



NEWS

October 2025



Ponchatoula Kiwanis Gifts Books to Third Graders

Improving the world one child and one community at a time

LaMissTenn District of Kiwanis International:
10000 Celtic Drive, Suite 706, Baton Rouge, LA 70809

26



34



35



ON THE COVER: The Ponchatoula Kiwanis Club recently gifted a book to every third grader at DC Reeves Elementary School. Division 13 Lieutenant Governor and Foundation Board Member Chelsea Brumfield helps two students choose their books. [See more on page 38](#)

IN THIS ISSUE

DISTRICT NEWS

- 3 Happy Kiwanis New year
- 4 Stepping Up to the Challenge
- 5 A Message from Your Vice Governor
- 6 Thank You, LaMissTenn!
- 7 October 2025 Check-In
- 8 Welcome to the Kiwanis Family!
- 9 107th LaMissTenn District Convention
- 10-11 DCON Re-Membering the 80s Dance Party
- 12 LaMissTenn Hall of Fame
- 13 107th Annual DCON Sponsors

THE FOUNDATION

- 14 Endowment Awards Presented
- 15 2024-2025 Annual Community Awards
- 16 Thank You!
- 17 Your LaMissTenn Kiwanis Foundation Update
- 18 Operation Park Bench

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- 19 The Kiwanis Children's Fund
- 20 Facebook & Newsletter Awards Presented
- 21 Aspire to Inspire: BALANCE
- 21 Past District Officer's Organization
- 22 Kiwanis Key Leader Update
- 23 Key Leader South
- 24 K-Kids are the Seed of Kiwanis
- 25-26 Key Club Fall Rallies

CLUB NEWS

27-38

BACK COVER

- 39 Share Your Club's News
- 39 Deadlines
- 39 District Leadership
- 39 District Office Information



Happy Kiwanis New Year!

By Marcel Lashover, Governor

Happy LaMissTenn Kiwanis New Year,

I am excited to get off to a tremendous new Kiwanis year as your 2054-2026 Governor with the other leaders of your district. Governor-Elect Andrew, Vice Governor Laura, and I are working as a team to ensure we are on the same page.

We have all been through a lot with our club since COVID in 2020, but the future growth of LaMissTenn is now and into the future.

At your district convention, I launched the theme for the 2025-26 year: "If you don't ASK, then you don't GET". Additionally, I aim to conclude the year with 4,000 members in our district. So what I am asking is for you to help us by starting this year to use this theme to build and strengthen your club's membership. Ask non-members to come volunteer at one of your events. We have found that some of them see what Kiwanis is all about, and they will ask you how to

join your club. Currently, our district has over 3,500 members. If each of us brings just one new member to our club by the end of 2026, we will reach 7,000 members! But what if we only do half of that? We would be 5,250 members, which is way above my goal. So please help me to accomplish this goal and leave a legacy where your club will be around long after you.

I asked Past Governor John Fry to be my District Membership Chair, and he accepted, so I appreciate him stepping up. At DCON, John and I met with the PDO Board and Past Governors to seek their support, and we received a positive response. They expressed a desire to see LaMissTenn return to its former state, and while we acknowledge it won't happen overnight, we recognize the need to start now. Also, you have heard the question "How do you eat an elephant? Well, one bite at a time, and that's the same way we need to build our district, one new member at a time.

Another goal is to open 4 or 5 new clubs in the district. The 1st one will be in Bastrop, LA, the week of October 19, 2025. If you are in the area and would like to



help, please let me know or contact the district office.

Remember, every new member we bring into Kiwanis means we can help more kids in your community. So, please help me and your club.

I'm asking you 1st to do your part by joining me, Andrew, Laura, your Trustees, and Lieutenant Governors in the 2025-2026 year. If you need help, please reach out to any one of us.

I can be reached through my email or my cell:

lamisstenngov2526@gmail.com

504-272-1600

Thanks, and let's have the best year for LaMissTenn!

Marcel Lashover

2025-2026 Governor



Stepping up to the Challenge

By Andrew Dozier, Governor-Elect

My Fellow LaMissTenn Kiwanians,

It is with great honor and privilege to serve this “Great Historic District.” As your Governor-Elect 2025-2026, I am asking for your continuous support. I want to thank you all for electing me to serve.

I will work hard to provide direction, vision, motivation and inspiration. I will help create an environment conducive to success by promoting communication and collaboration. I will strive every day to meet the needs of this District.

I take great pride in leading and fully understand its role and responsibilities. Service has been the hallmark of my life.

It is time to get to work. Let's begin the new year starting with renewed strategies, focusing on energizing our members, addressing the challenges of membership and attracting while also retaining members.

We must develop initiatives to increase membership. Leaders should inspire and motivate. When

you lead, the members will follow. Imagine the impact you can have while building a brighter future for the children and the communities we build together.

Our clubs' strategic plans must focus on: Membership, Engagement, Leadership, Education, Community Impact, Financial Viability, Branding and Image.

The challenge this year remains to be committed to engaging and retaining our members while also adding new members to our clubs. Executing the club membership plan, must be the focus monthly.

I challenge each club to use these methods: Two for Two, Club Boost Event, Open House, and Guest Days throughout year (**asking them to join**) and get a family member, neighbors, etc.

For our clubs' continued success and longevity, we must provide value for our members. We can obtain success through fostering commu-

nity and engagement, utilizing technology, adapting and innovation.

Kiwanis is the face of service in our communities; it starts with our existing members and continues with adding and elevating new members to support our initiatives and projects.

Let's step up to the challenge!

Kiwanians are resourceful and dedicated to the mission. I challenge all clubs in LaMissTenn to increase our membership in the first quarter by a net of 2 members per club. I'm confident and know you'll be able to step up and recruit 2 new members to the club before January 1st.

“If you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change”

“BOOTS ON THE GROUND”

I Salute You!

Andrew Dozier

2025-2026 Governor-Elect



Boots on the Ground team of superheroes at DCON 2025



I want to express my thanks to those who supported me, as I am honored and humbled to serve as your 2025-2026 Vice Governor. My platform is MEMBERSHIP.

We need more hands on deck to serve as many children as possible. When you are out in your community, at work, or with family and friends, talk about how much FUN we have in Kiwanis, because all of those people are your prospective members. Share your passion and love for Kiwanis.

Ask questions such as: What do you know about Kiwanis? Have you ever heard of Key Club? What do you think about Kiwanis helping children in the community? Can you please tell me more about yourself? Listen carefully to responses of those you come in contact with. In fact, LISTEN more than you talk. Everyone knows more about himself/herself than anything else on the planet, so let the prospect do

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR VICE GOVERNOR

By Laura Gilliland, Vice Governor

the talking. Find out what your prospect is interested in: hobbies, activities, career information.

Invite your prospect to a fundraiser, a service project, your meeting, for coffee, or for lunch. Once there, LISTEN to them. When your prospect is talking, lean in, make eye contact, smile, nod your head, and you may want to even take notes. Your body language will let your prospect know you are genuinely interested in what is said.

Point out the VALUE that the prospect offers Kiwanis. Let him/her know you recognize characteristics that your club needs. Say something like, "You are exactly that special someone we need in our club!" Use the information given to you while he/she spoke. Be specific and explain why.

Keep in mind, it may take more than one attempt to get your contact to become a Kiwanian. Notice I said "BECOME A KIWANIAN" not "JOIN KIWANIS." Once you have the prospect hooked, simply hand them an application and a pen, and say, "This is how you become a Kiwanian. It only takes a

couple of minutes to complete this application." As the new recruit completes the application, it is important to remain silent, so not to disrupt his/her train of thought.

When the application is completed, let him/her know that Kiwanis is a dues-based organization, and that dues may be paid with cash, check, or credit card.

I look forward to hearing your success stories of building our GREAT and HISTORIC LAMISTENN DISTRICT! Thank you, thank you, thank you for all that you do for Kiwanis.

Yours in service,

Laura Grace Gilliland



International Trustee Tim Sheppard installs Laura Gilliland as 2025-2026 Vice Governor at District Convention. Pictured with Laura is 2025-2026 Governor Marcel Lashover.

THANK YOU, LAMISSTENN!



By Claude Vinson, Immediate Past Governor

I sincerely appreciate all the LaMissTenn members for your unwavering support and encouragement throughout my term as governor this past year. Your dedication and commitment have truly made a difference, and I am grateful for everything you have done to help me succeed.



Thank you for everything you do in the furtherance of Kiwanis' mission in servicing the children in our District community and the world! Remember, stay energetic, compassionate, dynamic, and always be in search of that "Sweet Spot", but most importantly,

BE YOUR INVINCIBLE YOU!



October 2025 Check-In

Mark Your Calendar!



**2026 Mid-Year
Education Conference**
March 21 ★ Natchitoches, LA

Save the Date!



LaMissTenn DCON
July 31 - August 2, 2026
Kenner, LA

2025-2026 KIWANIS YEAR:

- ★ Oct. 6-10: Youth Protection Week
- ★ Oct. 13-18: Circle K Week
- ★ Nov. 3-7: Key Club Week
- ★ Feb. 9-13: K-Kids Week
- ★ Feb. 23-27: Builders Club Week
- ★ March 2-6: Aktion Club Week



HAPPY KIWANIS NEW YEAR!

WELCOME TO THE KIWANIS FAMILY!

Reflects new membership from 6/26/25 to 9/29/25.

Julia Achee, *Algiers*
Julia Achee, *Plaquemines*
Chad Arbourgh, *Plaquemines*
Gracie Barnes, *Gulfport*
Dillon Barnes, *Tupelo*
Nicole Bertrand, *Southwest Louisiana*
Christopher Bertrand, *Natchitoches*
Hannah Bilger, *Martin*
Courtney Blanco, *East. St. Mary*
Roy Blanco, *East. St. Mary*
Rebecca Boniol, *Calcasieu*
Samuel Brand, *Dawn Busters*
Nanette Brister, *Walker*
Bruce Brown, *Union City*
Jelana Bryant-Gant, *Zachary*
Kortney Burns, *Southwest Louisiana*
Ashley Cherry, *Union City*
Nikki Clark, *Greenville*
Russ Cloy, *Pine Belt*
Kayla Colvin, *Martin*
Clay Crockett, *Dyersburg*
Kyle Dew, *Laurel*
Angela Dodd, *Paris-Lakeway*
Vincent Dodd, *Paris-Lakeway*
Courtney Echols, *Martin*
Antonio Elisar, *Ascension*
Santee Ezell, *Starkville*
Aritza Garcia, *Dawn Busters*
Juan Giron, *Moisant*
Liz Giron, *Moisant*
Victoria Graves, *Dyersburg*
Deric Hill, *Acadiana-Lafayette*

Lisa Jekins, *Memphis*
Carroll Johnson, *Alexandria*
Bernard Johnson, *Natchitoches*
John Jones, *Memphis*
Brandi King, *Acadiana-Lafayette*
Alesia Lewis, *Waynesboro*
Christina Lord, *Alexandria*
Jenny Magliolo, *Northshore Mandeville*
Leigh Anne Mason, *The Natchez Trace*
Bacarra Mauldin, *Memphis*
Nick Melvin, *Thibodaux*
Stacy Mudge, *Plaquemines*
Marco Munoz, *Dawn Busters*
Angela Murray, *Baton Rouge*
Lloyd Newson, *Plaquemines*
Terry Nolan, *Algiers*
Jessica Otto, *East St. Mary*
Madison Pellegrin, *Thibodaux*
Edward Perkins, *Big Easy*
Riley Reed, *Northeast Shelby County*
Erika Richardson, *Dawn Busters*
Stephanie Salario, *Denham Springs*
John Schwarze, *De Ridder*
Jamie Starns, *Grenada*
Kristen Thibodeaux, *Opelousas*
Karla Tipton, *Houma*
Damien Tristant, *Natchitoches*
Partick Tuck, *Dawn Busters*
Thomas Viner, *Laurel*
Tenaj Wallace, *Big Easy*
Ty Weems, *Pearl*
Brooke Zar, *Dawn Busters*



107th LaMissTenn DISTRICT CONVENTION

The 107th LaMissTenn Convention held in Memphis, TN from August 8-10 was a successful gathering of more than 180 Kiwanians and guests. The weekend was filled with plenty of education, renewing old friendships and making new ones, taking care of official business, and Re-Membering the 80s at Governor Claude's Saturday night party. The District Foundation's Gift Basket Raffle sales, Friends of the Foundation contributions, and Endowment purchases were a great success. Claude Vinson was retired as Governor by our International Trustee Tim Sheppard. Elected at the House of Delegates on Saturday were Dawn Busters Kiwanis Member Marcel Lashover for Governor, Abbeville Kiwanis Club Member Andrew Dozier for Governor-Elect and Cortana Kiwanis Member Laura Gilliland for Vice Governor. Linda Ramsey was endorsed as International Trustee candidate. Tim



Pictured with 2025-2026 Governor Marcel Lashover (right) are the newly installed Region Trustees.

Sheppard installed the Governor, Governor-Elect and Vice Governor as well as Region Trustees Rick Danielson & John Gherardi, and the new Lieutenant Governors. A very special thanks goes to the Kiwanis Club of Germantown and Convention Chair Susan Olsson for coordinating and hosting this amazing event!



Circle K Governor Dylan Weinrich, Key Club Governor Lyndsey Griffin, and Germantown Elementary School K-Kids Member Rya Fondren spoke at the General Session. Governor Claude Vinson gifted each of them super hero capes in appreciation of their leadership.



International Trustee Tim Sheppard installs the 2025-2026 LaMissTenn Lieutenant Governors.

DCON Re-Membering the 80's Dance Party Snapshots!



Angus Young, Axl Rose, Pat Benatar, and Joe Perry had a rockin' good time!



Cathy & John reliving their prom days!



The Goonies want their MTV!



John Cougar Mellencamp & Cyndi Lauper!



Urban Cowboy meets Charlie's Angel



Ascension Kiwanis from rock to pop!



↑ Prince & Spindarella of Salt-N-Pepa!



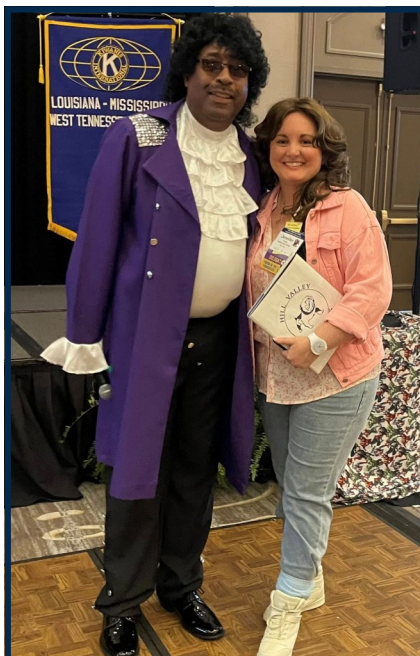
← The Dawn Busters' stylin' the 80s theme!

Continued on page 11

DCON Re-Membering the 80's Dance Party Snapshots!



Tom & Rhonda enjoying the 80s!



Prince found Jennifer Parker from Whittier High School. Where's Marty?



Axl won the costume contest but Barbie and Slash were tough competition.



Jennifer is sweating to the oldies!



Miami Vice's Sonny Crockett was on the scene!



Don't stop believing!



Brandy & Fred looking rad!



New Kids on the Block fans meet Joe Dirt!



Brian & Linnea enjoying the party!



Morris Day & the Time were no match for Prince & the Revolution!

107th LaMissTenn DISTRICT CONVENTION

LaMissTenn Hall of Fame

The LaMissTenn District Hall of Fame Program recognizes past and present Kiwanians who have dedicated their lives to Kiwanis and their community in the LaMissTenn District. This distinction identifies Kiwanians who have exemplified the Objects of Kiwanis and made extraordinary contributions to the LaMissTenn District on a club, divisional, regional, and/or district level. Congratulations to the inaugural class of the LaMissTenn Hall of Fame: Nettles Brown, Calvin "Cal" Carrier, Kim Champagne, Howard Olsen and Dennis Oliver.

These individuals were recognized during the 2025 LaMissTenn District Convention Fellowship Luncheon. Gulfport Kiwanis President Kristin Maddox accepted the award for Dennis Oliver and Division 7 Lieutenant Governor Rhonda Lorio accepted the award in honor of Kim Champagne. Howard Olsen was present to accept his award.



*Nettles Brown
Alexandria Kiwanis
eLaMissTenn Kiwanis
Past International President*



*Calvin "Cal" Carrier
East St. Mary Kiwanis*



*Kimberly Champagne
1970-2025
Acadiana-Lafayette Kiwanis
Broussard-Youngsville Kiwanis*



*Dennis Oliver
Gulfport Kiwanis
eLaMissTenn Kiwanis
Past International Trustee*



Region I Trustee Oscar Brown & Governor-Elect Marcel Lashover present Howard Olson of Millington Kiwanis his LaMissTenn Hall of Fame Award.



Rhonda Lorio accepts a LaMissTenn Hall of Fame Award in honor of Kim Champagne.



Kristin Maddox accepts Denis Oliver's LaMissTenn Hall of Fame Award.



Thanks to Our 107th Annual DCON Sponsors!



PICKLER
WEALTH ADVISORS



BAPTIST®



Kiwanis®
CLUB OF GERMANTOWN

Travel by Brandy
Experience yielding wonderful travel for clients



Club of Memphis



Outrageous Service!
ALLYSON AVERA
901-484-6194 • 901-754-0800
CRYE-LEIKE®, REALTORS®



Ponchatoula, LA

2022 Mayor Mike Palazzolo, City of Germantown

Pyroman Fireworks

Bill Griffin

CC Event Entertainment

Endowment Awards Presented

Endowment awards were presented by Tom Long, Foundation President, during the Fellowship Luncheon at DCON.

In 2008, the District Foundation Board of Directors established a goal to create an endowment of \$500,000 by the year 2013. This goal was achieved in 2014. The principal of the fund will remain untouched to continue to earn the highest amount of interest/

dividends possible. The endowment provides around \$30,000 per year for funding the Foundation's Grants & Scholarship Programs. The endowment doubles the Foundation's income sources and allows the District to assist more Kiwanis Clubs with extra funds to complete worthy projects every year.

To help add to the District's Endowment Fund, four endowment awards are available for purchase.

They are: the River of Life Fellowship (\$750), the Henry W. Nash~Eugene J. Maier Tablet of Honor (\$1,000), John T. Roberts Fellowship (\$500) and the Charles H. Ford Legacy (\$1,000). For more information or to purchase a District Foundation Endowment Award visit the Foundation page at www.LaMissTenn.org.



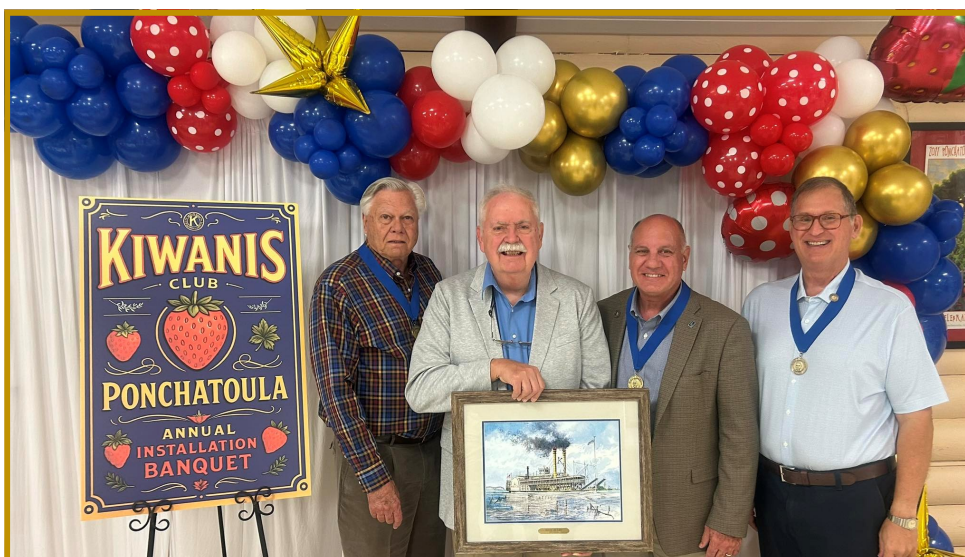
Past Governor Otha Britton, Martin Kiwanis, received his Charlie Ford Legacy Award from Tom Long.



Jonathan Booth, Greater Ouachita Kiwanis, received his John T. Roberts award from Tom Long.



Past Int. Trustee Greg Beard accepted a John T. Roberts award for Past Governor Jeems White, Alexandria Kiwanis.



At DCON, Shelly Zahn, Ponchatoula Kiwanis, accepted John T. Roberts awards for Donald Helms, William Daniels, Mark Mobley & Danny Williams and a River of Life for Jim Perrin.

Pictured from left to right at a Ponchatoula Kiwanis Club meeting accepting their endowments after DCON are: Don Helms, Jim Perrin Mark Mobley and Danny Williams.

2024-2025 Annual Community Awards

This year, the District Foundation contributed \$300 each to four charities chosen by the District's Annual Community Award recipients.

As the School Resource Officer at Martin Middle School, our **Lawperson of the Year** not only protects students and staff, but also plays a vital role in mentoring youth and supporting community service initiatives. With a career that began as a volunteer firefighter, he has earned both Firefighter and Policeman of the Year honors, along with the deep respect of his peers and students. His leadership in safety programs and presence at school events even inspired students to create a Service Award in his name. It is the District's pleasure to announce **Sgt. Jimmy Brown**, nominated by the **Kiwanis Club of Martin**, as the Lawperson of the Year. His chosen charity for the Foundation's \$300 donation is the Weakly County Back Pack Program, a nonprofit organization that uses 100% of its donations to purchase food for school age students.

As a dedicated middle school educator at Madonna Learning Center, our **Teacher of the Year** brings heart, purpose, and vision to both her classroom and her leadership of the Aktion Club. Susan Harlan empowers her students to grow in life skills, empathy, and community awareness. Under her guidance, Aktion Club members have led meaningful service projects—from supporting flood victims to uplifting hospitalized children through the Ryan Seacrest Foundation. It is the District's pleasure to announce **Susan Harlan**, nominated by the **Kiwanis Club of Germantown**, as the Teacher of the Year. Her chosen charity for the Foundation's \$300 donation is the Madonna Learning Center, a private, independent and faith-based school for children



Jimmy Brown, Lawperson of the Year, and Aniyah Brown, Firefighter of the Year accept their awards from Oscar Brown, LaMissTenn Service Committee Chair.



*Susan Harlan
Teacher of the Year*



Ascension Kiwanis Members Donna Leggett, Tiffany LaPorte and Boni Pater present Raven LaBiche with the 2024-2025 Layman of the Year Award and Executive Director of Volunteer Ascension Sherry Denig with a \$300 check from the Foundation.

and adults with disabilities.

As a valedictorian of her Fire Academy class and a proud member of the Shreveport Fire Department's Honor Guard, our **Firefighter of the Year** exemplifies courage, excellence, and heart. She has quickly earned the respect of her peers through her dedication to service and character. She continues to grow professionally—now enrolled in Paramedic School—and gives back by mentoring students and volunteering at community events. It is the District's pleasure to announce **Aniyah S. Brown**, nominated by the **Kiwanis Club of Shreveport**, as the Firefighter of the Year. Her chosen charity for the Foundation's \$300 donation is Women of Vision Inc., a community of women who partner with World Vision to break the cycle of poverty and support families and communities worldwide.

Our **Layperson of the Year** em-

bodies the spirit of compassion and community. She is a tireless advocate whose leadership and heart for service have touched lives throughout Ascension Parish. Through her work with the Arc of East Ascension and events like Dancing for a Cause, she has raised vital support for individuals with developmental disabilities, while creating joyful, inclusive experiences that bring people together. Her partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Ascension, through volunteer efforts like Trunk or Treat, reflects her unwavering dedication to collaboration and kindness. She lives the Golden Rule daily. This year, we are proud to honor and recognize **Raven LaBiche** as our Layperson of the Year, nominated by the **Kiwanis Club of Ascension**. Her chosen charity for the Foundation's \$300 donation is Volunteer Ascension, a non-profit volunteer organization serving the Ascension Parish community.

THANK YOU!!!

By Betty Carter, District Foundation Vice President



The LaMissTenn District Foundation Board would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all 41 Clubs for their generous support in providing such beautiful and thoughtfully curated baskets for our District Foundation gift-basket fundraiser at the 107th District Convention in Memphis, TN. Your contributions truly make a difference, and we couldn't achieve our goals without your kindness and dedication! Thank you for being such a vital part of our mission!

Acadiana-Lafayette Kiwanis

Alexandria Kiwanis

Algiers Kiwanis

Amory Kiwanis

Ascension Kiwanis

Baton Rouge Kiwanis

Big Easy Kiwanis

Biloxi Kiwanis

Bluff City Kiwanis

Columbus Kiwanis

Cortana Kiwanis

Dawn Busters Kiwanis

Germantown Kiwanis

Greater Covington Kiwanis

Greater Ouachita Kiwanis

Greenville Kiwanis

Gulfport Kiwanis

Lafayette Kiwanis

Louisville Kiwanis

Martin Kiwanis

Millington Kiwanis (2)

Natchitoches Kiwanis

New Orleans Kiwanis

Northshore Mandeville
Kiwanis

Opelousas Kiwanis

Pascagoula Kiwanis

Ponchatoula Kiwanis

Pontchartrain Kiwanis

Rankin County Kiwanis

Red Stick Kiwanis

Shreveport Kiwanis

Southern Hills Kiwanis

St. Bernard-Arabi Kiwanis

Starkville Kiwanis

Thibodaux Kiwanis

Third District Kiwanis

Tupelo Kiwanis

Twin Cities Kiwanis

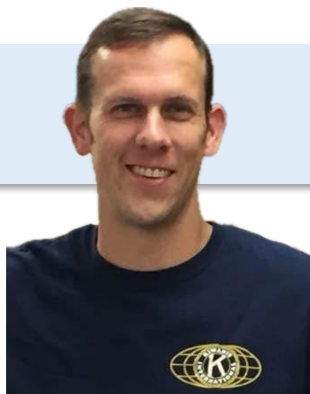
Union City Kiwanis

Vicksburg Kiwanis

Zachary Kiwanis



Carrie Richard delivers a gift basket at DCON from the Opelousas Kiwanis Club.



Your LaMissTenn Kiwanis Foundation Update

By Jonathan Booth, District Foundation President

I am very excited to introduce myself as this year's President of the LaMissTenn Foundation. This year, I am working with a dynamic group of Kiwanians from across our Great and Historic LaMissTenn District, and we have hit the ground running! I want to take time to thank everyone for your support at DCON. We were able to bring in \$6,900 in Memphis and are ready to send that money back out into the District.

Recently, the board met in Madison, Mississippi for our annual Face 2 Face in preparation for the upcoming administrative year. We took time to brainstorm, form new committees, and discuss how to better serve the clubs in the district. Our goals for this year include:

- Increasing Club participation in the Annual Club Gift to 70%.
- Increasing the number of Divisions reporting 100% Annual Club Gifting from 3 to 5.

- Increasing the number of Friends of the Foundation to 120.
- Increase general knowledge of the Grants available for our clubs and scholarships available for our Key Clubs and Circle K Clubs.

All our goals are only obtainable with your help. The Foundation, the fundraising arm of the LaMissTenn District, only exists because of people like each one of you and your clubs. Here are the ways you can help:

- With your club's participation in the Annual Club Gift with a minimum investment of \$5 per member, your club is eligible for up to \$5,000 in assistance with your club projects.
- For members, consider being a Friend of the Foundation. For just \$10 a month, you can help us get money into the communities and to the kids that need it. As a Friend, you will also be invited to a "Thank You Reception" at DCON in Kenner this year. In Memphis we were able to raffle off a Blackstone Griddle and this year, we have plans in the works

for another great prize!

- Support our Endowments Program. Every club usually has a standard of thanking an outgoing president or long-time member. Instead of the usual plaque, how about a River of Life, a Tablet of Honor, a John T. Roberts Fellowship or a Charles Ford Legacy? Thank your valuable member and support the Foundation at the same time.

To learn more about the Foundation, who we are, what we do, and how you can get funding for your club's projects, Student Leadership Programs, and the District Project Grants, visit the district website at lamisstenn.org. Also, if you have any questions about the Foundation or the money your club is missing out on, ask!



2025-2026 LaMissTenn Foundation Board Representatives at meeting in Madison, MS



Starting a new tradition, this year at the LaMissTenn DCON, the Foundation raffled a framed River of Life. The winner was announced during the House of Delegates session. Region II Trustee Ralph Carter was the proud winner.

Operation Park Bench

By Immediate Past Governor Claude Vinson, Germantown Kiwanis



Claude Vinson enjoying a day at the park on a newly installed Kiwanis park bench.

Ahhh, imagine being out in nature where the birds are singing, the bees are playing, and the bugs are doing what bugs do best... nothing. Where children are playing in the park, where golfers are awaiting their turn on the tee box; immersing your soul in the beauty of it all while sitting on, wait for it ... a park bench.

And not just any other park bench; a **KIWANIS** park bench!

As part of my ongoing signature project, Operation: Park Bench, I am asking Kiwanians and their

clubs to consider purchasing and placing Kiwanis signature park benches in their communities where Kiwanis can constantly be recognized and benches are enjoyed for many years to come.

Thank you to those clubs who have already purchased and installed Kiwanis signature park benches, in their communities, earlier this year.

Remember that **YOUR** Foundation has grants available to assist

with this project so please keep that in mind.

Visit the Foundation grants page at www.LaMissTenn.org to complete and submit your club's park bench grant application.

Also, look for updates and other helpful information in the regular Tuesday LaMissTenn Weekly emails and feel free to reach out to me at Neelyskid@yahoo.com if you have any comments, suggestions, etc. I would love to hear from you!

Let's replace this poor guy!





Kiwanis

CHILDREN'S FUND



A Big Thank You from the Kiwanis Children's Fund

By Lenny Simmons, Kiwanis Children's Fund District Chair

Since the beginning of **The Possibility Project (TPP)** campaign on October 1, 2024, Kiwanis Clubs worldwide have made commitments of gifts and pledges of **\$8,622,755.55** towards our goal of **\$25,000,000**. In our District of **74%** of our Kiwanis Clubs have made gifts and pledges in the amount of **\$130,3555.84** to support the Children's Fund's newest service campaign. The top Clubs making a pledge and gifts for the TPP are: **New Orleans, Martin, Tupelo, Dawn Busters, Lafayette, and Baton Rouge**. For the 2024-25 administrative year, Clubs and members have contributed **\$39,853.56**. Thank all of you for your generous support!

Don't forget to include your club's pledge/gift in your budget for 2025-26.

Make your club's check payable to the Kiwanis Children's Fund and mail to:

**Kiwanis Children's Fund
P.O Box 6457 – Dept. # 286
Indianapolis, IN 46206**

You can also pay on line by going to [Kiwanis.org](https://www.kiwanis.org) and go to the Kiwanis Children's Fund tab.

I also want to remind you about the Children's Fund grant programs for 2025-26. The Club Grant Program will continue again this year. There will be two cycles. For the March 1st funding cycle, your club must submit a letter of inquiry any time before November 1st and if approved, your club must submit a full application by January 1st. For the August 1st funding cycle, the letter of inquiry must be submitted any time before April 1st and the full application must be submitted by June 1st. The popular Microgrants program will also continue again this year. These grants are for Clubs with 35 or fewer members and are in good standing with Kiwanis International and the Kiwanis

Children's Fund. Clubs may apply for grants between \$250 and \$1,000. Your project must be a service project enhancing the lives of young children and youth in your community; support a least one of the three Kiwanis causes: **health and nutrition, education and literacy and youth leadership development**; be upcoming or in process (not yet completed) when grant payment is received. The advantages of the Micro grants are: shorter application, less funding requirement required from other sources, a shorter decision period and faster distribution of funds. Please go to the [Kiwanis.org](https://www.kiwanis.org) and go to the Kiwanis Children's Fund tab for more information on the club grant and microgrant programs.

**Happy Kiwanis New Year!
And thanks again for Serving the Children of the World!**



the
**POSSIBILITY
PROJECT**



Facebook & Newsletter Awards Presented

By Donna Leggett, LaMissTenn District Public Relations Chair

Congratulations to the 2024-2025 Facebook and Newsletter contest winners. The following clubs were recognized at our District Convention in Memphis and received a certificate and banner patch. These clubs are doing a fantastic job at building our Kiwanis

brand!

Club Facebook Contest Winners:

- Gold: Alexandria
- Silver: Baton Rouge
- Silver Honorable Mention: Dyersburg
- Bronze: Opelousas

Club Newsletter Contest Winners:

- Gold: St. Bernard-Arabi
- Silver: Cortana
- Silver Honorable Mention: Vicksburg

- Bronze: Third District

All clubs are encouraged to utilize Facebook pages and newsletters to help promote club activities. The purpose of these contests are to stimulate interest in good club Facebook pages, to raise awareness of Kiwanis and LaMissTenn clubs, and to improve these sources of Kiwanis



Accepting the Facebook Award for their clubs from Marcel Lashover are: Darren Green, Alexandria Kiwanis; Joy Hammatt, Baton Rouge Kiwanis; Linda Ramsey, Martin Kiwanis (accepting for Dyersburg Kiwanis); and Carrie Richard, Opelousas Kiwanis.



Accepting the Newsletter Award for their clubs from Marcel Lashover are: Nicholas Koepp, St. Bernard-Arabi Kiwanis; Patricia Anderson, Cortana Kiwanis; Tom Osburn, Vicksburg Kiwanis; and Lizette Coughlin, Third District Kiwanis.



Aspire to Inspire: BALANCE

By James A. "Jeems" White, MD, Past Governor

Okay, it's a new Kiwanis year. Okay, the weather is cooling. Okay, it's football season. Fine, well and good but how is your balance? There is a lot going on in the world right now. Sometimes it can be overwhelming. One of the keys to success ... and to happiness ... in this complex era is to maintain balance. What does that mean?

We all know the traditional mantra to balance the activities and time allocations to work, play, family, physical, spiritual, etc. parts of our lives. So, you work hard, hug your family, get some exercise, eat rationally, get proper sleep, go to church, pursue hobbies, hang out with friends ...

Wait! What are you doing for that "one child and one community at a time?" Are they being included in the balanced flow of your life?

The recent news is filled with the growing health issues of children: obe-

sity, lack of fitness, diabetes and other chronic diseases. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. is leading a movement to make children healthier by removing harmful chemicals, additives and excess calories from food. He is getting both praise and criticism for his efforts. In whichever camp your opinion resides, we all can agree that there is a problem and RFK, Jr. is bringing it to the forefront. Another part of the raging debate is "to jab or not to jab" and how much is important to personal and public health. Balance might be the most important element in addressing the health of our nation's children. Are you contributing to youth nurturing and leading by example?

Picture this: we work hard all week. Saturday rolls around and we flick on the TV to watch a football game or two or three. Even those who are not avid football fans often get included.

We are temporarily "couch potatoes" and surround ourselves with foods and beverages. Some TV advertisements entice us to eat, eat, eat vari-

ous irresistibly delicious-appearing foods. Other TV ads then urge us to take various medicines to lose weight, improve gut health, get better sleep... on it goes. Isn't that a paradox? Follow the money. All the ads are selling something to make a profit ... and ostensibly to make you happier and healthier. Yeah, right. Where is the balance in eat, eat, eating and then taking stacks of medications?

What about those children in your community? Most are in school. What are they doing in non-school time? Are you and your Kiwanis club sponsoring healthy activities? Are you contributing to the balance in their lives? Assisting them to become healthy productive adults?

Hey, no one has all the answers. But balance is important and as Kiwanians we include efforts for children in our lives. With this cool-weather, football season, new Kiwanis year ... let's do it.

Past District Officers Organization

Ralph D. Carter, PDO President

The Past District Officers (PDO) organization of Kiwanis is an untapped resource to all clubs in the LaMissTenn District. PDO is made up of Kiwanians who have served as District Officers, such as Lt. Governors or Trustees. This bank of knowledge can be tapped in a number of ways.

If a club needs a speaker to provide a program for your club, there is a PDO member who could talk on a variety of Kiwanis subjects. If a club member is interested in growing in their Kiwanis leadership, a PDO member can guide them toward serving in a District leadership position by answer-

ing questions and providing advice or support. If a club is experiencing difficulties, a PDO member can serve as an advisor to work through those difficult issues like club membership or community impact and even work with the District Club Strengthening Team to assist in membership recruitment events.

The PDO promotes the District by encouraging attendance to district events like Mid-Year Educational Conferences and District Conventions, giving to the District Foundation, and helping to build new clubs in the District. The PDO is a way for Kiwanians



who have served as District Officers to continue to support the District and continue building up the strong leadership of the future.

All past District Officers are welcome to be active members of PDO with a nominal annual service dues payment of \$10. The money we get from service dues will go back into the District to support our SLP programs—most recently we donated \$500 to Key Leader North and \$500 to Key Leader South. **Come join our fellowship today!**

Kiwanis Key Leader Update

By Linda Ramsey, Key Leader North Coordinator

I know that some of you have heard me mention that the Kiwanis Key Leader Curriculum is changing. I attended the Key Leader Workshop in Pittsburgh, PA., at the Kiwanis International Convention, where they began rolling out the new program. It is still very much a living document and changes are still being implemented at this time. They piloted the program at two Key Leader Event locations last spring, and have implemented changes.

On September 10th, I was involved in the monthly Key Leader Meetings on Zoom where changes in the curriculum are being explained, what's being left in and what's changing are being introduced, and the program outline is being altered somewhat. KI staff told us that the handbook isn't finished, and they aren't sure that it will be ready by October for the events this fall. They are still welcoming our input. The monthly meetings will happen each month throughout the 2025-2026 year.

The major components are changing from Integrity to Leadership; Personal Growth to Growth Mindset; Respect to Meaningful Connections; Community to Global Citizenship; Excellence to Effective Communication. The importance of neighborhoods has been brought back into the program. Some of the notes I made about what is staying the same are activities: Leader grams (instead of Key Leader Grams), Smores, Bonfire, and Ropes Course.

However, they are making concessions for areas that don't have access to ropes courses. The cost will be \$7000 with a \$2000 deposit being due to Kiwanis International prior to the event.

Supplies for KI and from our district are pretty much the same. They are offering ideas to assist with student recruitment. I shared some thoughts with them about some of the ways that I recruit students. They are looking at developing postcards and business cards which can be distributed at Kiwanis conventions and meetings.

Student Facilitator training can be done virtually ahead of time, but it can also be done on site as well. We are being asked to send the email addresses of our Student Facilitators when they are identified so that KI can be in touch with them about the virtual training. KI is going to provide a survey for District Chairs concerning what worked and what didn't work.

Some changes that are proposed for the weekend outline of events are that Registration and check-in be moved to 3-5pm instead of 4-6pm. Do away with the 2pm student facilitator meeting; however, on-site training can still happen. Sometimes we've done it during dinner time when students were unable to make it in time for the 2pm session or it could be partially done during registration. At 5pm, there would be a welcoming session where neighborhoods, mailboxes, etc. are established

and set up. Then dinner would occur at 6pm followed by the curriculum continuing after dinner at 7pm. The schedule on Saturday and Sunday is pretty much the same, except that the ropes course goes from 1-5pm instead of 1:30-5:30pm, and then there's a short session before going to dinner at 6pm. Sunday's schedule is the same.

I have heard that they are taking the Larry video out which has been a very inspirational part of the program, but I do understand that it is an older video. I hope that they can find another example of someone who is close to the role model that Larry has been for so many years.



Key Leader South Challenge: 40 Students!

Key Leader South's goal for this year's event is to have 40 students!

We need YOUR help:

(1) SPONSOR A STUDENT(S) (\$250/student). Contact the District at 225-769-9233.

Send funds [HERE](#) or mail check to 10000 Celtic Dr, Ste 706, Baton Rouge, LA 70809.

(2) RECRUIT STUDENTS to attend! Students can register [HERE](#).

(3) VOLUNTEER at Key Leader South! Contact the District Office at 225-769-9233 or districtoffice@lamisstenn.org.



Save the Dates!

KEY LEADER SOUTH

November 14-16, 2025
Camp Istrouma
Greenwell Springs, LA

Register or
Sponsor a Student at:
www.LaMissTenn.org

Key Leader is a leadership education weekend for high school students & 8th graders focusing on: service leadership, integrity, growth, respect, community & excellence.





K-Kids are the Seed of Kiwanis

By Don Eye, 2024-2025 K-Kids District Chair

This will be my last letter for the district news. I have been privileged to have had the honor to contribute to a great newsletter for a well-run organization. The recent District Convention is a great example of the team work required to have a successful event. It is time for a new K-Kids Advisor to take the reins but, I am and always will be a Kiwanian.

My educational session at the District Convention had a well-

trained group of Kiwanian attendees on K-Kids and “Terrific Kids.”

The K-Kids speaker, Rya Fondren, was my last of the 12 young folks since 2013 speaking at the District Convention. Hopefully someone will continue the program.

The K-Kids are the seed of our organization. If we do not feed it we will lose a valuable asset for the extension of Kiwanis. K-Kids and TK offer “Kiwanis moments” every day somewhere in this world. I’ve certainly had my share. My most favorite came from a newly elected young Aktion Club president when closing her first meeting said “the



Members will now go on a journey.”

God Speed,

Don Eye

2024-2025 K-Kids District Chair

Kiwanis
K-Kids
Young Leaders Helping Others



K-Kids Pledge

**As a K-Kid, I promise to serve my
neighborhood and my school.
I will show respect toward my
environment and I will try to make the
world a better place in which to live.**

Fall Rallies: Nothing's Sweeter than Service

By Cathy Simmons, New Orleans Kiwanis Club & Tiffany LaPorte, Ascension Kiwanis Club

Five Key Club Fall Rallies throughout the District kicked off on Saturday, September 13th, at Pearl High School in Mississippi. This year's theme is "Nothing is Sweeter than Service." The rallies are coordinated by the LaMissTenn Key Club Board Members and Governor Lindsey Griffith. The rallies are amazing opportunities for Key Clubbers in the District to meet fellow members in their area. Each rally has workshops, keynote speakers, service, fellowship, food and FUN! The first one was a small turnout with Region III Trustee Lori Alles as the keynote speaker.

The second one was held at Ben Franklin High School, in New Orleans, Louisiana and was a fantastic turnout with over 200 registrants! Participants filled the auditorium to hear Key Club Governor Lyndsey



LaMissTenn Key Club Board Members with keynote speaker Region III Trustee Lorri Alles at the first Fall Rally in Pearl, MS.

welcome all to a fantastic new school year, full of wonderment and service. The Governor's projects, Erika's Lighthouse and NAMI, both focus on mental health issues and how Key Clubbers can and will make a difference this year! After a fantastic Keynote presentation by Comedian Mary Ryan Brown on

how to overcome Boredom, Key Clubbers broke into groups for ice breakers, rounds of workshops and even an on-site service project – filling comfort bags with shampoo and toiletries for Erika's Lighthouse. The New Orleans Kiwanis Club sponsors the Key Club at Ben Franklin School, and also sponsored



LaMissTenn Key Club Board Members with keynote speaker Comedian Mary Ryan Brown at the Fall Rally in New Orleans, LA.



Kiwanis service is even sweeter with Key Clubbers! Members from the Ascension, Baton Rouge, Cortana, LSU and Red Stick Kiwanis Clubs provided and served lunch at the Fall Rally held at Baton Rouge Magnet High School.

Continued on page 26

Service, Leadership, and Community Spirit!

By Sandy Tarkington, Columbus Kiwanis Club

Dyersburg High School (DHS) Key Club is back in action, volunteering and serving the community stronger than ever - with their membership **THREE** times the number of last year.

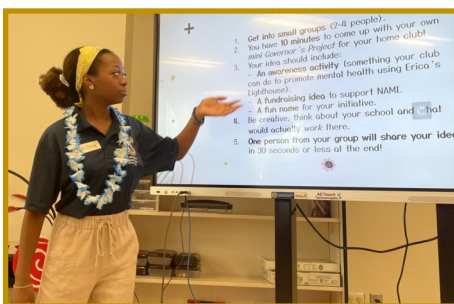
The first service project of the year for DHS Key Club was in co-

ordination with the local Farmers Market. On September 6th, they helped sign up community members to vote for our community in a grant that could bring free concerts to the market. How great to see students making such a potential impact for our entire community!

DHS Key Club Sponsor is Megan Brock, a long-term Kiwanis member and past president (2011-13). Megan's background in Kiwanis, as well as her connectivity to the community, ensures an active and productive Key Club. We are proud of our local Key Club!



Fall Rallies Continued ...



LaMissTenn Key Club Governor Lindsey Griffith presents a workshop at the Baton Rouge Fall Rally

this event by providing snacks throughout the day, the advisors' hospitality lounge, and pizza for lunch.

Rally number three took place at

Baton Rouge Magnet High School in Louisiana on September 27th. More than 200 Key Clubbers attended workshops ranging from club officer training to running for higher district level positions as well as learning about DCON, social media presence and the Kiwanis Family. The keynote speaker was two-time Key Club International Trustee Ethan Schmitz. The thrift store fundraiser organized in the cafeteria was a huge success! Members from Ascension, Baton Rouge, Cortana, LSU and Red Stick Kiwanis provided and served lunch.

Still left to come are the Lafayette Fall Rally on October 25th and the Memphis Fall Rally to be scheduled soon. A huge shoutout goes to the many Kiwanians who attend and participate in the rallies!



LaMissTenn Key Club Board Members present keynote speaker International Trustee Ethan Schmitz with a gift at the Baton Rouge Rally.

Algiers Kiwanis Keeps Busy!

By Linda Leger, Algiers Kiwanis Club

The Algiers Kiwanis Club had several things going on this past quarter. We assisted with registration for the Red Dress Run on August 7-9. A total of 9 members and 4 non-members worked for 116 hours for the combined 3 days. The Red Dress Run is an annual charity event held in New Orleans, organized by the New Orleans Hash House Harries. Participants wear red dresses and run or walk through the city starting at Crescent Park and continue through the French Quarter. The event is a fundraiser for local charities with proceeds going to various causes.



Assisting with the Joey's Hope Project are Algiers Kiwanis and Edna Karr High School & Academy of Our Lady Key Clubs.

Now that school is back in session, we're continuing to support the "Joey's Hope" project by filling bags with food items to be distributed to several local schools to supply kids in need. We do this as a service project at our monthly



Joey's Hope Project

meeting on the first Thursday of the month. Key Clubs from Edna Karr High School and Academy of Our Lady assist with this project.

We presented the Officer of the Quarter plaque and check to Stephanie Kennedy for her hard work and dedication as a New Orleans police officer.



Algiers Kiwanis members volunteering at the Red Dress Run.



Officer of the Quarter

Ascension Kiwanis Celebrates Community!

By Tiffany LaPorte & Donna Leggett, Ascension Kiwanis Club

When we work together, we make the world better. That's why Kiwanis International participates every year in Celebrate Community - a weeklong initiative that promotes collaboration between Kiwanis International, Lions Clubs International, Optimist International and Rotary International. The event happens the second week of September.

This year in honor of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, the **Kiwanis Club of Ascension** collaborated with the Gonzales Lions Club to provide care items for St. Jude's pediatric patients at Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital. We partnered with the Dream Day Foundation to assemble care packages for over 100 patients and families.



The Hydration Drive: Fueling Our Teams

By Angela Crooms, Greenville Kiwanis Club

In the month of July, as temperatures spiked above 100 degrees, the **Kiwanis Club of Greenville** continued its commitment to supporting local student-athletes through the “Cool Kiwanis” Project. President Jan Vaughn and fellow members rallied together to provide Gatorade and Powerade to help athletes stay hydrated during the intense summer heat.

On Monday, July 21st, the Kiwanians visited Greenville High School, and on Tuesday, July 22nd, they made a stop at St. Joseph Catholic School. This effort was a meaningful way to show student-athletes that their health and well-being matter, while also offering encouragement as they prepare for the upcoming season.

Coaches and players were present both days to receive the donations, and Kiwanis members enjoyed the opportunity to connect with the teams, share words of support, and demonstrate the club’s ongoing dedication to youth in our community.



Columbus Kiwanis Cares!

By Ralph Carter, Columbus Kiwanis Club

Members of the **Kiwanis Club of Columbus** recently put together Blessing Bags to help the homeless of Lowndes County Mississippi. The bags included a wash cloth, socks, deodorant, tissues, bandages, shampoo, body wash, loofah, toothpaste, toothbrush, floss, granola bar, meat sticks, tea, lemonade mix, snack crackers, trail mix, and canned tuna. Club members packed 30 bags which were delivered to the Homeless Coalition in Columbus for distribution. Members participating were Ralph Carter, Taylor Richardson, Hollis Peel, Floyd McIntyre, Bob Crigler, and Mark Crigler.

Cortana Kiwanis Gives Back

By Wanda Magee, Cortana Kiwanis Club

Builders Club

Cortana Kiwanis members Khaki Pittman, Jim Frederick, Wanda Magee, and Reggie & Mary Stockwell joined Faculty Advisor Megan Perry and students for another Builders Club meeting at Mayfair Elementary Lab School. Everybody got into the act of making bracelets for patients at Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital.



AED FOR KIDS' ORCHESTRA

On Thursday, September 11th, Cortana Kiwanis members Chuck Morgan, Sean McDonald, Pam Morgan, and Cortana President Brent Phillips presented the an AED to Dr. Brian Gallion, Operations Director at the Kids' Orchestra.

The Kids' Orchestra is an after school program at many public and charter schools. Their mission is to build a community of creative, confident, and socially engaged students through music education.



JAMBALAYA FOR RECOVERY WALK

Daryle Gauthier and his amazing team of Rick Haddad, Tooley Towns, and Don MacGregor prepared jambalaya servings for 200 registrants at the Inaugural United in Recovery Walk benefiting O'Brien House. Everyone ate and raved about how delicious the Cortana Kiwanis jambalaya was.



THE SAFETY PLACE

Brent Phillips, Reggie Stockwell, Keith McDavid, and Heather Folks-Givens, spent the morning at the Safety Place's new home at Cedar Ridge Park! They built 3 'houses', finished a boat, and the grocery store, and put together some cars all for Safety Town.

This will be a fantastic place for children to learn about gun, fire, playground, and bike safety. Also, Safety Place will be able to work with more children now that they have a home instead of having to transport and build Safety Town over and over again.



FOOD BANK

Keith McDavid, Wanda Magee, Daryle Gauthier, and Danny Fields presented 200 food items which were donated by Cortana Members to Mike Manning, President & Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank. Mike thanked Cortana members for participating in the Challenge issued by Jan Risher, Staff Writer at The Advocate. Armed with a check from the Cortana Community Service Committee, Daryle Gauthier went shopping to supplement what Cortana members donated.



VOLUNTEERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Haley Miller, the Volunteer and Community Partners Director at Volunteers in Public Schools, discussed the organization's efforts to improve literacy rates among students in East Baton Rouge public schools. Haley was presented with a check for \$500 from the Cortana Community Service Committee budget to purchase books to give to children.



Continued on page 31

WWW.LAMISSTENN.ORG

Cortana Gives Back Continued . . .

CHRISTMAS PARADE BENEFICIARIES

Cortana Kiwanis Foundation presented grant checks of \$8,000 each to the Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center and the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition.

Tanya Haase Executive Director of the Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center thanked Cortana Kiwanis for the impact of supporting children and families that have been going thru trauma related to abuse, violence, and sexual assault. Tanya explained how the funds have supported their Grinchmas event and summer Therapy Program.

Josh Howard Chief of Staff, and Lucas Spielfogel, Executive Director were grateful to accept the check for the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition. Lucas said that one of the ways that BRYC and Kiwanis are aligned is the ethos of one child in one community at a time. He shared a success story of a Scotlandville High student winning the Gates scholarship, highlighting the impact of their work in local schools.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Kiwanis Club of Baton Rouge Foundation presented a \$1,500 Micro Grant to Michelle Carbo of Junior Achievement of Baton Rouge for their JA Biz Town program, which provides immersive



Cortana Kiwanis presents \$8,000 to Executive Director Tanya Haase of the Baton Rouge Children's Advocacy Center.



Cortana Kiwanis presents \$8,000 to Chief of Staff Josh Howard and Executive Director Lucas Spielfogel of the Baton Rouge Youth Coalition.

business and money learning experiences for 5th grade students in East Baton Rouge Parish.

Also, Cortana Kiwanis supported the St. Vincent de Paul Uniforms for Kids program with a \$500 donation.

BROADMOOR ELEMENTARY

Cortana Kiwanis members showed their generosity by donating school supplies for Broadmoor Elementary School. Pam Morgan delivered them. The faculty was very thankful. We love our "Little Bucs" and wish them a happy, successful school year.

Also, Pam & Chuck Morgan, Susie Hahn, and Debbie Chandler volunteered to be First Day Helpers at Broadmoor Elementary School.



He Built a Culture of Reading with Dawn Busters

By Courtney Lucius, The Advocate Staff Writer

As he strode up to the podium at the Jefferson Parish School Board's June meeting, Mel Dussel asked everyone to join him for a pledge. "I promise," Dussel said, as board members and the audience repeated after him. "Over the summer holidays ... I will read at least five books."

It's a pledge he says in every elementary school across the parish every year. As chairman of the Rewards for Reading program at the Kiwanis of Metairie **Dawn Busters**, the 77-year-old retiree finishes every presentation with those words.

After 18 years, the program now touches 56 schools, and Dussel has presided over it since the beginning. It's sponsored by Metairie's Kiwanis Club, which has "Dawn Busters" as part of the name because of their early morning meeting time and the early morning radio show "Dawnbusters with Henry Dupre."

The club's Rewards for Reading program was created to help kids learn to read, and improving literacy has become a focus of policymakers since the pandemic.

As of May, 23% of Louisiana third graders scored "well-below" target reading levels on an end-of-year assessment, an improvement from 27% in 2024. And a new state law requires students to pass the

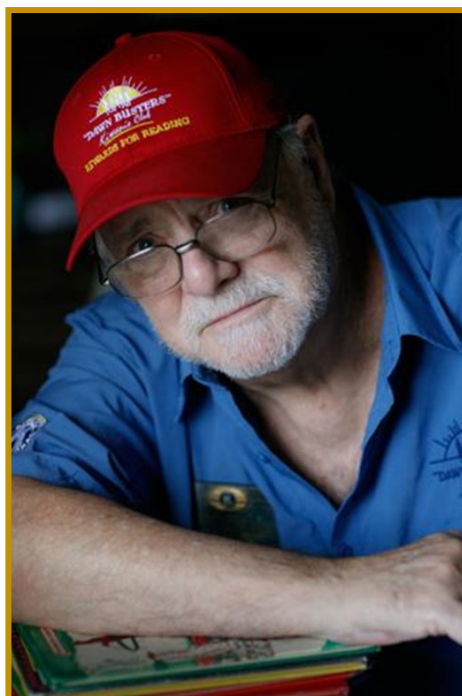


Photo of Mel Dussel by John McCusker

state reading test before advancing to fourth grade.

A car full of prizes

Here's how Rewards for Reading aims to solve the problem: A child reads a book, and takes a test on it. For each test they pass, they get a ticket that goes into a prize drawing. Then, twice a year, Dussel brings a car full of prizes — including Walmart gift cards, gift certificates for food or games and other donated items — to all 56 elementary schools in Jefferson Parish for the children who entered the drawing. The boy and girl who read the most books are rewarded with bikes. Over the years, the program has

given away between \$18 million and \$20 million in prizes.

Julie Broussard, a former Jefferson Parish school system librarian, saw firsthand how the program motivated kids to read. She had to start arriving to school 30 minutes early so kids could go to the library to check out books. Now, as the Bridgewater Elementary School principal and as a Jefferson Parish parent herself, Broussard sees how the program continues to get children excited about reading.

"Some students haven't had experiences with literacy and literature in their homes, so school is their first experience with just fun reads," Broussard said. "It just became something that was a fun incentive, but just built this culture of reading in the school."

Dussel boasts that the reading program's participation throughout the years is 99%.

'You gotta do this'

The bike giveaway is the highlight of the Rewards for Reading program, and it has been since Dussel visited his first school, A.C. Alexander in Kenner.

That first year, Dussel had two bikes with him, but he planned to give away only one. He picked two names out of 600 kids, and by happenstance both children had parents

Continued on page 33

He Built a Culture of Reading Continued . . .

By Courtney Lucius, The Advocate Staff Writer

who had died within the past 6 months. Dussel gave away both bikes — and found his calling.

“To me, the man upstairs said ‘Hey Mel, you gotta do this,’” Dussel said.

At that point in 2009, the program was in 14 schools. But 10 years later it was in every school in the parish.

“I got to know the principals and librarians, and they said ‘Mr. Mel, what you’re doing is great, but you’re coming to a school where you got 500 kids. They’re waiting to see you and, 10 minutes later, you go on, and you give away two bikes and 498 kids are upset because they read a book and they didn’t win anything,’” Dussel said. “So I started going out and getting sponsors.”

Now, every child can get a prize, Dussel said. Cici’s Pizza gives the program 30,000 certificates a year; Adventure Quest Lazer Tag in Elmwood provides 30,000 free games; Game on Social Hub in Kenner supplies 30,000 certificates and different prizes for the top boy and girl readers.

The impact of rewarding children for reading, instead of punishing them, goes a long way, Broussard said.

As a parent, Broussard notices her own children are more excited

about reading for fun. They’ve even been asking to go to the library consistently this summer, she said.

Dussel makes this magic happen at the Rewards for Reading presentations, a school-wide assembly where Dussel gives away prizes to the entire school. With mascots and more, the presentations are carefully designed to entertain and excite children. When Dussel first started as chairman for the program, the presentations lasted 3 minutes. Now, they’re as long as 45 minutes to an hour.

“Everything that we say in front of these kids has been carefully thought of. I got them jumping up and down, I get them screaming, I get them dancing ... You know, their attention span is roughly three

minutes,” Dussel said. “So every three minutes I’m changing things.” Dussel says he dedicates at least two and a half months a year to this program, planning the presentations, gathering sponsors and visiting every school. But he isn’t traveling alone. His fellow volunteers from the Dawn Busters Kiwanis Club take a month and a half off of “everything they do in life” for this program.

But the results make the sacrifice worth it for Dussel and the Dawn Busters Kiwanis Club, he said.

“It’s our job, as adults,” Dussel said. “These are our kids and the future of Jefferson Parish depends on what these kids do as they grow up. And if they can’t read, they can’t succeed.”



The Dawn Busters Biker Gang! Delivering bikes for our Rewards for Reading Program to some of our schools.

Hammond Kiwanis Helps Kids Pack for School

By Vic & Judy Couvillion, Hammond Kiwanis Club

BACK PACKS FOR KIDS

Hammond Kiwanis was represented at the annual Back to School Bash sponsored by the City of Hammond. Judy Couvillion joined a group prepping back packs for school supplies that were to be handed out to school children in the area. The Hammond Kiwanis Club has supported the Hammond's Back to School Bash for a number of years and each year contributes a cash donation that goes towards the purchase of school supplies.

Preparing back packs for distribution were, from left, Hammond City Judge Britain Sledge, Ty & Payten Silewicz, Judy Couvillion, and Hammond Mayor Pete Panepinto. →



OLDEST MEMBER HONORED

Hammond Kiwanis recently honored one of its cherished members, Marty Solis, on the occasion of his 94th birthday. Solis, the oldest member of the club, still attends the group's weekly meetings. He has been a member of Hammond Kiwanis for 25 years and for most of those years was recognized annually for perfect attendance.



September 21st brought to a close the second annual Top Dog Memphis contest. Top Dog has become one of our major fundraising events. Last year we raised over \$15,000. While this year's amount was somewhat less, \$7,500, we still did well and got a lot of great press out for our organization.

The contest is simple. You enter a photo of your dog along with a brief paragraph of why your dog deserves to win and anyone can vote for your pup. Votes count one dollar apiece and all money raised goes to the **Kiwanis Club of Memphis**. The dog with the most votes gets their image and story

Top Dog Memphis

By Melanie Blakeney, Memphis Kiwanis Club

on a beer can produced by one of our sponsors, Grind City Brewing. They are a tremendous participant and also allow us to hold a celebration party at their facility on the river in Memphis. The second-place dog wins a custom portrait done by a local artist. The rest of the winning dogs, through tenth place, get gift certificates to another sponsor's location, Hollywood Feed pet stores.



This Sunday was the party at Grind City. We had food trucks; music by a local DJ and several vendors with dog-related services and gifts. The event was well attended, and everyone had a great time visiting with all the dogs. We fully expect to hold the contest again next year!

KIWANIAN OF THE YEAR

Long time Kiwanis Club of Memphis member Harry Pratt was named 2025 Kiwanian of the Year. The award was presented to him at a recent luncheon for his outstanding service and dedication to the community.

← *Kiwanian of the Year Harry Pratt & his wife, Lisa Pratt*

New Orleans Kiwanis Hosts Back 2 School Dance

By Cathy Simmons, New Orleans Kiwanis Club



The Kiwanis Club of New Orleans hosted the 12th annual Back 2 School Dance for the high school and adult students of St. Michael Special School. What a blast! The school theme for this year, “Sailing the Seas of St. Michael School,” was the background for the wall of water entry way, as well as the shimmering waves on the tables. Ninety-four eager students filled the gym, donned their sailor hats and danced the night away! The play list included favorite tunes from the 80’s, as well as line dancing. The bubble machine was a big hit and so was the photo booth. Snacks of pulled pork sliders, Pirates’ Booty and rice crispy treats added to the evening festivities. It was great being with the students again. Their energy and enthusiasm for starting a new school year filled the air. Check out some of the fun!



Are You Ready for Reading?

By Tracy Duplantier, St. Bernard-Arabi Kiwanis Club

Kiwanis of St Bernard-Arabi is stepping up to support the children of St Bernard Parish in getting “Ready for Reading” (RFR). The goal of all literacy initiatives under the RFR umbrella is to support children in achieving key literacy milestones of reading proficiency by providing increased access to books and engaging reading experiences!

Reading programs begin with Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library where children are eligible to receive one age-appropriate book per month from birth until age five. The books are mailed directly to the child’s home.

Kiwanis Read Around the World provides books to over 500 prekindergartners twice a year. Readers provide an opportunity for the students to hear their chosen book at school, and each student gets to take it home.

Our Reading Incentive Program is also being perfected at 3 local elementary schools. Students are encouraged to read grade level books and take ARP tests. They are rewarded with opportunities to win incentives. The program has already contributed to students more than doubling their Accelerated Reading points and number of words read throughout last school year!



Our club’s involvement with literacy doesn’t stop with these programs. We also support Book Fairs, a Library Summer Reading Program, and Little Free Libraries. This worthy endeavor will take the efforts of our whole community, but we believe our kids are worth it and we are excited to help them get “Ready for Reading!”

Opelousas: Doing Great Things!

By Carrie Richard, Opelousas Kiwanis Club

SUMMER CAMP

On July 30th, the Opelousas Kiwanis Club proudly partnered with Mr. Eric Williams, founder of the non-profit Guns Down, Power Up, to support the organization's impactful summer camp initiative. Mr. Williams, who recently became a Kiwanian, continues to lead efforts to combat gun violence and guide young people toward positive life choices.

The mission of Guns Down, Power Up is to reduce gun violence by empowering youth with tools for leadership, confidence, and long-term thinking. During the event, Mr. Williams passionately shared with the campers the importance of building self-respect, making thoughtful decisions, and visualizing a brighter future.

Kiwanis members were on-site cooking and serving hot dogs and nachos to the campers. The event was attended by several Kiwanis leaders, including President Shelly Fontenot, President-Elect Pam Thibodeaux, Treasurer Valerie Arceneaux, Eric Williams, and Jamie Comier.

The partnership between the Kiwanis Club and Guns Down, Power Up reflects a shared commitment to shaping future leaders and creating a safer, stronger community.

SOFTBALL AND COOKING

On August 16, 2025, the Opelousas Kiwanis Club proudly hosted its 5th Annual Co-Ed Softball Tournament alongside the 2nd Annual "Anything Over Rice" Cook-Off. These events, held at the City of Opelousas' Teen Civic Center and adjoining baseball fields, were more than just fundraisers



Volunteers and participants of the Guns Down, Power Up Summer Camp

— they were a celebration of community spirit, collaboration, and fun for all ages.

The softball tournament featured six co-ed teams, including four representing the Kiwanis Club's valued corporate sponsors. American Bank and Trust Company participated under the leadership of club Treasurer, Valerie Arceneaux. Dupre Carrier Godchaux was represented by Secretary, Carrie Richard, while St. Landry Bank & Trust Co. was represented by club President Shelly Fontenot, Bobby Tomlinson, Board Member, Marlena Cane, and Miranda Zachary. Washington State Bank also fielded a team, proudly supported by Kiwanians Allison Hagan, Hope Vaughn, and Latasha Aggision.

In addition to these corporate sponsors, two community-based teams joined the tournament: Bat Intentions, participating for the first time, and Hope for Opelousas, a nonprofit organization and long-standing partner of the Kiwanis Club through their Kiwa-

nis Kids signature project.

The softball competition was spirited and filled with camaraderie. Hope for Opelousas clinched the championship title for the second consecutive year, showcasing their teamwork and enthusiasm. St. Landry Bank & Trust Co. earned second place, rounding out a strong performance by the corporate teams.

In conjunction with the tournament, the club also hosted its 2nd Annual "Anything Over Rice" Cook-Off, which saw tremendous growth compared to the initial event two years ago, which had only three participants. This year, nine teams entered, bringing a variety of flavorful and creative dishes.

Participating teams Catalyst Bank represented by Kiwanian, Ashley Burleigh, Dads and Kids represented by Kiwanian Jeremy Richard, St. Landry Bank represented by Ben Marks and Washington State Bank represented by Allison Hagan, Hope Vaughn and Latasha Aggision. Other enthusiastic

Continued on page 37

WWW.LAMISSTENN.ORG

Opelousas: Doing Great Things! Continued . . .

By Carrie Richard, Opelousas Kiwanis Club

teams included D&D, Krewe De Stew, K&Z Auto Body, the Lions Club, and Put Ya Foot In It. Notably, the Lions Club had previously supported Kiwanis by donating homemade chili for the last few years for our hotdog sales with our tournament.

The cook-off delivered both delicious food and friendly competition. Dads & Kids took home 1st place, followed by Krewe De Stew in 2nd place and Washington State Bank in 3rd. The People's Choice Award went to St. Landry Bank, affirming their popularity with the crowd.

The day was further enhanced with live music featuring local talent from across Acadiana, including DJ Alton Celestine from Ville Platte, David Henry of Church Point, Holly Ortego from Basile, and Lafayette's own J.J. Cailler. The event also included family-friendly activities such as free bingo for all ages and temporary tattoos for children, making it a fun and inclusive event for the entire community.

The Opelousas Kiwanis Club extends sincere thanks to the many indi-



1st Place Softball Tournament Team: Hope for Opelousas

viduals and organizations who made the event a success. Special recognition goes to the City of Opelousas for donating the use of the Teen Civic Center and baseball field, and to the Rotary Club of Opelousas for volunteering their time to help run the event. Additional thanks are due to Everything Rental for providing cooling equipment and to Super 1 Foods for donating water for attendees. The club also wishes to thank Mr. Jody White, Gary Vidrine, and Len Champagne for generously volunteering their time to serve as umpires for the softball tournament.



Finally, the Opelousas Kiwanis Club expresses its deepest gratitude to all of its dedicated members, whose hard work, planning, and passion brought this day to life. With the continued support of local businesses, nonprofits, and community members, the Kiwanis Club remains committed to service and fellowship. Until next year—thank you for making a difference with us!



1st Place Cook-off Team: Dads & Kids



Ponchatoula Kiwanis Continues Traditions

By Pete Clark, Ponchatoula Kiwanis Club

TEACHER'S PRAYER BREAKFAST

Another excellent way to start the school year off for our local teachers and staff was a remarkable success! Our **Ponchatoula Kiwanis Club** proudly worked hard to prepare and host this annual event. We offer this occasion as a welcome meet and greet, we serve delicious homemade breakfast, and door prizes as a form of appreciation.

Our members team up to prepare months ahead with the menu and work with local business owners to gather door prizes and gifts to involve our entire community. Every year the attendance grows as this is so exciting with over 140 teachers and staff attending this year.

Our Mayor Wesley Daniels spoke with words of encouragement. The Ponchatoula Jaycees Club also helped by providing gifts.

Teachers and staff are grateful for this event as this shows our love and



support for all their hard work. Our Ponchatoula High Key Clubbers helped us by serving food and passing out gifts with bright smiles all morning!! Our members are always honored to organize and hold this annual event to cherish and thank our local school's staff! We pray that our teachers and students will have a safe and productive year as we work together to improve our community.

BOOK GIVEAWAY

We had the pleasure of giving a book to every third grader at DC Reeves Elementary School. This is one of our favorite projects to promote reading



throughout our community. As a partner with Tangipahoa Parish School System Literacy Program, we are honored to participate and show our support.

The children are always excited to be able to choose their own book to keep. We provide all types of different books of interest so the students can have a wide variety of choices. Our members love meeting the teachers and talking with the students about how important reading is. Students also share stories with us about why they choose the book they choose.

Share Your Club's News!

By Tiffany LaPorte, District Bulletin Editor

Submit your article and photographs:

EMAIL: tiffany@lamisstenn.org

ARTICLES & PHOTOGRAPHS: All article submissions must be attached in an email as a Word document along with picture captions. *Please submit original articles written by your club's members. We cannot use pre-published articles due to copyright laws.* Do not include photos within text documents; send as separate attachments in the highest resolution possible.

Please send one Word document along with pictures attached separately in one email. Multiple stories per club should be sent in one Word Document, preferably an overview of each story in one article.

DEADLINES:

The deadline for submissions is always two weeks before the publication's date. The deadline for the next issue is:

Jan 2026 Issue = Deadline Dec 15, 2025

Include this information:

CLUB: Club Name and Author **TITLE:** Article Title

EVENT: Make sure to answer: **what** was done, **why** it was done, **who** benefited, **when** and **where** it occurred, **how** it was accomplished, etc.

ACCURACY: Please double check all dates, locations, etc., and be sure that all names are spelled correctly. While we do our best to correct issues if we notice them, we do not have the resources to confirm this type of information.

PHOTOGRAPHS: If you're shooting a service project, look for an action photo of the volunteers in progress or interacting with children. Shoot from the front – we are not likely to use a shot with mostly backs. Use as high a resolution as possible. Captions may not always be published, but it is helpful if you can identify subjects.

AND REMEMBER . . . THE BEST SHOT WINS THE COVER!

Keep in mind, the cover photograph for the District News Magazine will be selected based on clarity and the display of impactful service.

We want photographs showing how your club impacts the community!



"The LaMissTenn District News"
is the official publication of the
Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee District of
Kiwanis International

2024-2025 LAMISSTENN DISTRICT BOARD:

Governor: Marcel Lashover

Governor-Elect: Andrew Dozier

Vice Governor: Laura Gilliland

Immediate Past Governor: Claude Vinson

Executive Director: Jen Robertson

Region I Trustee:

Oscar Brown, *Millington, TN*

Region II Trustee:

Ralph Carter, III, *Columbus, MS*

Region III Trustee:

Lorri Alles, *The Natchez Trace, MS*

Region IV Trustee:

Jennifer Kelly-White, *Thibodaux, LA*

Region V Trustee:

Rick Danielson, *Northshore Mandeville, LA*

Region VI Trustee:

John Gherardi, *Lafayette, LA*

Region VII Trustee:

Darren Green, *Alexandria, LA*

DISTRICT OFFICE INFORMATION:

Jen Robertson, Executive Director:

jen@lamisstenn.org

Tiffany LaPorte, Administrative Assistant:

tiffany@lamisstenn.org

225-769-9233

districtoffice@lamisstenn.org

www.lamisstenn.org

MAILING ADDRESS:

LaMissTenn Kiwanis District Office

10000 Celtic Drive, Suite 706

Baton Rouge, LA 70809

HOURS:

Monday - Friday: 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.