

MASON KIWANIS TURNS 70!

Sally Sherman Caudill, Editor

It was 70 years ago this month that Mason Kiwanis was born. And as with most any origin story, there's always the person behind the scenes who makes good things happen. In this case, that person would be Mason attorney John Zopff.

In 1956, John was a relatively recent law school graduate and had moved to Mason to build his law practice. He often found himself in the county seat of Lebanon for court hearings and other legal matters. Through some of the other attorneys and business people he worked with, John was introduced to the Lebanon Kiwanis and invited to a meeting.

While there, John was very impressed with the organization and their mission to help their community. This meeting planted a seed in John's head towards the idea that Mason should also have a club like this, so, he set about making it happen.

In order to start a new chapter, there needed to be a sponsoring club to help oversee the startup. John approached the Lebanon club and they happily agreed to sponsor. Lebanon was going to help the fledgling club financially in the beginning, but the club would need additional startup capital, so John setup meetings with some Mason business leaders to gauge their interest. They needed to have a minimum of 25 members to organize. John was able to bring 33 members on board.

The new members set up a dues structure at \$25 a year and then had to decide on where and when to have the weekly meetings. The "when" had to be a meal meeting, either breakfast, lunch, or dinner. The men decided on lunch because attendance would be easier for the members having to juggle their business and other family commitments. Meals would be in the \$2 to \$2.50 range. The "where" was a little trickier... Mason had very few places at that time, capable of serving a weekly meal



John Zopff, fresh out of law school, 1951.



Russ Carter (2nd from right) with other unidentified grill masters at the Kiwanis Chicken BBQ during Mason's 1965 Sesquicentennial Celebration. This event was held at Everybody's Farm and Kiwanis served over 1,200 patrons. (If you can ID any of the others, please let us know.)

to over 30 people. After some thinking, the club's organizational committee decided to approach the local churches. After explaining what the Kiwanis purpose was and what it would mean to the community, three of the downtown churches agreed to host on a quarterly basis. The last quarter was hosted by the Mason Grange, a group of mostly farmers who had been doing good works in Mason for over half a century.

The organization was now off and running, and on April 12, 1956, the first official meeting of the Kiwanis Club of Mason was officially chartered with Kiwanis International. This new club dedicated their mission to making the community a better place to live by working together on projects determined by local needs. At their 50th anniversary in 2006, Kiwanis was honored by the City of Mason for helping children by donating money for scholarships, sponsoring local activities, supporting the local library, and providing Christmas gifts to children of needy families.

Their two major fundraisers currently are the Annual Golf Classic, and the ever-popular Pancake Day every November at Mason Middle School.

Today, Kiwanis of Mason meets every Thursday at noon at The Manor House on Mason-Montgomery. They enjoy a great meal, fabulous fellowship, a short business meeting, and a program of general



Don Williams

Tom Shackelford, Tom Moeller, Gene Foster, and Don Williams steer the Kiwanis entry for the 1980 Heritage Days Outhouse Race around the 5/3 Bank corner. Just after this photo was taken, they took the turn too sharp and Don ended up falling into the wooden sawhorses and couldn't continue. The other three drivers continued the race and won 3rd place.

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Kiwanis Turns 70, cont.



Big Al's Diner was the Pancake Day theme, ca. 2010. L-R: Jerry Agin, Marvin Worst, Janet Dane Nelson, Rhonda Inderhees, Nick "Elvis" Bogan, Dave Moushey (seated), Rich Cox, Tracey Carson, Sallie Wolfe Nally, Jack Mueller, Phil Perry.



Mason Kiwanis Golf Outing, 2022. L-R: Ray Fitzgerald, Tawnya Dunn, Susan Romer, Michelle Haverkos, Barry Polley, Debbie Slater, Bill Delong.

interest, all within an hour. Their 100+ members are men and women of all ages, from all walks of life with a common passion for community service through their scholarships, support for Mason student/athletes, and more. So, if you want to hang out with a fun group of people, who also happen to be passionate about the community, they would love to welcome you.

Many thanks to Don Williams for the story idea and providing me with a wonderful history of the organization. Don, along with Dick Yost, and Tom Paffe are the only Kiwanis Intl. Lifetime members from Mason. Tom Paffe is also the only inducted Mason member of the Ohio Kiwanis Intl. Hall of Fame. Thanks as well go to Sherri Reed Federle, Helen and Jim Fox, and Dee Schuessler for their help.

A LONG OVERDUE STEP

Kiwanis membership was originally only opened to men. Some women joined "Kiwianne" clubs, which were not part of the main organization, but allowed them to serve. That all changed in 1987 when a decision to allow women was made by a two-thirds vote of delegates at the annual Kiwanis Intl. convention.

Dolores "Dee" Schuessler (at right) became Mason's first female president in 1995. Janet Nelson is their current president.



KIWANIS CHARTER MEMBERS 1956

William Aufranc (Pres.)	Jim Knott
Joe Barr	Eugene Kunze
Frank Batsche, Sr. MD	Floyd Lantzer
C.W. Bercaw	Bill Lawless
Russell Carter	Robert Lehman
Robert Chamberlain	Clem Muennich (VP)
Walter Chesney	Ernest Reigel
John Conner	Harry Shorten
James Coulson (Treas.)	Rev. Warren Silven
J.F. DeBorg	Clair Smith
Elmer Durrell	Roy Smith
John Fox	Al Voorhis
Thomas Fox MD	Hugh Walker
Francis Girton	Robert White
Rev. Hiram Holdridge	Harley Winfield
Ray Keith	Val Yost
	John Zopff (Secy.)

Alverta Green Museum and
MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 NEWSLETTER



This article first appeared in the April, 2026 edition of the Mason Historical Society newsletter. Chock full of stories about the fascinating history of our city, the newsletter is sent out every month to all of our members,

If you would like to join the Mason Historical Society, please contact us at masonhistoricalsociety.org, call us at 513-398-6750, or email at AlvertaGreen@masonhistoricalsociety.org

Established in 1979, the Society's aim is to promote and preserve the history and heritage of Mason.