Kiwanis
EAST FORK REGION

Ohio District of Kiwanis International

A traditional new club opening activity took place in eastern Clermont County Ohio. The initial meeting with the District Membership Chair took place in August of 2019.

There is no significant community in the geography of eastern Clermont County so invitations for membership were concentrated on the four small communities surrounding East Fork State Park. After 3 months of community visits, introductory meetings, and preliminary club meetings the club held its organizational meeting.

The club chartered on December 3, 2019, with twenty-nine members. Early on discussions determined that service activities were essential.

- The club immediately connected with Empower Youth, a community children's outreach group and volunteered to help at their Winter Wonderland activity in December and, we also volunteered to help at the Village of Batavia's Christmas in the Village.
- This represented two service opportunities performed within the first month.
- The club obtained from Kiwanis International Kiwanis t-shirts that we wore during these initial service activities. The objective was to let the public know that there was a new service club in town.
- The next two months concentrated on planning for our charter celebration. A charter dinner and party were held on March 7, 2020. At the meeting, the club raised funds through a silent auction, split the pot (50 – 50), and a basket raffle. The objective was to celebrate and use the opportunity to fund beginning service work for the club.

Two days later, on March 9, COVID came to Ohio. With strict closures mandated by the state, the club board immediately ceased in person meetings and decided to continue to meet via the internet. It is important that the club board decided that no meetings were to be skipped and service should continue.

- The club quickly reacted helping a local hospital care for its staff by providing goody bags.
- A homeless shelter asked for assistance preparing and delivering meals to homeless who were relocated to hotels because shelters were closed.

- The club's goal was to continue to provide some relevant service during the initial months of the pandemic.

Fundraising had to be continued as well in order to support service during this time. Because of two experienced Kiwanis club members, suggestions of known successful fundraisers were offered and discussed.

- Having experience with Funds2Orgs (www.funds2orgs.com), an Orlando based company that purchases new and used shoes collected by non-profits, the club held a new and used shoe collection. Within a few months, despite the impact of COVID, the club raised $1600.
- Other pandemic service included Empower Youth food bags packing, and additional support to hospital workers.

As the pandemic softened, the club took on its Laundromat Library project. This involved the placement of children's furniture (table, chairs, and bookcases) children's books and club signage at one location. The County Library (a corporate member) agreed to provide books for these facilities.

- Soon after, additional locations were opened, and a final location was installed when the business owner felt comfortable with the pandemic.
- A courthouse library was installed at the request of a Domestic Relations Judge (a club member). The Judge recognized the value of having a place for children to spend some time as their parents participated in the activities of the court.
- One additional (our sixth) installation was made at the local YMCA in their youth room.

The club had grown to thirty-five members during its charter year. Kiwanis One Day in 2020 could not be overlooked. The club approached the Village of Batavia and suggested that club members could clean planters along Main Street.

Club Leaders and all members have been encouraged to attend division, District, and international events. Since our beginning, club president, and others have attended division meetings, mid-year education days, District Conventions, and International Conventions.

Approaching Christmas, the club learned of the need for non-food household items by another community service organization. The club board elected to provide four laundry baskets containing various household items. Club members wanted to do more, and they donated additional funds and items to the project. The club provided seventeen baskets. The club provided bags to Empower Youth for their Winter Wonderland. These bags were fabric tote-bags printed with the club's name and logo.

The club Holiday party was a success. We had the opportunity to gather in-person and we used the party as a chance to collect used, unwanted, or unneeded gift cards. We created a basket with gift cards, and scratch-off lottery tickets as a prize for a club raffle. Sale of tickets to

members, family, friends, and other community members using our Facebook page netted our service account almost $1000.

Fun and camaraderie at meetings fueled member enthusiasm, especially after in person meetings resumed early in 2021. After a few months of hybrid (in-person and internet) meetings, the club board decided that the internet became an excuse to not attend meetings and the internet meetings were no longer offered.

How does all of this happen? The club has an active Service and Fundraising Committee. Since service and fundraising go hand-in-hand, the single committee keeps everything in focus. Meeting, maybe every other month, the committee discusses ideas before the best ideas are presented to the club board. Each project, either service or fundraiser has an assigned Project Coordinator. This individual, usually the person who brought the idea to the committee's attention serves as the focal point and project manager.

In spring of 2021, an article in the Kiwanis magazine addressed the use of school planter gardens. The board approved a club project and offered above ground planter boxes to a local Intermediate School. The school principal (a club member as well as the district superintendent) suggested and the club provided five boxes, one for each fifth-grade classes.

On April 1st, the club chartered a new Key Club at one of the six high schools located within the club's service area. When inviting members to join the club in 2019, this school's principle saw the value in Key Club and joined as a club member.

In May of 2021, our club's monthly speaker talked about the needs of young children entering foster care. The presentation was effective and our club President, after reading in the Kiwanis magazine a story about the "$5 Challenge" used this as a special fundraiser to purchase journey bags to be given to these children to hold their belongings as they move into foster care. The club spent $1,700 to provide ninety bags.

A club member brought the idea of Story Walk to the Service and Fundraising Committee's attention after reading about it. The idea was presented to the board and the club agreed to pursue.

- The County Park District (a corporate club member) was a place to start. The library provided the story, and our first StoryWalk was installed.
- In August, as a member of the Chamber of Commerce, the club requested a formal opening day ribbon-cutting attended by local elected officials, club members, and the public.
- Several stories are available for regular swap out to provide each StoryWalk with a new look.
- A second StoryWalk was approved and installed in 2022 in an adjacent village's park.

Prior to the Kiwanis International Education Conference in Salt Lake City, our club secretary became aware of a webinar on a service and fundraising opportunity provided by the Colonial

Flag Foundation, a partner of Kiwanis International. The Foundation provides program management support to Kiwanis clubs who wish to display U.S. flags during certain holiday periods. Flags are sponsored to honor U.S. military veterans and first responders. They are displayed in large groupings in a prominent community location.

- This project is a service project honoring those who have served or who are serving.
- This project is a fundraiser with sponsors to defray costs with excess funds benefiting our club's service account.
- The club displayed over 100 U.S. flags in each of four locations during November2021.

By the end of the club's first full year of operation, club membership grew to thirty-five and then fell back to twenty-nine by year's end. Our 2021 Fields of Honor flag project raised over $2,000 by the end of the year. While short of our initial hopes, it laid the ground for a second "annual" project during 2022.

- To help of fundraising, in March, the club agreed to do a 2nd Shoe Drive with Funds2Orgs. This time, we raised $1,000 to aid with service projects.

The County Developmentally Disabled organization was approached to form an Aktion Club. The Director saw value in a relationship with our Kiwanis Club and agreed. They joined our club as corporate member along with three Aktion Club advisors.

- A new SLP
- Four new Kiwanis members
- One of the club advisors has volunteered to be our club webmaster to improve our club website.

Supporting Kiwanis International initiatives is an important factor in fostering Kiwanis growth. Two members of the club had attended the first presentation of Amplify. Recognizing the importance of supporting Kiwanis International and growing leadership, the club board approved three $100 scholarships to three members who complete Amplify. Of the three who enrolled, two $100 reimbursements were approved and disbursed to the two graduates.

Another corporate member, Child Focus, sponsored a community day. Our leadership saw an opportunity to support our corporate member and serve children. Each child who attended the event was required to sign in and with their registration, they received a free raffle ticket. At the end of the day, Raffle tickets were drawn with the first seventy-five receiving a new bicycle helmet. The last two tickets drawn, one boy and one girl received a new bicycle and helmet. One recipient's mother later told us that the event was but a few days before her child's birthday and all that was wanted was a bicycle and the mom could not afford a new bike. Our Kiwanis club answered a prayer. The other winner's parent told us that the child was happy to win but happier to be able to hand down his older bike to a younger sibling.

Approaching the start of a new school year, our SLP chair reminded the Service and Fundraising Committee that a neighboring Kiwanis Club and sponsor of a Key Club had turned in their charter. The affected Club was without sponsorship. Recognizing a need to provide a meaningful Kiwanis connection for this Key Club, our club stepped in and volunteered to serve and sponsor the Key Club, becoming our second Key Club and third SLP.

Because of the prior year's success of the club's Fields for Project, the club decided to do this service and fund raiser project for a second year. Basically, the club repeated what it had accomplished in 2021. Dues to increased business sponsorships and the less costs of materials for the project, the club earned over $12,000 for its service budget .

The end of Kiwanis Year 2021-2022 ended on a successful note with net growth of fourteen members and one ready to join the club in October.