Club structure
An introduction to Aktion Club

An Aktion Club is a community-service group composed of adult citizens who live with disabilities. A Kiwanis club, composed of leading business and professional people of the community, serves as the Aktion club’s sponsor. The mission of Aktion Club is to provide adult citizens living with a disability an opportunity to develop initiative and leadership, to serve their community, to be integrated into society, and to demonstrate the dignity and value of citizens living with disabilities.

Aktion Club can address many needs of the community and help the sponsoring agency because many Aktion projects can target the agency’s needs. Kiwanis members address not only the social and emotional needs of the clients through Aktion Club, but they also help the agency purchase materials and equipment.

Aktion Club members strive to return to their communities the benefits, help, and caring they have received, while at the same time developing important skills. Members receive many benefits from participating in Aktion Club. Some of the benefits include:
• Participating in the active life of the community.
• Contributing to the community.
• Developing mechanical, creative, and intellectual abilities.
• Developing social interaction awareness.
• Improving self-esteem.
• Developing leadership skills.
• Achieving personal and service goals.

History
The Florida District of Kiwanis International created the Aktion Club program in 1987 to address the needs of citizens living with disabilities. An Aktion Club program has four primary goals for its members:
• To develop initiative and leadership.
• To provide experience in living and working together.
• To serve the community.
• To prepare for useful citizenship.

An Introduction to Kiwanis International

Kiwanis International Structure
Member - Club - Division – District - Kiwanis International

The local Kiwanis club is the backbone and building block of the International organization. The club members provide the time and resources to assist individuals
and communities. The members of each Kiwanis club elect a president and a board of directors to guide the club in its activities.

Kiwanis International is divided into 47 districts. These districts are organized geographically, by state, region, or nation. The official elected to oversee the activities of the district is the governor.

The district governor also leads the district board comprised of a secretary and several lieutenant governors. The lieutenant governor is the chief elected official of a division, which is a group of clubs within a district. Divisions also are organized along geographic or demographic boundaries.

There typically are 10 to 15 clubs in a division. A 19-member Board of Trustees, comprised of volunteers elected by Kiwanis club delegates to represent the organization, manages Kiwanis International. These International officers reside in all regions (districts) of the Kiwanis world. The Board of Trustees meets four times annually to set policy and make decisions that guide the organization. Kiwanis International conducts an annual convention during the month of June at which time Kiwanis club delegates participate in election of the organization’s leadership and vote on policies and procedures, and other documents that govern the organization.

There are two conferences conducted by each Kiwanis district. There is a district convention in August or September to elect district leadership and to vote on changes to governing documents, and one in February or March designed primarily as an educational opportunity. The Kiwanis Club Kiwanis International is a worldwide service organization comprised of individuals interested in improving their community and the world. As a group, Kiwanis members can achieve what one individual cannot accomplish alone. These men and women attend Kiwanis club meetings for fellowship and inspiration. Like Aktion Club, the Kiwanis club elects its own officers, determines the schedule for its regular club meetings, establishes its own committees, and adopts its own bylaws.

Kiwanis performs service beyond the capability of an individual. Clubs conduct service projects, which reach many different individuals. Kiwanis clubs assist the aging; provide food and clothing to the needy; mentor to youth; improve services offered by the community; and encourage International understanding. Service through Kiwanis clubs reaches every age group and every community need based on the organization’s theme: Serving the Children of the World.

**Kiwanis members live by the Kiwanis International Objects:**
- To give primacy to the human and spiritual rather than to the material values of life.
- To encourage the daily living of the Golden Rule in all human relationships.
- To promote the adoption and the application of higher social, business, and professional standards.
- To develop, by precept and example, a more intelligent, aggressive, and serviceable citizenship.
• To provide, through Kiwanis clubs, a practical means to form enduring friendships, to render altruistic service, and to build better communities.
• To cooperate in creating and maintaining that sound public opinion and high idealism, which make possible the increase of righteousness, justice, patriotism, and good will.

Individuals of good standing in the community, invited by Kiwanis club members themselves, are eligible for membership. The cost is low, considering the tremendous satisfaction Kiwanis membership provides.

Kiwanis was founded in Detroit, Michigan, January 21, 1915. It extended into Canada in 1916. Today Kiwanis numbers almost 300,000 members in about 8,600 clubs worldwide.

Kiwanis Support of Aktion Club
Three groups of individuals support the Aktion Club program on the International and district levels. Administration of the Aktion Club program is the responsibility of the Aktion Club staff at the Kiwanis International Office. International staff is responsible for maintaining information on individual clubs and statistical information on the entire program, producing and distributing the Aktion Club newsletter and mailings, and providing support materials upon request. To request information contact the Aktion Club staff at Kiwanis International by phone, (317) 875-8755 or 1-800-KIWANIS, ext. #380, or e-mail, aktionclub@kiwanis.org.

The Aktion Club staff also provides program development functions for Aktion Club, such as creating new support items, preparing the annual budget for Aktion Club, and coordinating award programs.

Though International Office staff develops these programs and materials, the Kiwanis International Board must approve all new initiatives prior to implementation.

Each year, the Kiwanis International President-Elect appoints individuals to serve on the International Committee on Aktion Club. The purpose of this committee is to promote and encourage the growth of the program on the International level. This promotion takes the form of correspondence with Aktion Club district administrators, publication of articles in various Kiwanis and Aktion Club newsletters, and communication with the Kiwanis International Board. This committee often reviews current programs related to Aktion Club and offers suggestions for change. The names and addresses of individuals on the International committee are distributed to clubs annually and are posted on the Aktion Club Web site at www.aktionclub.org.

Each Kiwanis district governor, prior to his/her term in office, appoints an individual to serve as the Aktion Club district administrator. This volunteer has the responsibility for the maintenance and growth of the Aktion Club program in the district. Specific duties include, but are not limited to:
• Building new Aktion Clubs in the district, in cooperation with Kiwanis club sponsors.
• Devising and initiating, in consultation with the district governor, such promotion as is valuable and practical for clubs within the district.
• Communicating with the International Office about the status of the Aktion Club program in the district.
• Assisting the International Office, when necessary, in determining the actual status of individual Aktion Clubs within the district.

Individual Aktion Club advisors are encouraged to contact the district administrator for assistance and guidance. An Aktion Club district administrator listing is available for viewing on the Aktion Club Web site at www.aktionclub.org.

**Kiwanis Club Support of Aktion Club**

Before launching an Aktion Club program, the Kiwanis club must understand that it is an ongoing responsibility that requires continuing support. An Aktion Club cannot be formed and then simply turned over to the agency. It is a long-term commitment. For the Kiwanis club, that means providing support and service hours on a consistent basis. Involving other Kiwanis clubs, however, can reduce these responsibilities.

Just as important is the involvement of an agency or workshop that serves people who live with a disability. The agency’s commitment to the program must be strong.

To sponsor an Aktion Club, the Kiwanis club must provide:
• Initial start-up costs as needed.
• Four to six dedicated Kiwanians to help plan and supervise Aktion Club events.
• Reliable transportation (agencies may provide this).
• A meeting place.

An agency’s primary responsibility is to provide a staff coordinator to attend Aktion Club functions and advise Kiwanis members. This individual will serve as the Aktion Club advisor. An Aktion Club is a Kiwanis sponsored program. However, unlike Key Club and Circle K, Aktion Club is not organized beyond the club level. Aktion Club does not have governors and lieutenant governors, districts or divisions, but it does have an administrative structure at the International level of Kiwanis.

**Responsibilities of the Sponsoring Kiwanis Club**

The responsibilities of the sponsoring Kiwanis club are many. The dedication and effort of the sponsoring Kiwanis club will determine whether the Aktion Club succeeds or fails. The Aktion Club is the responsibility of the entire Kiwanis club, but ultimate responsibility of program coordination rests with one person, the chairman of the Committee on Aktion Club.

An effective chairman understands not only the Kiwanis club’s responsibilities, but also the total operation of the Aktion Club. The role of the chairman in successful Aktion Club operation is one of advisor. The chairman offers suggestions, advice,
and counsel from past experience but does not force ideas upon the group. It also is the chairman’s responsibility, in conjunction with the club advisor, to make sure the Aktion Club operates smoothly.

The chairman is also responsible for ensuring that the members of his or her committee are interacting with and assist the Aktion Club. Attendance at regular Aktion Club meetings should be arranged, and a working plan or calendar should be created for use by each member should be established.

Following are tasks the Committee on Aktion Club should pursue. As an Aktion Club advisor, you may want to follow the committee’s progress and assist where needed.

1. Establish a plan. Soon after the election of Aktion Club officers, the Kiwanis Aktion Club chairman should encourage them to meet and set-up a tentative plan for the entire year. Exact dates are not necessary, but basic time periods should be outlined for special service projects, programs, and fund raising. This ensures that activities are not scheduled too closely together and offers the club a plan to follow in carrying out its responsibilities.

2. Schedule new officer training. A training session should be conducted each spring to acquaint the newly elected Aktion Club officers with their duties. This also is an excellent time to develop a plan for the coming year. It is the responsibility of the sponsoring Kiwanis club to ensure this training takes place.

3. Make sure the Aktion Club:
   - Meets regularly.
   - Follows the Standard Form for Club Bylaws.
   - Develops club moneymaking activities to fund service projects that require start-up costs.
   - Elects club officers and offer them opportunities to preside at meetings.
   - Has some social, “fun time” functions.
   - Understands and uses correct parliamentary procedure.
   - Complete and submit reports as outlined in Aktion Club - Reports for the Administrative Year.

4. Make sure the Kiwanis Aktion Club Committee:
   - Periodically invites Aktion Club members to attend Kiwanis club meetings.
   - Keeps and uses a file of Aktion Club literature.
   - Forwards special needs and requests to the International Office.
   - Publicizes Aktion Club activities throughout the community and Kiwanis district.
   - Encourages Kiwanis club members to attend Aktion Club meetings.
   - Assists Aktion Club members with projects and requests their assistance on Kiwanis club projects.
   - Ensures the Aktion Club has well-run meetings.
   - Attends all Aktion Club board meetings and general membership meetings.
   - Reads the Aktion Club quarterly mailings and each issue of the Aktion Club newsletter.
- Ensures that the Membership Information Form and membership fees are submitted to the International Office.
- Budget extra funds to assist the Aktion Club in its activities.
- Ensure reports are submitted in a timely manner.