

notes



Larry Dobson, Governor

Mid-Year Conference Follow-Up and Membership Message

Our Mid-Year Conference is behind us. I hope everyone found it valuable and inspiring. Events like this let us share ideas and renew our commitment to serving children and our communities.

Today, I'd like to talk about something essential to the success of every Kiwanis club—**member retention and growth.**

Our organization has a powerful mission: improving the lives of children and strengthening our communities. But to continue that mission, we need a strong, active membership. Recruitment is important, but retention is equally critical. When members feel engaged, valued, and connected to the club's purpose, they stay—and they bring others with them.

Let me start with a quick question:

How many of our clubs have lost members in the past few years?

Many clubs have experienced this challenge. The good news is that there are proven strategies that help clubs retain members and grow stronger.

Why Members Stay Involved

One of the most important factors is **meaningful service.** Most people join Kiwanis because they want to make a difference. When members participate in projects where they can see the impact—whether it's providing school supplies, mentoring youth, or supporting families in need—they feel that their time and effort truly matter.

Another key factor is **connection.** Kiwanis clubs are not just service organizations; they are communities. Members who develop friendships within the club are far more likely to stay engaged. Social gatherings, collaborative projects, and simple gestures of appreciation help strengthen those relationships.

Engagement also plays a major role in retention. New members, especially, should not feel like observers. Instead, they should be welcomed, mentored, and involved in committees or service projects from the start. When people feel their voices matter and their contributions are valued, they become invested in the club's success.

Understanding Why Members Leave

We also need to understand why members leave.

Often, it's not because they've lost interest in service. Instead, members may feel disconnected, too busy, or unsure how they fit into the club. Long or repetitive meetings can also reduce enthusiasm. Be flexible, keep meetings productive, and offer participation options that fit members' schedules.

Attracting Younger Members

Attracting **younger members is another vital focus.**

Younger professionals and community members are interested in service, but they often have busy schedules and different expectations. Clubs that successfully attract younger members usually emphasize hands-on projects, flexible participation, and opportunities for leadership early on.

Use **digital communication and social media** to highlight club impact.

A strong pipeline for younger members comes from programs within the Kiwanis family, such as **Key Club for high school students** and **Circle K for college students.** These young leaders already share Kiwanis values and can become future club members.

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Making Service Visible

Another strategy that successful clubs use is **making their service visible in the community**.

Projects like supply drives, food packing events, playground improvements, and cleanups help those in need and showcase Kiwanis to the community. Visible impact draws new members.

Personal invitations are powerful. Many members joined because someone they respected invited them to a meeting or project. If each member invites **one guest per year**, membership growth becomes more achievable.

Practical Strategies for Clubs

When discussing membership at district or divisional meetings, it's important to focus on solutions clubs can implement immediately. Some strategies that work include:

- Hosting service projects instead of only meetings
- Partnering with youth programs like Key Club and Circle K
- Creating mentorship programs for new members
- Encouraging every member to invite at least one guest each year

Many clubs have increased membership by focusing on visible service projects and ensuring new members feel welcome and involved.

Keeping the Audience Engaged

When presenting these ideas, it can also be helpful to involve the audience.

For example, you might ask:

- "What service project has brought your club the most visibility?"
- "What is one thing your club has done to retain members?"

Short discussions like this help leaders share ideas and learn from each other.

The Three Keys to Strong Clubs

Successful clubs focus on three things: **purpose**—making a difference through service; **connection**—building friendships and belonging; and **opportunity**—allowing members to lead and contribute.

When these three elements are strong, retention improves naturally, and membership growth follows.

Closing Challenge

Membership means more than numbers—it's the key to increasing our impact for children and communities.

Here are three clear actions to take this year: Invite at least one guest to a meeting or project. Replace a regular meeting with a service project to increase hands-on engagement. Assign every new member a mentor and quickly include them in club activities.

If every club takes these small steps, we can strengthen membership and expand Kiwanis's impact.

Thank you for your continued dedication and service to Kiwanis.

Larry Dobson, Governor



**Lt. Governor-Elect
Training**
April 17-18, 2026
Rough River

CLUB GRANTS
Due Dates:
Letter of Inquiry: April 1
Application: June 1
www.kiwanis.org

Check the District web site for updates:

<https://k10.site.kiwanis.org/events/>

DISTRIC CONVENTION
August 13-16, 2026
Alcoa, Tennessee

Microgrant Program
Clubs with fewer than 35 members
Application dates:
October 1 through July 1
Grants processed on the 1st of
each month



Mid Year Conference

WOW! What a weekend. There were so many awesome roundtables to attend, it was hard to choose; but the schedule really was planned well and the ability to attend the majority of the workshops was amazing. Great Food, Awesome Fellowship, and Amazing Networking!! Awards were presented; Foundation Scholarships were approved; Amtryke applications were approved; and so much more.

Congratulations to the following award recipients:

Superior Club Reporting Awards

CRITERIA: All monthly reports submitted on time; election report submitted by June 1; Dues paid on time

DIVISION 1: Fayetteville, Franklin County, Murfreesboro, Rutherford County, Tullahoma

DIVISION 2: Kindness Putnam County

DIVISION 3: Fort Oglethorpe, Hixon

DIVISION 4: Athens, Madisonville, Oak Ridge Tellico Village-Loudon

DIVISION 5: Maryville Northside, Knoxville, Sevierville

DIVISION 6: Rockcastle County

DIVISION 7: Elizabethton, Erwin, Jonesborough

DIVISION 9: Berea, Irvine Ravenna, Mount Sterling

DIVISION 10: Boone County, Paris

DIVISION 12: Louisville, Oldham County

DIVISION 14: Bowling Green, Clarksville, Hilldale

DIVISION 16: Ashland Breakfast, Paintsville

DIVISION 19: Lexington Blue Grass

International Distinguished Award

CRITERIA: See details on Kiwanis.org

Louisville, Sweetwater, Dover, and Tellico Village

FRESH FROM DISTRICT

FUNDRAISING | SERVICE | NEW OFFICERS | NEW CLUBS

SPRINGFIELD, TN— In January, David Woodard presented a program entitled “The Joy of Collecting”. David and his wife Debbie recently moved back to Springfield after living abroad working with missionaries across 70 countries with the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism. The Woodards are lifelong collectors of extraordinary antiques and their home was a featured site on the 2025 Robertson County History Museum’s Christmas Tour of Homes. Many items that dated to the 16th century were displayed.



Left to Right:
David Woodard,
Debbie Woodard
Jennifer Warner
Mike Fowler

Foreground: A wooden bee trap to capture bees

Background: Rushlights from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries



They also have a Kids Christmas Assistance Program that serves 855 Robertson County Children. They work with the Family Resource Center for qualifying families for this program to ensure efficient service delivery. Local businesses and community members collected toys, purchased and delivered toys, and/or provided monetary support to make Christmas happen for families this year. They had a total of 114 volunteers spending 30 hours volunteering. A special thanks goes out to friends and huge supporters from Fletchline. The Springfield High School Spanish National Honors Society, Beta Club and Key Club provided Spanish and English speaking volunteers also.



In February the Springfield Club had a presentation by fellow Kiwanian Ace Timmermeier, Director, Regional Community Impact with United Way of Greater Nashville. He provided an overview of how United Way serves Robertson County, including the 211 Helpline, VITA Free Tax Prep, Raise Your Hand tutoring, Stuff the Bus, and Season of Sharing Days of Action, volunteer opportunities both traditional and disaster related through Hands On Nashville.



RICHMOND, KY— Kiwanis Club of Richmond, Kentucky, awarded BUG certificates to 3rd grade students who Brought Up Grades at the Daniel Boon Elementary School. Wayne Short, immediate past president of the Richmond Kiwanis and officer at the Cumberland Valley Bank organized the event. Dr. Dominick Hart, Eileen Hart, Pauline Kelley and Karen Kelley helped present certificates. The four classes that were recognized posed for a group picture after the program.



LOUDON COUNTY, KY—Spreading a little LOVE to our Highland Park teachers and staff for Valentine's Day! Just a little way to say "we see all you do for the kids in our community and appreciate you so much".



Tellico Plains Club: Division 4 Lt. Governor and Past Governor David Coulter made an official visit to the Tellico Plains Club Meeting. Sweetwater also had a double Interclub at the meeting as well.

Rutherford Co.—The Kiwanis Club of Rutherford County held their second annual Cookie Train family event on Dec. 2, 2025 at the Remington Room in Smyrna, Tenn.

The Cookie Train is a free to attend event with Santa on-site for photos. Vendors have fun give-a-ways for the kids. New in 2025, children could also write and send a letter to Santa from a mailbox along the Cookie Train. Those in attendance who chose to donate \$20 hopped on the Cookie Train with a ticket and picked up a dozen treats provided by local vendors, then voted for their favorite stop at the end of the event.

Rutherford County Kiwanis started the Cookie Train fundraiser in 2024 as its first fundraising project, said Frank Clayton, president of The Kiwanis Club of Rutherford County. “As a club started in 2023, we needed a fundraiser idea that would both serve the community and provide a means for us to raise funds for service projects,” he said.

The idea for the Cookie Train came from club secretary David Johns who thought it would be fun to have an event around Santa and cookies that families could attend during the Christmas season.

“We invite the community to come and get the free pictures with Santa,” Clayton said. “Along the way they can also choose to ‘get on the Cookie Train’. At each stop they get their card punched, receive a unique cookie and other items provided by the table sponsor. They also receive a pint of milk from the MTSU dairy. We also have a creative balloon and sign sculpture that is great for pictures and really sets the mood for the event. “None of this would be possible without the support of our sponsors, members, and local community. Santa and several sponsors have already said they want to participate next year! It has become our flagship event not just for fundraising but a way to reach out and invite the community to see what Kiwanis can do.”



OAKRIDGE KIWANIS CLUB— At the February 10 meeting guests included Past Ky-Tn Governor Claire Crouch; present Lt. Governor and former Governor David Coulter; Past Lt. Governor Roger Robinson; and a Kiwanis interclub group from the Sweetwater Kiwanis Club.

The program was given by Jim Palmer from Career Pathways. This program is sponsored by leaders in the Oak Ridge community for the Oak Ridge High School students facing significant academic and personal challenges. Career Pathways provides mentoring and part-time jobs to help boost the achievement of these students. The Oakridge Kiwanis Club has been strong supporters of this program over the years.

Following the program, the Legion of Honor Certificate for 40 years of membership was presented to Harold Hartman.



Meeting speaker Jim Palmer (left) receives Certificate of Appreciation from Kiwanis President William Gwin (right) with help from newer Kiwanis member Lena Atkinson (center)

Oak Ridge Kiwanis Secretary Harold Hartman (2nd from right) received Kiwanis International Legion of Honor Certificate for 40 years of Kiwanis Membership from Kiwanis President William Gwin (right) with help from past KT Governors Clair Crouch (center left) and David Coulter (left).





HARDIN COUNTY— We're so proud of our West Hardin Middle School Builders Club kids! Look how many recently volunteered at Feeding America, Kentucky's Heartland. Way to go, kids!



TELLICO VILLAGE—The Tellico Village Kiwanians made a delightful impact during the Read Across America Celebration at Lenoir City Elementary School on March 6, 2026. The readers, with their animated storytelling and engaging presence, captivated their young audience. The theme for the event emphasized kindness and the joy of reading.



LOGAN COUNTY— We were officially chartered into Kiwanis International. Thank you to the work of Carol Wisdom (club coordinator), Lt. Governor of Division 14 Christopher Lanier (our club coach) and our sponsoring club Kiwanis Club of Clarksville, TN. We were joined with clubs from the Kentucky-Tennessee District of Kiwanis to include Bowling Green, KY Kiwanis Club, Kiwanis Club of Hilldale, Clarksville and the Kiwanis Club of Clarksville, TN (Downtown). We thank everyone that came and helped us



celebrate.



SEVIERVILLE, TN—Kiwanis members attended United Way of Sevier County Dancing with the Stars event!

Club President, Dr. Melinda Hallam and her husband, Phil Hallam, won the People's Choice Award for most \$ raised!



HENRY COUNTY, KY— At the March Club meeting of the Henry County Kiwanis Club, members brought snack items to be donated to the Henry County Youth Service Center! These donations will help the backpack program continue to take care of students over the weekend and on breaks.



DIVISION 9— Governor Larry Dobson and newly elected Division 9 Lt. Governor at the Division Council Meeting.

Kiwanis Club of Kingsport
“Serving the Children of the World”



P.O. Box 3506
Kingsport, Tennessee 37664 king-
sportkiwanis@gmail.com
www.kingsportkiwanis.org

February 3, 2026

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Kiwanis Club of Kingsport Foundation recently announced the recipients of new grants totaling \$16,000. Receiving the funds are five non-profit organizations which focus on assisting the children or disadvantaged in the Greater Kingsport area. The Club plans to continue to partner with local charities and offer annual grants. The organizations receiving funding for their projects this year are:

Crossroads Medical Mission to fund an additional day of a mobile medical clinic at First Broad Street United Methodist Church.

Mountain Region Speech and Hearing Center for computer upgrades.

Hope Haven Ministries to fund new washers and dryers for their women’s shelter.

Girl Scout Council of the Southern Appalachians to assist with a local community safety event

Small Miracles Equestrian Center to fund scholarships for children

SIGNATURE PROJECTS

Signature projects can be fundraisers or a service project. They are recurring project that enhances the Kiwanis image, demonstrates a significant impact on the community in monies raised or children served, and strengthens the membership and partnership opportunities.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING COUNTIES FOR THEIR SUBMISSION INTO THE SIGNATURE PROJECT CONTEST.

DIVISION 3: COPPERHILL—The Annual Copperhill Christmas Parade serves families across the rural, tri state Copper Basin, where many households face economic challenges and have limited access to youth activities and large community events. The population includes children, teens, parents, seniors, and multigenerational families from Tennessee, Georgia, and North Carolina who rely on shared traditions to stay connected. The parade meets a significant social and emotional need by providing a safe, inclusive, no cost event that strengthens community identity and celebrates children. Drawing more than 1,500 attendees and reaching over 5,000 residents, it offers one of the few large-scale family friendly gatherings in the region. It also creates meaningful leadership and participation opportunities for local youth organizations helping young people engage with and contribute to their community. By sustaining a 66-year tradition, the Kiwanis Club of Copperhill ensures families have access to shared experiences that build pride, connection, and hope during the holiday season.

DIVISION 4: TELLICO VILLAGE-LOUDON—This project started in 2019 by member (and former club president) Kevin Meyer. The original aim was to place a “buddy bench” at each local elementary school, providing a means of recycling plastic bottle caps as well as fostering kindness and communication between elementary children. Each bench requires 200 pounds of caps. To date, 111 benches have been placed throughout East Tennessee. We have also placed six picnic tables, each requiring 55 pounds of caps. The total amount of caps recycled through this program is over 2,300,000 (more than 25,200 pounds). The Kiwanis Clubs of Alcoa, Loudon County, Madisonville Maryville, Oak Ridge, ad Sweetwater have assisted this program by collecting caps and sponsoring benches (the costs for each bench is approximately \$391, including expenses). Our goal for 2026 is fifty-four benches.

DIVISION 10: BOONE COUNTY—Our yearly fund raiser is used to raise funds primarily for GO Pantry. There are 1,200 children in Northern Kentucky who receive Go Boxes and Go Bags of food for children who need help with food insecurity. We also support tuition for four middle or high school students who receive one week’s paid tuition for summer camp from one of thirty locations Camp Corral uses.

DIVISION 11: COLUMBIA—The club implemented a comprehensive promotional strategy to maximize community awareness and participation. A dedicated Facebook and event page were created, and Eventbrite was utilized for ticket sales and additional online promotion. The club partnered with a county middle school art class, engaging students to paint chili pepper signs and display them throughout the community. Media outreach was strengthened through club members, including the editor of the local newspaper, who published articles promoting the event, and the members who host weekly local radio programs and promoted the event to their listeners. In addition, the club used Constant Contact email campaigns to reach previous year’s attendees, offering them priority registration for chili cook off teams. Proceeds from this year’s event benefited the Shop with a Cop program, directly supporting children in need and aligning with Kiwanis’ mission to serve the children of the world by fostering positive experiences, community support, and bright futures for local youth.

DIVISION 14: BOWLING GREEN—There are ten counties that make up what is defined as the South-Central Kentucky Region: Warren, Barren, Allen, Metcalfe, Butler, Hart, Edmonson, Logan, Simpson, and Monroe. According to data collected by the Bowling Green Area Chamber of Commerce, those ten counties have an approximate population of 316,541 people. Thunderfest is hosted in Warren County, which is home to 142,229 people. That means almost half of the total population of the region lives in Warren County and is being served by Thunderfest either through the funds raised and distributed or by the event itself.

DIVISION 14: CLARKSVILLE—For more than 45 years, the Kiwanis Club of Clarksville has focused on children’s literacy, starting with a partnership with the RIF (Reading is Fundamental) program in the 1980’s. Through the RIF program, club members would distribute books to all third graders in the Clarksville-Montgomery School System. Students could pick from a number of different books, covering various topics and reading levels. Over the years, our club has distributed more than 100,000 books through the RIF program. We focus on the third-grade level as studies have shown this is a crucial point in the development of reading skills, comprehension, and a general love of reading in children. In 2017, our club shifted its focus to a new program we call the “Reading Rodeo,” named after our club’s signature fundraising event, the Bill Hoy Kiwanis Rodeo. Funds from the rodeo directly support our literacy efforts. The Reading Rodeo is unique. We not only ensure that all third-grade students receive a free book each year (more than 3,200 students), but we have also taken it a step further by engraining a single approved book into the students’ school curriculum and treating the students to a large speaker engagement event.

The 2025 Reading Rodeo event held at Clarksville’s F&M Bank Arena featured local author of “Mr. Lemoncell’s Library” Chris Grabenstein. He delighted the students with stories of the book and his path to becoming a successful author. After the event, a copy of this book was waiting at each school for every student, more than 3,200 children. Moreover, our club works with the local students to read the same book together, discuss topics such as structure and story themes, and share their thoughts on the book. This ensures that each student not only receives a free book, but they can also share in the love of reading with their classmates. Including our original partnership with RIF, the Kiwanis Club of Clarksville has distributed more than 120,000 books to local third graders over the last 45 years.

DIVISION 14: DOVER—We serve children coming to the library for Story Time as well as all those young children who use the library. In Stewart County, our library is a focal point for parents, grandparents, and guardians since they offer so many programs and resources for free for children. Story Time is held weekly on Thursday mornings and during the school year with about 25-30 children attending. When pre-school is not in session during the summer and on breaks, that number balloons to 50-60. Once a month, the Dover Kiwanis Club provides two new books for the library, and a member goes and reads the story to the children. All children, whether they attended Story Time or not, are then free to check out the books. Reading is a basic vital skill, and we try to encourage a love of reading and of books by making story time fun, exciting and an event that the children want to attend, as well as giving them the opportunity to check that book out, reinforcing the message that reading is fun. We have many low-income people in our community, and this project levels the playing field in that ALL children have access to books, not just those families who can afford them. And of course, Kiwanis volunteers who are reading always bring for each child a little toy or treat relating to the specific book. The children love the goofy little items they are given, and those items help the kids to remember the story.

DIVISION 14: HILLDALE, CLARKSVILLE—The Kiwanis Club of Hilldale along with our Service Leadership Programs (1-CKI, 1-Aktion Club, 10-Key Clubs, 2-Builder’s Club, and 2-K-Kids Programs) provide Easter Baskets for children in our Department of Children Services Foster Care. Last year we provided 265 Easter Baskets for all the children in foster care along with children of parents in our Mental Health Court and children in our domestic shelters. The partnership started because our Kiwanis Club had DCS present a weekly program and the director spoke about an unmet need the children had. She talked about how the children are taken care of at Christmas but forgotten at other holidays. This is where the partnership was formed. It continues to grow each year with us being able to serve more youth. As cliché as it sounds, I believe our club members and Service Leadership Program members receive more enjoyment out of this program than the participants. Each member can choose to fill a complete basket, or two, or purchase a bulk item from our Amazon Wish list, curated from the Department of Children Services suggestions.

DIVISION 14: HOPKINSVILLE—For the project “Warm the Children,” local partners, including Hopkinsville Walmart, allowed Kiwanis to shop over a period of 7 days with a designated purchase point. They also gave a 10% discount for each purchase to have free airtime to promote the project. They also made and shared articles about the project on their social media. The Salvation Army vetted clients for the project and gave names for use. Christian County School Family Resource Centers vetted potential clients and made contacts on their end.

DIVISION 16: PAINTSVILLE—New Shoes for Christmas assists 270 local students with the greatest needs for basic supplies such as food, clothing, and school supplies. All throughout the year, the Kiwanis Club of Paintsville has fundraisers to raise money by setting up our Kettle Corn booth at festivals and other local events. All money raised is used directly to purchase 270 pairs of brand-new high-quality shoes for students across Johnson County. The nine schools identify 30 students within their buildings who are of the most need and a list is compiled from the school leaders; and then we, as a club, purchase the 270 pair of shoes with the money we have raised with our kettle corn sales as well as money we have received through grant applications for this project.