Just your type

WHETHER YOU’RE CLASSIC OR MODERN, HI-TECH OR A YOUNG PROFESSIONAL, THERE’S A KIWANIS CLUB THAT’S A PERFECT FIT FOR EVERYONE.

One hundred years ago, the Detroit Kiwanis Club No. 1 met weekly for a meal. Members recited a patriotic pledge, prayed an invocation, laughed and learned something new from interesting speakers. Outside their meetings, the Kiwanians took on projects to improve their community and serve children.

This 100-year-old style remains the standard of Kiwanis clubs worldwide. But in 2015, you’ll also find clubs that don’t sing. Clubs that don’t pledge. That don’t pray. Don’t even meet, except at service events.

Over the past couple decades, Kiwanis has tested new types of clubs. The Kiwanis Club of Tombstone, Virginia City, Montana, was founded in 2000, on the Internet with members from around the world. This past February, the Young Professionals Germany Kiwanis Club organized, joining a youth revolution started in the early 2000s.

Officially, there are five types of Kiwanis clubs. Several are hybrids, mixing new styles with the old. This variety meets the needs of a diverse, changing world—from the burgeoning population of retiring Boomers to the busy, career-focused Generation X’ers, many of whom have developed a passion for service and acquired leadership skills through Kiwanis’ Service Leadership Programs.

Where does your club fit? Are there opportunities for different styles of clubs in your community? Read on.
THE CLASSICS

Most Kiwanis clubs fit under the “classic” category. They range in size from small to Birmingham, Alabama’s 528. They are tried-and-true machines of service. Though they are patterned after 100-year-old practices, they remain “modern” by adapting to their communities’ changing needs and societal preferences.

The Kiwanis Club of Saint Marys, Georgia, is the very definition of classic.

“We have excellent meals, well-structured meetings that begin and end on time, involve all members immediately upon joining, maintain a reasonable dues structure and have only two major fundraisers, each of which is very successful and involves all members,” says club Secretary Herb Rowland.

With a roster consistently hovering around the mid-60s, Saint Marys stays strong with quality service activities and pride of membership.

“We are all proud to be Kiwanians,” Rowland says, “and we let folks know it. We are popular because of our reputation and our signature projects (a Rock Shrimp Festival and a July 4th Festival). Our members work with every outreach program in the county, so we are known by our involvement in the community.”

The club also sponsors a fleet of K-Kids, Terrific Kids, Builders Club and Key Club programs.

At least twice a year, the club conducts membership drives, but the best results are achieved through “the old each-one-reach-one method,” according to Rowland.

“We are very open and friendly,” he adds. “We tend to make our major projects into social events, and we are constantly in the news for our good works, both as individuals and as a club.”

For more than 10 years, the 53-year-old Saint Marys Kiwanis Club has met at the First United Methodist Church (opposite page). Meetings almost always follow a set agenda of lunch, introduction of visitors, prayer, pledge, meet and greet, happy bucks (above and below), announcements and a program.

Saint Marys photos by Fran Ruchalski
President Wang Si-Hsi describes her Hui Hsin, Pan Chiao City Kiwanis Club as a sisterhood. Teamwork and passion are the strengths of this classic Taiwan club.

“We combine fellowship, service and branding in one project,” she says. “For example, on a mountain-cleaning project, we went hiking, had fun and a picnic and enjoyed the view. And we never forget to wear our Taiwan Kiwanis vests while we are together.”

The club is very attentive to maintaining membership strength, making certain every new member understands the Kiwanis mission, culture and expectations.

“You need to take very good care of new members,” Wang says. “Sustainable development is the forever goal in the Kiwanis Club of Hui Hsin.

GOLDEN AGE

For many of Kiwanis’ early years, clubs involved retirees in “golden” activities, but it wasn’t until the 1970s that consideration was given to forming clubs of senior citizens.

Today, there are more than 100 such Kiwanis clubs with “Golden K” in their names. These clubs focus on service and fellowship opportunities that are suited to the interests and needs of retired people.

Within the 63-member Cape Breton Golden K Kiwanis Club in Nova Scotia, members serve as drivers for local conferences, PGA and hockey tournaments. They also greet cruise ship passengers with information and maps to scenic locations, historic sites, restaurants and shops. The list goes on and on: music festival, mock jail fundraiser,
skating jamboree, blood pressure clinic, meal deliveries to home-bound residents and day-care children. ...

“Camaraderie, empathy, wanting to participate and the ability to get along with others is paramount,” Secretary Lynn Pollock says. “Your members are your ambassadors.”

**SERVICE COUNTS**
Meet less and do more. That’s the philosophy behind 3-2-1 Kiwanis clubs: Three hours of service, two of social activities and one hour devoted to meeting each month.

The Kiwanis Club of Bald Eagle and Nittany Valleys, Pennsylvania, actually calls itself a 3-2-1+1 club, because it adds a second monthly meeting for its board.

Since organizing in February 2012, the club has grown in membership each year. President Bill Henning attributes that strength to the club’s emphasis on service. And with so much of the 3-2-1+1 ratio devoted to service, Henning says they can’t identify just one signature project.

“We have several,” he points out, listing a 5K/10K run to support the club’s commitment to be a Model Club for The Eliminate Project; an Easter egg hunt, Kids’ Day, food drives for Salvation Army and Winterfest with Santa to name a few.

“Never invite prospective members to meetings,” he advises other 3-2-1 clubs. “Follow up with orientation, get them involved as soon as possible and let them know that even the smallest involvement is appreciated.”

**TWO IN ONE**
In Tennessee, the Kiwanis Club of Murfreesboro applied the 3-2-1 formula when forming its new satellite.

A satellite is not a type of club; rather, it’s an extension...
of an existing club. The satellite group meets at another
time and may operate inde-
pendently or like a committee
of its club.

“Our roster shows a mem-
ership of 50,” reports member
Becky Lanham. “Twenty-eight
members participate in the
traditional way and 32 partici-
pate with the 3-2-1 satellite.”

The classic-style Murfrees-
boro club launched the satel-
lite because too many people
were passing up the oppor-
tunity to be Kiwanians due to
schedule conflicts.

“3-2-1 members plan their
own projects, but also work
with the main club on many
occasions,” Lanham says.

“Once a month, the groups
join forces at the VA hospital
to play bingo with patients.”

ONLINE MEET-UPS
The Egg & I diner is the meet-
ing place of record for the
Greater Chicago-eKiwanis
Club. But you’ll also find the
23 members of this Internet-
based club interacting in chat
rooms, on social media, send-
ing emails or texting.

“Our members can attend
our meetings from any loca-
tion that has an Internet con-
nection,” says club President
Jerry Scheuing, who describes
those meet-ups as “fairly tra-
ditional” with an agenda and
committee reports.

With the entire suburban
Chicago area as its territory,
members may drive more than
30 minutes to participate in
projects. A favorite is packing
a cake, party hats, streamers,
plates, napkins, books and
gifts as a birthday party kit for
children in difficult situations.

“It’s a fast and easy project,
but makes us feel we are con-
tributing to a child having a
good birthday,” Scheuing says.

Internet clubs, he advises,
need lots of projects and social
activities to keep members
active and interested.

“It’s too easy to lose some-
one if they aren’t participat-
ing,” he adds.

Chicago’s eKiwanis Club mem-
bbers show up at a Relay for Life
in luau gear (top). Initially, the
Murfreesboro club (left) invited
young women and men to its
satellite but found the concept
attracted older members too.
YOUNG PROS

Young professional Kiwanis clubs meet the needs of young women and men who are looking for a service outlet that’s compatible with schedules packed with the responsibilities of starting families and launching careers.

To fit into its 25 members’ busy calendars, the Kiwanis Club of Downtown Scottsdale Young Professionals of Arizona operates a little differently from classic-designed clubs, according to President-elect Jennifer Phillips.

“We meet for happy hour,” Phillips says. “Our meetings last less than one hour. We conduct a lot of business via email, and we’re very efficient, often combining our service projects with a social gathering afterwards.”

Another challenge for young professional clubs is that some members have not yet established roots in the community, which makes it difficult to maintain a healthy roster when members move.

“Within the past three years, we’ve had several active club members—even board members—who have moved away for new jobs and family purposes,” Phillips explains. “We compensate for this turnover by actively recruiting and bringing in new members as often as we can—usually every month.”

The Scottsdale Young Professionals’ annual kickball tournament (below) raises money for The Eliminate Project and two local charities. Other club projects include sponsoring a K-Kids club (above), cooking dinners at a Ronald McDonald House and volunteering at a food and clothing bank.