Happy Kampers

With the help of a Kiwanis International Foundation grant and the New York District, children of military personnel spend a week at “Kamp”

By Curt Seeden

New York wants to see lots of happy campers.

Or make that happy Kampers.

More happy kids went to Kamp Kiwanis the past two summers when an extra week was added—arranged especially for children of military personnel and made possible through the generosity and efforts of the New York District and grants from the Kiwanis International Foundation.

“One thing we always like about military campers is they are so appreciative,” said Rebecca Lopez, executive director of the New York Foundation and Kamp Kiwanis.

Kamp Kiwanis is the major focus of the New York Kiwanis District Foundation, providing a welcomed respite for underprivileged and disabled children, as well as children whose lives are thrown off course by events such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.

For the past two years, the district foundation
has applied for and received grants from the Kiwanis International Foundation to offer an outdoor summer adventure for children whose parents are soldiers or otherwise employed by the United States military.

The campground, located six miles north of Rome, New York, features sleeping cabins, bath houses, athletic fields, library, sports area, swimming pool, nature trails, a camping area with a tepee, arts and crafts rooms, an administration building with an infirmary, and a pond for fishing and canoeing.

Kamp Kiwanis is a coed camp for children ages 8 to 17 with a capacity of 130 campers. The camp also offers a counselor-in-training program for teens 15 to 17 years old. Due to costs, their families’ frequent transfers, and other issues, military children rarely enjoy summer camp. And one week at Kamp Kiwanis makes a lasting impact.

“We had one family here from West Point, and two of their three children had special needs,” Lopez says. “The first child, Olivia, found our flier at her after-school program and talked to her mom about how much this would mean to her.

“Her mom, Stephanie, contacted us, and we were able to serve three of her four children. So for one week last summer, Andrew, 15 and suffering from a brain tumor, and his sister, Abby, who is autistic, and Olivia spent an unforgettable week at camp. They had a good time the first year, but the second year they were different children. Their self-esteem was so good. When Olivia was here, she actually won camper of the week.

“Kiwanians in New York support us so much,” Lopez says, “and Kiwanis International has been so good to us.”
Sal Anelli, president of the New York Kiwanis Foundation, recalls visiting the camp 10 years ago during his lieutenant governor training at a critical time in the camp’s history.

“It was in dire need of help,” Sal says. “The 102 acres contained cabins; they were run down and in need of major repairs and refurbishing.”

So Anelli and thousands of other New York Kiwanians stepped up to restore the glory of Kamp Kiwanis.

“We have some 280 clubs, and any club can choose to send a check,” Lopez says. “They also find the kids in their community and pay for them to go to camp or a portion of it. The foundation supplements the cost.

“I’ve worked for a lot of camps—wealthy ones that are for-profit and camps that are nonprofit,” Lopez says. “Kamp Kiwanis is different. It mainstreams all the kids. If you have a handicap, you still go with the rest of the kids. Kiwanis wants every child to have this experience. They just want these children who are less fortunate to have a chance to be happy and be outdoors.”

**Champions for children**

*It’s a natural attraction. People who love children choose to join an organization that loves children. Meet Sue, Yvette, and Sam. Through their careers, they have achieved recognition for helping children. But they want to do more. Of course they do. They’re Kiwanians.*

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Change from the Heart

Sam Rawlins wants to help children even before they’re born. And he does.

A member of the Kiwanis Club of St. Augustine in Trinidad and Tobago, the public health research scientist is troubled by the spread of HIV/AIDS but confident Kiwanis can help reduce its threat.

For years, he chased mosquitoes to battle two other diseases that preyed on children. That experience has convinced him there are parallel applications in the fight against AIDS.

“Mosquitoes are the vectors—or transmitters—of diseases like malaria and dengue fever,” he explains. “Changing human behavior to prevent transmission of those diseases is the key to overcoming them—just as it is in overcoming AIDS.”

He was more than pleased when Kiwanis’ Eastern Canada and the Caribbean District took on the prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission as a district project.

“Because of the compassion and the community-outreach capabilities of Kiwanis,” he explains, “we can be agents of significant change.”

Sam’s knowledge of vector-borne diseases resulted in an invitation to become a lead author in the fourth report issued by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) this past year. For its work, the IPCC shared the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize with former US vice-president Al Gore.

So is this dedicated Kiwanian also a Nobel Laureate?
Well, yes, in a sense, Sam concedes, but quickly points out: “So are the 2,000 other scientists and many essential supporters who contribute their time and talents to the IPCC.”

**Walking the walk**

Earthquake, hurricane, terrorist attack? In the most difficult situations, Sue Cox takes care of kids when they need her most.

A registered nurse whose expertise is pediatric critical care and trauma, Sue also serves as chief nurse of one of 107 disaster medical assistance teams that make up the United States National Disaster Medical System.

In that role, she has delivered emergency care to children caught in some of the worst disasters in US history, including a devastating California earthquake in 1994, the World Trade Center terrorist attack in 2001, and Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

As one of 10 children, Sue learned early on to step up and speak up. Today, she talks the talk of community service and, as a member of Division 100 Miracle Miles of Quarters, San Diego club, walks the walk.

Five times a participant in “Breast Cancer 3-Day” 60-mile walks, Sue is a popular speaker at Kiwanis club meetings and community events. She is tireless in spotlighting issues of pediatric trauma, injury prevention, and community support. “I want to inspire others to get involved,” she explains.

Sue has received several awards, but one honor epitomizes her dedication. In 1995, Sue was named San Diego County’s “Champion for Children.”

And, oh yes, she’s motivated at least one new member to join Kiwanis: her husband, Conrad.
Breaking the silence

Yvette Janvier speaks out for kids who can’t speak for themselves.

As a physician, Yvette helps autistic children discover a world that offers a simple, but elusive freedom: normal human interaction.

“We need to find the cause of autism and the treatments that work,” explains Yvette, who is medical director at Children’s Specialized Hospital in Toms River, New Jersey, and a past president of the Kiwanis Club of Toms River. “A big challenge is in how we make a diagnosis and who does it.”

The number of children diagnosed with autism is on the rise, reported a 2007 study by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Controversy surrounding the study has increased the disorder’s public profile, which is fine with Yvette because it promotes awareness.

“The earlier autism can be identified in a child the better the chance that child can be in a regular school classroom,” she explains.

This past year, Yvette received a four-year appointment to the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee of the (US) National Institute of Health.

“This work is probably among the most exciting things I’ve ever done,” she says.
In a conversation with Kiwanis International CEO Rob Parker, University of Georgia President Mike Adams describes how past Key Club and Circle K experiences equipped him to make a difference through leadership.

In November of 1969, 21-year-old Circle K International President Mike Adams didn’t hesitate for a moment when the offer came for him to visit the war zone in Vietnam. After spending 10 days meeting with frontline soldiers, dignitaries, and the president of South Vietnam, this young leader came home and boldly shared with Circle K members his thoughts about the progress of the war. Nearly 40 years later, University of Georgia President Michael Adams still speaks his mind, calling for change and making a difference in the lives of others.

With 55,000 students, the University of Georgia in Athens has a larger population than many cities and towns in the world and faces some of the same complex challenges. Calling on a lifetime of leadership development experiences, including his early days in Key Club and Circle K, Adams still is on the front lines shaping the lives of men and women. On a rainy night in Georgia (OK, maybe it was late afternoon), Adams met with Kiwanis International CEO Rob Parker to talk about leadership, courage, change, and how to get things done.

Rob Parker (RP): In 1969, you traveled to a war zone and came home to speak your mind about it. Are you still doing that kind of thing?
**Mike Adams (MA):** I’ve been accused of a lot of things over the years, but not being direct is not one of them. While I hope I’m always respectful, I haven’t been afraid to fire a rhetorical shot across the bow to keep things moving. To turn a ship this big sometimes requires more firepower than many university presidents are willing to use. Shortly after I arrived here, we proposed six major academic changes, and I am proud to say we’ve completed five of them so far.

**RP:** Key Club and Circle K exposed you to servant leadership. Yet most people describe you as a bold, direct leader. How do you blend those two approaches?

**MA:** I don’t think the two are mutually exclusive. Servant leadership relates primarily to relationships. One thing I’ve been able to do is to hire and retain great people, which requires investing in relationships. The real test for me is if the people who really know you best believe you’re genuine.

**RP:** In his book Good to Great, Jim Collins emphasizes the need to solve the “who” part of equation before focusing on the “what.” It sounds like you’ve taken the same step by getting the right people on the team.

**MA:** One of my mantras is: When somebody leaves, replace them with somebody better. Sometimes that’s difficult, but we’ve hired some really first rate faculty in the past 10 to 11 years who have established themselves with national reputations.

**RP:** What do you do when there’s difference of opinion or a clash of dreams?

**MA:** Listen. Hear them out. The sad thing is when there are more good ideas than there is money. That means you have to prioritize. It’s tough message when a good idea doesn’t fit into the available resources.

**RP:** What’s the best way to foster change at an organization like Kiwanis?

**MA:** The world has changed a lot from the service club mentality of the 1960s and ’70s. I’m not sure service clubs have changed enough to keep up with the changing world. For example, there are probably some comparisons between universities and service clubs in the area of diversity. One thing I had to deal with in ’69 and ’70 as CKI President was the issue of opening membership to women. I made a pitch to the International Board, and they were not supportive of the change. We didn’t want to go against the (Kiwanis) International Board, but we also knew that change was inevitable.

**RP:** What’s your biggest leadership challenge?
MA: The hardest thing for me to keep under control is my patience. And I’ve probably had times when I don’t pay attention to process. It does slow you down, but if you stop and work the process, you end up with a better product.

RP: You came to the university with a reputation and credibility. But you needed some early wins. Tell us about those.

MA: I did two or three fairly visible things right off the bat. I closed down a parking lot. I created a strategic gathering place. And, in the second year, I taught a class. A UGA president hadn’t done that in a long time. What the professors do here every day is extremely important. It’s not all about administration or budgets or legislature.

RP: You’re exceeding your fundraising goals. What inspired people to get involved in this challenge?

MA: Three things contributed to our success. First, we started with a strong, committed support base. Second, we painted a vision that most of our support base could buy into. Third, we’ve hired a lot of good people. We are at the US$550 million mark on a $500 million campaign, and by June it should end up at the $650 million range.

RP: How do your experiences in Kiwanis’ high school and college leadership programs continue to resonate with you?

MA: I don’t know how many people believed me at the time, but I’ve always said Kiwanis’ (Service Leadership) programs were its greatest asset. I had a great Key Club experience. I had a very positive Circle K experience. I was from a relatively small liberal arts school, so I had to work hard to get elected. The whole campaign process taught me some things. I believe in those programs. They continue to build leaders out of high school and college students.

RP: Our clubs depend on 8,000 incoming leaders who need education every year. What counsel can you offer club leaders with one year to do make an impact?

MA: I’d tell people to do some real soul searching to figure out if they’re willing to commit the time and resources. At the club president level, that should be the primary outside activity. If you’re going to lead, you have to say to people: This is my commitment for this year. There ought to be
enough commitment for someone to see you walk down the street and to say, “Here comes the Kiwanis club president.”

They excel in every category

They're generous caring fun growing

They're great!
What does it take to be a great Kiwanis club? To find answers, Kiwanis magazine searched for clubs that excel in four categories: consistent membership growth, generous giving, effective service, and engaging fellowship. From a host of qualified clubs, Kiwanis singled out four “great” clubs and sought to identify practices that keep them in top-notch shape.

Great clubs deliberately work on being great. They plan, strategize, and set goals. They insist on relevancy, conducting surveys and adjusting service, fundraising, meetings, social activities, and membership efforts accordingly. And they develop leaders, with members involved at the division, district, and International levels.

Here, representing all great Kiwanis clubs, are Stuttgart, Germany; Weston, Connecticut; Las Vegas Strip, Nevada; and Lombard, Illinois.

Weston, Connecticut

Growth: 1 percent of town’s 10,000 residents are Kiwanians
Giving: $50,000 annually
**Service:** 18th century carriage barn renovation, alcohol-free New Year’s Eve party, clean-up day  
**Fellowship:** Golf and tennis tournaments  
**Other:** Nine members qualify for Ruby K award by sponsoring five or more new members

It’s Saturday morning, and seemingly everyone in Weston, Connecticut, is headed to the Norfield Congregation Church for breakfast. Included in the crowd are some of the community’s most influential leaders. They all are on their way to their weekly Kiwanis club meeting.

In addition to attracting high-profile people to its membership, the club strongly encourages members to take on positions of responsibility within the club. It’s easy to say yes, because everyone knows they’ll never be alone.

“Senior members rally around to help the junior members do an effective job,” says immediate past club president John Babyak. “The club also maintains fairly well-organized project books, containing all the steps that have proved to be useful in organizing a project or event. This allows new leaders to feel more confident in their ability to get a job done.”

Another key to the club’s success is its vigorous and ongoing public relations process. Weston Kiwanians attend most community events, setting up a foldout display board, distributing handouts, and keeping membership application forms close at hand.
Las Vegas Strip, Nevada

**Growth:** 38 percent growth over the past 10 years  
**Giving:** Annual contributions to Kiwanis district and International foundations  
**Service:** At-risk school, seven Key Clubs, Scout camp  
**Fellowship:** Stuffing Social combines service and fellowship  
**Other:** Members are active at the district level, serving as lieutenant governors, foundation board members, and Key Club advisors

If energy attracts people, Las Vegas Strip Kiwanians are volunteer magnets.

The club, which admits to a casual attitude toward traditional protocol, frequently adopts new members’ new ideas while remaining true to past projects. Members continue their longstanding support of a Scout camp but add projects to address new needs.

Accompanying Las Vegas’ population explosion has been an increase in homelessness and at-risk families. So the club has instituted coat and food drives and adopted an at-risk school. Plus, it co-hosts a hospital Christmas party for indigent patients.

Two highlights on the club’s calendar are the twice-a-year “Stuffing Socials.” While volunteers “stuff” themselves at a potluck dinner, they “stuff” packages for various service agencies. In 2007, for example, they packed duffle bags for street teens and gifts for National Guard personnel in Iraq.
“We often hear comments that we stand out because we really ‘do’ community service,” says member Marti Marek. “It keeps us active, and that energy attracts people.”

**Stuttgart, Germany**

- **Growth**: Nearly doubled its roster since 1994
- **Giving**: 42,500 euros in 2007
- **Service**: Homeless children, blind school, children’s village
- **Fellowship**: Outings to sporting events and museums

In the prosperous, high tech metropolis of Stuttgart, where more than 40 service clubs compete for members, Kiwanis thrives.

A key reason for its success is that members enjoy being Stuttgart Kiwanians. In addition to service endeavors, the club’s social calendar keeps members engaged. They visit museums, theaters, and a planetarium together. They bowl together, watch soccer games together, and compete fervently against one another in club foosball tournaments.

Often, they invite the children they serve. It’s another way to keep in touch with local needs.

Every year, club secretary Gerhard H. W. Bach explains, the club evaluates its charitable and service activities, selects programs that are not already overfunded or overserved, and adapts its projects to the community’s needs.

**Lombard, Illinois**

- **Growth**: Membership doubled to 44 in five years
- **Giving**: Scholarships; cancer camp, home for teen mothers
- **Service**: Kiwanis dolls, school bags for children in developing nations, Bring Up Grades, Aktion Club, Key Club Fellowship: Inter-club/shopping “road trips”
- **Other**: Partnership with assisted living facility to make Kiwanis dolls is occasion to enjoy one another’s company.

If he is asked why the Lombard Kiwanis club is so successful and popular, secretary Erik Johnson replies: “We’re fun. We care. We’re outgoing. We’re
involved. We’re happy. We’re 66 percent female. We meet at 7 a.m. and drink a lot of coffee. We’re Kiwanians!”

That may sound easy enough, but the club diligently works at maintaining its sterling reputation. All members are invited to help compose the club’s SMART goals (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely). And once a month, a club meeting focuses on promoting membership growth or Kiwanis education.

Every couple of years, the club conducts a community analysis and adjusts its service and giving programs so they remain relevant in the community and interesting to members.

In addition to asking guests to meetings, Kiwanians invite potential members to volunteer in the club’s home tour fundraiser, child safety program, or some other club project. Then they invite prospects to a membership-information meeting. The annual home tour, for example, usually adds two or three “experienced” newcomers to the Lombard roster.