December 2015

Note of thanks and wish lists

As you and your club prepare to embark on a new year, consider writing a thank-you note to your community partners in the form of a letter to the editor. This gives your club the opportunity to be publicly aligned with other community groups, schools or organizations with which your club partners to help children in the community. Be sure to thank all partners, and be sure to name individuals who have helped your club, either as club members or those who also are interested in helping children.

Here’s a great example from the Georgetown Kiwanis Club, published in the Eagle Tribune in North Andover, Mass., in which partners were thanked for helping with a Thanksgiving dinner. All the partners, including the Kiwanis partners, were noted in the letter to the editor.

And, consider a letter to the editor as a wish list for 2016. Brainstorm with your community partners or club members and select a few items needed by kids in your community. Maybe they need books. Perhaps it’s backpacks with school supplies. Maybe they need safety lessons for the water or for riding bicycles. Whatever the idea, let your community know how your club will work with other groups and organizations to achieve your goal, and be sure to include information on how readers can become engaged with your club or help with events. Set goals for fundraising and list some events that you hold to raise money for the projects. Brainstorm some social media posts around those events for the coming year. Some examples are:

- The XXX Kiwanis Club is helping by doing [list your project] #kidsneedkiwanis
- #kidsneedkiwanis ... and Kiwanis needs you! Volunteer for a service project here: [add your club’s website URL]
- #kidsneedkiwanis in their lives. Help us serve the children in our community and beyond: [add your club’s website URL]

Help with a service project today. Make certain you include a contact name and phone number or email address in your letters. That makes it easy for others to find you and join in the fun.
If your newspaper offers a guest columnist opportunity, follow the lead of the LaGrange, Georgia Kiwanis club. Jerry Johnson wrote about the many activities his club sponsors and how much fun the members have. In fact, he encourages readers to get involved, in any club, for the rewards that return with service.

Creating social media graphics

Kiwanis International's official social media accounts often use graphic elements to help convey messages with our posts. We are fortunate to have designers on staff who can create graphic elements for us. We hope clubs will share our graphic elements, such as the ones we created for International Volunteers Day or any of the numerous graphics created for Kiwanis One Day or for The Eliminate Project.

If you club has a member who is a designer, or who is adept with design, this tip sheet from Ragan Communications will help with image sizes for all social media sites – Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram. Just remember, stay within the Kiwanis brand guidelines (available online) so the audience will instantly recognize Kiwanis.

Honoring Kiwanis club members

This year at Kiwanis International, two members of our leadership team were nominated for awards by a local business publication, the Indianapolis Business Journal. Ann Updegraff Spleth was honored as a Woman of Influence and Bob Broderick was honored as one of the chief financial officers (nonprofit arena) of the year. Updegraff Spleth, who leads Kiwanis International Foundation, was noted as a mentor and Broderick was honored for his business acumen bringing new revenue streams for Kiwanis.

Take a closer look at your club members during your next meeting and determine if anyone would qualify for awards that are given by local periodicals or organizations in your community. The submissions are typically completed online with a small time investment that yields larger rewards.

Involving the youth

Every day, the Kiwanis media report includes stories about youth who have been honored by Kiwanis clubs. If your club has a student of the month or a youth of the month honor, make certain someone (the PR chair if your club has one) is sending the information to the local media, posting it on media’s public social media and web sites and sharing it on the club’s social media channels. Clubs in Palm Beach (FL), St. Louis,
McAlester (OK), Medina (OH) and Mooresville (IN) submitted short stories and photos with a focus on the students. Don’t forget the children’s programs – the Elsberry (MO) club focused on youth in the Terrific Kids program.

Advice from the professionals

When you write media releases for your club’s projects, fundraisers or events, follow these suggestions from Ragan Communications, a leader in public relations trainings and educations. Purge jargon from your vocabulary. Kiwanis members know what an SLP is, or what YCPO stands for, but reporters and editors won’t know – unless they are Kiwanis club members. Better to edit those words out of your release before sending it to the media. Other terms also should be edited from the release, according to the Ragan article “5 pieces of jargon to erase from your vocabulary.”

Having some fun with video and Twitter and club news!

The Jamestown, North Dakota Kiwanis Club took advantage of International Volunteer Day and posted a short video about some of the projects the club has worked on and the people who have participated. The short video, made of photos and set to music, is a recruitment effort that’s also a fun way to show the impact a club can have.