis’ wife, and one of Big Bird’s best friends. You, too, can meet her. Sonia Manzano, who has portrayed Maria Rodriguez on *Sesame Street* for more than 30 years, will speak at the 93rd Annual Kiwanis International Convention in Orlando, Florida, June 26-29. Her topic: serving children, of course.

Manzano has received numerous awards and honors, including the Hispanic Heritage Award for Education, an honorary doctorate in fine arts from Notre Dame University, and two Emmy nominations. As the author of two children’s books—*No Dogs Allowed* and *A Box Full of Kittens*—Manzano draws on her adventures as a young girl who grew up in a Bronx neighborhood of New York City.

**Learn to be a story ‘shooter’**

Words are one way to compose your story, but a picture can tell tales too.


A popular, standing-room-only workshop at the 2007 convention, the forum returns this year with two options:
- A beginners’ class, which is open to children as well as Kiwanians and adult guests.

- A more advanced class for attendees who participated in previous photography forums and for those who are comfortable with a camera.

If you plan to attend a photography forum, bring your camera and its manual, because participants will be assigned to take photos throughout the convention. Your pictures may be projected during convention highlight presentations or appear in future Kiwanis International publications.

**Early entries are prize-eligible**

Kiwanians who beat the 2008 International Convention’s early registration deadline are eligible to win prizes. For example, one winner will receive two Southwest Airlines tickets to Nashville, Tennessee, for the 2009 Convention and Kiwanis gift certificates. The prize package also includes limousine transportation and an entertainment card with free admission into more than 30 Nashville-area attractions.

Other prizes include: a Richard Petty Driving Experience, hundreds of dollars in Kiwanis gift certificates and merchandise, and a US$500 buffalo meat gift certificate.

**Key Leader a huge success in Malaysia**

Students in Malaysia received a three-day lesson in integrity, respect, community, growth, and excellence during two Key Leader events this past August and September.

The Kota Rainforest Resort in Kota, Tinggi, Johor, hosted the Southern Key Leader in August, and September’s Central Key Leader was staged at Kem Bina Semangat in Kuala Kubu Baru, Selangor. To date, Malaysia has staged five Key Leader events with a total of 341 participants, according to K H Wan, chairman for Key Leader in Malaysia.
“The Key Leader events in Malaysia have been very powerful in bringing the call to service leadership to hundreds of young people from different backgrounds and sections of the country,” says Dick Peterson, Key Leader program manager. “We value our partnership with the Malaysia District of Kiwanis in growing this program in future years.”

Let Dave speak

Dave Curry would like to sit down and talk with you. Every month, Kiwanis International President Dave addresses Kiwanians worldwide via the World Wide Web. His one-minute video message for the month of January 2008, for example, relates how a Manitoba Kiwanis family develops leadership skills among youth through involvement in service.

Who leads the way?

Nomination form coming soon!

Kiwanis International is seeking nominations for a future online feature about everyday leaders. If you know a Kiwanis member who excels in his/her profession, family, Kiwanis club, community, or a cause (church,
politics, environment), submit his/her name for consideration by February 27, 2008.

**Missed meals aid children**

The Kiwanis International Foundation brings the entire Kiwanis family together to raise funds for the Kiwanis Children’s Fund.

Every Kiwanis-family member, as well as non-Kiwanians, is encouraged to participate. [Skip-A-Meal](#) is a Kiwanis-organization initiative conducted during the last week of April each year. Every Kiwanis family member, as well as non-Kiwanians, is encouraged to participate.

Skip just one meal during the last week of April and send the cost equivalent of that meal to help fund numerous programs that support children.

For information on how you can participate in Skip-A-Meal, contact the Kiwanis International Foundation by [e-mail](mailto:) or by phone at 800-KIWANIS or 317-875-8755.

**People**

**Tested by fire—once again**

Gary Jander had no idea San Diego was catching on fire. Again.

The [Lake Murray, La Mesa, California, Kiwanian](#) left the Key Leader camp in Julian, California, at noon Sunday, October 21, just missing the start of the Witch Creek fire. The blaze was soon raging out of control two miles from the camp, closing off main roads behind him, and forcing 85 Key Leader teens and chaperones who left 30 minutes later to take lengthy detours out of the area.

By 9 a.m. the next morning, Gary was deploying hundreds of Kiwanis volunteers to QualComm Stadium—normally home to the National Football League’s San Diego Chargers and Major League Baseball’s Padres—with cook stations, food, supplies, and manpower to help evacuees.
So much for going to work Monday.

“We were able to put boots on the ground within hours,” Gary says. “The Kiwanis role (in the relief efforts) was significant.”

Through Gary’s leadership skills and his army of Kiwanians, 15,000 evacuees staying at the football stadium on Monday and Tuesday were able to eat.

And it was no small feat. Gary and his crew of Kiwanians were confronted with constant roadblocks, from security guards not allowing food deliveries, to city officials who were unaware that Kiwanis already had obtained city permission and county health permits Monday morning to serve food.

“It was bureaucratic chaos at QualComm,” says Gary. “But Kiwanians were patient and worked around the obstacles. We still ended up serving 20,000 meals the first day.”

Gary, a lawyer, stayed in charge of the operation for the next 48 hours, coordinating hundreds of Kiwanis volunteers who served thousands of meals to the evacuees.

He knew what it is like to be displaced. The Jander family had been evacuated during the 2003 Cedar Fire, which came rather close to his suburban home near QualComm Stadium. That experience motivated him to keep serving total strangers 16 hours a day during the first few days of the 2007 fires.

“Kiwanians need to feel proud of the fact they didn’t quit,” Gary says. “They just kept serving. It was a Herculean effort by the volunteers.”—Lynn Seeden
The Kiwanis International Foundation’s Disaster Relief Fund continues to help southern California recover from the 2007 wildfire disaster. Donate via a secure online form or call 800-549-2647 or 1-317-875-8755.

**Chef dishes disaster delicacies: bologna, hotdogs**

Lisa Sandoval trained as a chef at San Francisco’s Le Cordon Bleu. She has prepared meals fit for royalty. But during the last week of October, her bologna sandwiches were worth gold.

The La Mesa, California, Kiwanian didn’t hesitate when California-Nevada-Hawaii District Governor Oscar Knight asked her to coordinate food efforts for the thousands of people who were displaced by raging wildfires that consumed much of eastern San Diego County.

“I gathered some volunteers, and the Key Clubbers came because they had no school (due to the fires). They were all food-certified (a health department requirement), because I was qualified to certify them,” says Lisa, a 44-year-old mother of four who also is a general contractor and licensed welder.

Lisa headed to the La Mesa Community Center where she was met by the mayor and city attorney and was told she had full cooperation from the city.

“We started making sandwiches—everything you can imagine—ham, cheese, salami, bologna, turkey, peanut butter and jelly,” she says. “We started making sack lunches with water, granola bar, fruit, chips, and sandwiches.”

At nearby QualComm Stadium, fellow Kiwanian Gary Jander got the attention of the scores of television cameras. He announced on television that donated supplies were now needed at the La Mesa Community Center.
“Food started coming in by the buckets-full,” Lisa says. “I set up tables along the walls and gave volunteers lists and Sharpie pens, and then I delegated so they would organize everything as it came in. We had more than 4 tons of clothing, 500 pounds of dog food, 15,000 cases of water. We made more than 20,000 meals over three and one-half days.”

Many of those meals were delivered to QualComm and other evacuation centers.

October’s wildfires were a repeat performance. In October 2003, the Cedar Fire destroyed 2,400 homes. This recent firestorm leveled 1,700 homes.

“The lessons from the Cedar fire were written out. We learned a lot in 2003,” says Governor Oscar, who was heavily involved with the volunteer efforts during both fires. “Kiwanis was better mobilized this time.”

When she’s not feeding evacuees, Lisa teaches life skills to people who have mental disabilities, and cooking classes for children.

Lisa guesses she slept about six hours over a four-day stretch during the fires and never did get to go home.

“I had the mayor of La Mesa delivering ‘pigs in a blanket’ at 2 in the morning,” she says.—Curt Seeden

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**Community’s servant garners recognition**

Bart Bleuel’s good deeds often leave people speechless, but most of his friends recall a time when he got a mute child to speak.

Bart, longtime member of the **Kiwanis Club of Ventura, California**, serves as Santa Claus for his club’s Christmas party for children with disabilities. Dressed in civilian clothes during the first hour of the party, he circulates among the 60 to 100 children who attend each year, learning their names and a little fact about each. Then when he appears later as Santa, he calls them by name and tells them something about themselves.

The reaction of the children is heartening, as their belief in Santa as someone who knows them and cares for them is reinforced. But one poignant example of Bart’s work with these children came a couple years ago when one of them said “Thank you” in response. It was a child who, caregivers said, had never been known to speak.
His annual stint as Santa is but one of many activities that have cemented Bartley S. Bleuel’s reputation as a servant leader in Ventura County. It’s a reputation that has garnered the attorney much public acclaim, most recently being picked to represent the county in Washington, DC, at the nation’s annual Jefferson Awards Celebration.

The Jefferson Award program was founded in 1972 to honor volunteers who represent the highest ideals of public service. About 25,000 people are nominated each year, with about 66 people chosen to represent their regions in Washington. Bart says the honor recharged his zeal for public service.

“I have received awards in the past,” he notes, “but nothing that remotely compares to this one. Being among some 60 other award winners was a treat, but I think the most important thing that came out of all this is that it re-energized me to continue community service. I sort of owe it back!”

Bart was cited for his long-term service to many causes and organizations, especially his work on behalf of children in the Ventura United School District. He established a K-Kids club at Sheridan Way Elementary School 16 years ago, and since then, he and his wife, Michelle, have volunteered at least once a week in some capacity in the school system.

As chairman of the school district’s annual Festival of Talent, Bart helped to raise between US$40,000 and $50,000 each year for the past four years to provide grants to teachers to support projects the normal school budget cannot fund. He’s also been active in the chamber of commerce, the American Heart Association, and his current pet project, the City Corps of the Central Coast.

“This is an effort to involve marginalized youth and others in community activities,” he explains. “It is more than just getting them involved in the service, though. We engage them entirely, so that these 12- to 24-year-olds plan the activities and perform the service projects—which will number in the thousands each year in each city.”
“This gives the kids a real sense of purpose and pride in their work and in their associations with each others. It’s one of the most exciting community service projects I have been involved with in a long time.”

Ask him what inspires him to serve, and Bart likely will recall the words of his mother.

“My mother always said when you do the Lord’s work, the Lord will owe you a place in heaven,” he says. “Quite frankly, I have my heaven here. The Lord doesn’t owe me a thing.”

Showcase

As one or many, Kiwanis clubs enrich lives

A journey through northeastern United States reveals the cooperative spirit of service among Kiwanians

It takes special people to enrich the lives of others. As Eva and I traveled through the northeast part of the United States, we met a number of these humanitarians. Whether they serve within individual clubs, collaborate among several clubs in a region, or join the efforts of an entire district, they all have one thing in common: They are members of Kiwanis clubs.

The Kiwanis Club of Eldorado, Altoona, Pennsylvania, was a driving force for building the Miracle League of Blair County baseball field. This field gives children who have disabilities the experience of playing baseball on a field created especially for them. It is a heartwarming achievement.

A group of Kiwanians created the Kiwanis Conference of Western Pennsylvania, which partnered with the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children in Pittsburgh. For decades these Kiwanis clubs have responded to the facility’s special needs so its staff can continue to educate an exceptional group of young girls and boys. Eva and I had the opportunity
of meeting one family whose daughter has been helped by the school. Raising a special needs child is an enormous undertaking, and the mother expressed to us her gratitude for Kiwanis. Her daughter even wanted to give me her autograph in appreciation. (I love the spontaneity of children!)

In Boston, the New England District supports the Kiwanis Pediatric Trauma Institute at the Tufts-New England Medical Center. For more than 30 years, this Kiwanis partnership has delivered ongoing support so the institute’s staff can provide much needed trauma care for children throughout the New England region. Administrators acknowledge that over that time span, Kiwanians had raised more than US$7 million for this worthwhile effort on behalf of children.

Whether through an individual club, a regional collaboration among many clubs, or an entire district, Kiwanians are meeting children’s needs worldwide. As individuals, our time on this planet is short. But as an organization, our legacy of service leaves its mark on the children of the world for generations. As Eva and I travel, thank you for making us so proud to be Kiwanians, and keep sharing your story of service with others.

School administrator advocates for Terrific Kids

The Kiwanis Club of Red Deer, Alberta, has a cheerleader for its Terrific Kids program: St. Patrick’s Community School principal Kathleen Finnigan. Having witnessed the program at another school, Finnigan was eager to adopt the Kiwanis program upon stepping into the administrative role at St. Pat’s. So, she wrote a letter to the Red Deer Kiwanis club, which already sponsored Terrific Kids programs in seven elementary schools. Now, it sponsors eight.

“Her letter describes the impact this program has on children who come in contact with Terrific Kids,” says the club’s vice-president, John Elliott. The letter (abridged):

“I have had the unique opportunity to see firsthand what the Terrific Kids program does for children within our city. My first experience with the Kiwanis club began when I was the principal of St. Martin de Porres School. Together with the Kiwanis members, we changed children’s lives as a result of this powerful program.
“Children would wait anxiously each month for our Spirit Day assembly. The school would buzz with anticipation of who would be the Terrific Kid in each classroom that month. Kiwanis members would join us at the assembly. The children absolutely loved to see these gentlemen!

“Each teacher would prepare a paragraph explaining why the selected child received the award. There would be cheers and shouts as each Terrific Kid came forward to receive his award. For days after the assembly, the child would continually wear her T-shirt proudly proclaiming why she was the Terrific Kid. This was the biggest award to receive at St. Martin.

“I could not thank the Kiwanis members enough for their support of our children. I told them about seeing pride and confidence build within children who have so little. I also expressed the sincere gratitude from parents as their child was chosen and they were invited to attend the assembly to witness the award. Then, to hear from teachers of the change in their child’s attitude and behavior as a result of being recognized by others in their lives as being special and important! Amazing stories were always shared each month and throughout the year. Children would work hard each month knowing the award was being given.

“With this in mind, I would like to make a special request that consideration of the implementation of the Terrific Kid award is given to St. Pat’s School. Our school community is a wonderful place to educate children who come from low socio-economic areas within the city. These are children who need an extra boost of confidence to let them know they are great people.”

**Putting students in the story**

*Personalized books motivate first-graders to read*

Jymir Octcalt sat on Bill Walters’ lap, ready to read from a new book just delivered by Bill and other Kiwanians to the first-grader’s Pennsylvania elementary school.

Jymir didn’t know that this book was unlike any he’d ever seen.
“Hey, that’s my picture! And that’s my name!” the boy exclaimed as he turned the first few pages. He grinned at Bill. “Is this my book? Can I take it home?”

More than 650 first-graders like Jymir were grinning at themselves in books throughout the Easton Area School District that day, all because of a collaboration involving Bill’s Kiwanis Club of Easton, businesses, and a publisher that produces personalized books for children.

Bill, club secretary, says the project was a natural extension of Kiwanis International’s focus on literacy.

“This was an easy project for the Easton club to do,” he explains. “The vendor found businesses to sponsor ads, which covered the cost of producing the books. We were the only service organization he invited to take part. Our share (of the cost) was just $700.”

The vendor then worked directly with the school district to weave children’s names and school photos into the stories.

Once the books were ready for delivery, Kiwanians tooted them to six elementary schools. Bill had a ball.

“The surprised look and laughter from the children was so amazing,” he says. “One child screeched, ‘My very own book!’ There’s no price you can put on bringing joy to a child.”

He and other club members took time to read with the kids.

“To sit with a group of children as they read to you and hear one of them whispering a word to help their friend was so rewarding. You had to be there
to truly appreciate it,” Bill says. “A personalized book was a wonderful thing to give them.”

In Easton, however, literacy is not a once-a-year focus. The Kiwanians encourage reading throughout the year.

“Rather than give an honorarium to guest speakers, our club asks them to autograph books, which we then take to an agency that needs them,” he says.

Easton also asks club members to read to kids and collects children’s books for social service organizations.

“We’re buying new books of various age levels in case lots,” he says. “Then we’ll place a sticker inside identifying them as coming from Easton Kiwanis. We distribute these to social agencies, not only to bring books to families who need them, but to spread the word about how much Kiwanians care about literacy.”—Cindy Dashnaw

**Builders ‘get dirty’ to make a difference**

Four teenage girls, dressed in blue jeans and sweatshirts, made their way down to Mill Run just above the Porter Street bridge early Saturday morning to start their day. Members of the **Cochranton Junior/Senior High School Builders Club**, they joined the nearly 1,000 volunteers at the 14th annual Crawford County (Pennsylvania) Make a Difference Day.

“I’m ready to get dirty,” laughed Erika Stininger.

“It’s fun,” added her friend, Shelby Proctor. “We did it last year. We just like helping the community out.”

The pair, along with Kelli Loper and Sarah Parker, all 8th-graders, were joined by dozens of others at Mill Run, hauling trash out of the water and removing tree limbs and tree stumps to allow the water to flow clearly.—*The Meadville Tribune*
Clubhouse

Planting project’s impact tree-mendous

Anyone who doubts the positive impact one club can have on its community is barking up the wrong tree. The Capilano, West Vancouver, British Columbia, Kiwanis club, through its “Tribute Trees” program (“Memorial Program Takes Root,” August 2003), has planted more than 100 trees and funneled more than CAN$150,000 into the community.

The seeds of the program were sown in 2000, when then-president John Howell saw a need for a new fundraiser to help the club with its work in the community. Under the program, when an individual donates $1,500 to the club, the donor selects a location for the tree, the species of the tree, and the inscription for a plaque. The tree is then planted and maintained by the parks department.

Half the donation goes to the parks department, while the rest goes to the club.

“Our partnership with Kiwanis has value on at least three levels,” notes Corrine Ambor of the parks department. “For starters, half the donation goes back to support good causes in our community. Value also comes from the relationships being formed between the Kiwanis club, our staff, and the community. The community also benefits not only from the trees being planted in various locations, but also from the additional opportunity to make donations to our parks.
**Want awareness? Go the newspaper route**

Kiwanians the world over have long searched for the recipe to get their club’s name known. The **Kiwanis Club of Stamford, Ontario**, has it figured out.

As 2006-07 club president, Marjorie Slinn turned to good, old-fashioned public relations strategies by sending an “open letter” to newspapers and accompanying Web sites.

“We had a meeting with our city council regarding permission to install new bus benches,” Marjorie recalls. “One of the council members asked us, ‘What is Kiwanis anyway, and what does it do for the city?’ Naturally, we were a little taken aback, and we decided we would make more people aware of our club and its function.”

Did the letter spark interest in the club?

“It netted us nine new Kiwanians!” she enthusiastically reports.

**Kiwanis family in the news**

**Altruism alive in Tar Heel state.** The **Winston-Salem (North Carolina) Kiwanis club** kept busy during Kiwanis Family Month (November) by:
- working as senior advisors with their Crosby Scholars;
- making donations to the Boys and Girls Homes at Lake Waccamaw;
- donating dictionaries to Easton and Arts Based elementary schools and the Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club;
- donating books to Smart Start;
- attending meetings of their sponsored youth;
- financially assisting Key Club members who attended **Carolinas District** Fall Rally and Carolinas District Kiwanis Family Conference.

The club also donated cans of food to the **Reynolds High School Key Club** food drive, visited the **K-Kids Club at Arts Based Elementary** and the **King Kiwanis club**, and tutored students in math and reading at Easton Elementary.—*Winston-Salem Journal*

**Little levity in Levittown.** When Joe Corace, 2006-07 governor of the **New York District**, challenged Kiwanis clubs in the state to complete a six-part project involving Scouts, health, local heroes, family, seniors, and sports, the Levittown Kiwanis club answered. Among its activities:
- presenting Everyday Hero awards to five community members; inviting
residents of local senior citizen centers to attend its Brotherhood/Sisterhood luncheon; putting up a health table at a fair, staffed by member Jacquelyn “Jackie” Nogan; sponsoring Levittown Pride Day with a host of fun activities for the family; hosting a Father’s Day run.—Levittown Tribune

### Happenstance won’t make it happen

Leadership is a constant pursuit. So say visitors to Kiwanis International’s Web site, kiwanis.org.

In a recent online poll, 85 percent of respondents completed the sentence “Leadership is,” with their favorite description: “a lifelong learning process.”

Other results:

- An inherent trait, 8 percent
- The result of strategic training, 6 percent

But only 2 percent of respondents say leadership is “accidental.” Beginning February 1, the kiwanis.org Web poll asks: “In its pursuit of excellence, what is the biggest challenge facing your club?” What’s your answer?

### Club Clinic

**Q I have been asked to serve as vice-president, which means I ultimately would be president within three years. If I agree and am elected, what is my commitment, and is there any help available to prepare me for the job?**

A Congratulations! The sky’s the limit.

Your selection as a Kiwanis club officer puts you in position to make a valuable contribution to your club and community. Ideally, your commitment, within the next three years, is to effect positive change in your hometown, be a leading force that corrects what needs to be corrected, and encourage the leadership potential within fellow Kiwanis, Key Club, Circle K, Builders, and K-Kids club members.
Kiwanis International and club bylaws describe the “official” responsibilities of the club vice-president, president-elect, president, and president-elect. And the International Office teams with your district to provide officer-training sessions at conventions and other events. But above all, pose the question: “What would make our town a better place, especially for our children? Whatever your answer may be, make that your commitment.

**Kiwanis Impact**

**One day for the 'K'**

This past year, members of the **Kiwanis Club of Palmyra, Missouri**, were glad to see they would not be alone on Kiwanis One Day, because Key Club, K-Kids, and Builders Club members also would participate. We thought this would be a great opportunity to get to know the youth, and they would get to know us outside of our “responsible” jobs. The senior housing area was glad one of our groups went there, because most of its residents are not able to do a lot of outside cleanup. We plan to do Kiwanis One Day again this year (Saturday, April 5, 2008, is the official One Day date), but we hope to have warmer weather!—*Mary Lou Hawthorne, secretary, Kiwanis Club of Palmyra, Missouri*
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 deserves 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.