

Single Purpose Clubs

LGBTQ+

What is an LGBTQ+ Club?

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

An LGBTQ+ focused club is a Kiwanis club that focuses on raising awareness and providing support to youth who identify as LGBTQ+ who are facing homelessness, bullying, thoughts of suicide or mental health issues, isolation from their families, and physical, sexual and drug abuse. The club is for individuals that identify along the LGBTQ+ spectrum and for allies, family, friends, and supporters of LGBTQ+ youth. The club aims to create an inclusive, diverse, safe, and supportive community for LGBTQ+ youth, while promoting the Objects of Kiwanis.

How to Begin

You should examine the needs of LGBTQ+ youth in your area as well as your club's own interests. Because there are many projects that can be done virtually or from long distance, there is no need to focus specifically on local needs, although there may be unmet needs in the local community that should be addressed. For tips and instructions on how to create a Kiwanis club generally, see *Opening a New Kiwanis Club Complete Guide*, www.kiwanis.org/clubopener.

The first step is to decide what projects will most likely appeal to your prospective members. For example, if there are organizations that your prospective members would be interested in supporting, you should contact those organizations to find out how you can volunteer or support their efforts. If this organization is not in your area, it may even lead to a partnership that would allow your members to get involved with the cause in your local area.

Potential Projects of an LGBTQ+ Kiwanis Club

There are many organizations whose mission is to support LGBTQ+ youth who could be potential partners for Kiwanis service projects or provide an example of the types of service projects that serve LGBTQ+ youth. Generally, there are a few different ways a Kiwanis club could help:

Promote Awareness - Acknowledge, celebrate, and promote LGBTQ+ days of significance and raise awareness of issues faced by LGBTQ+ youth. In addition, a club that is a member of Kiwanis International with a 100 year plus history of helping children and youth, may spread awareness of the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth further than any local organization by itself.

Partnering with LGBTQ+ organizations – Offer volunteer support, fundraising assistance, or promote awareness of organizations in the community that support LGBTQ+ youth.

Start your own program – You may find that in your community there are no support services currently being offered to LGBTQ+ youth, or services are offered through other overlapping organizations (for example, homeless youth organizations) who do not specifically serve LGBTQ+ youth. Because of the reach of Kiwanis International throughout metropolitan and rural communities, a Kiwanis club can fill the needs of youth that are currently being underserved.

Examples of Projects/Missions by Other LGBTQ+ Organizations Supporting Youth¹

There are many organizations, both local and international, that support LGBTQ+ Youth. Some of the better-known organizations include:

It Gets Better Project – Its mission is to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the globe by providing access to uplifting and inspiring stories of hope, resilience, and determination, as well as through building community, both internationally and locally, by cultivating a network of international affiliates and engaging with young LGBTQ+ people both on and offline, and connecting them to local community service providers that can provide on-the-ground assistance.

The Trevor Project - The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ young people under 25. “Digital” volunteers receive 40 hours of training and can volunteer from anywhere and provide a safe and secure connection for LGBTQ+ youth to reach out.

GLSEN - GLSEN believes that every student has the right to a safe, supportive, and LGBTQ-inclusive K-12 education. GLSEN is a national network of educators, students, and local GLSEN Chapters. Each chapter supports students and educators locally, organizes around LGBTQ-affirming public policy, plans teacher trainings, and hosts events for students, educators, parents, and allies. GLSEN also oversees a network of student-lead clubs called GSAs (Gender and Sexuality Alliances) that work to create safe and LGBTQ-inclusive schools.

Getting started

The first step is to contact or network with other people who are interested in improving the lives of LGBTQ+ youth and determine the project that is most appropriate and appealing to potential members. The possibilities are limitless. Visit [Kiwanis.org](https://www.kiwanis.org) or call 1-800-KIWANIS to obtain resources and help in identifying options for your new club.

¹ **Examples of LGBTQ Club in Other Service Organizations**

LGBT Rotarians and Friends Fellowship: <https://rotarylgbt.org/>

Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/Rotary.LGBT/>

New Rotary Fellowship brings together LGBT community:

<https://rotaryserviceblog.org/2018/08/01/new-rotary-fellowship-brings-together-lgbt-community/>