

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## The Meaning of Kiwanis

The name Kiwanis is an adaptation from the Indian term "Nun Keewanis," which in its original meaning suggested the promotion of personal and economic interests. "We Trade" was the slogan adopted by the early founders of Kiwanis. But Kiwanis has come to have a much broader, a much deeper, a much more significant meaning.

To the educator, Kiwanis is an organization which can and does help out in the growing problems of public education; to the governmental official, Kiwanis is an organized effort on the part of some of our best citizens to secure better government; to the business man, Kiwanis affords the business and professional men of any community an opportunity for good fellowship and a means of being of real assistance to those who are unfortunate, with particular emphasis on children. To the minister, Kiwanis is important not only for the good things that it accomplishes in local communities, but also because it is an international organization interested in the welfare of all humanity.

Following the leadership of stalwart citizens, Kiwanis in 1920 adopted the comprehensive and



impressive motto "We Build." Under the guidance and inspiration of this motto, Kiwanis has come to mean a unique, altruistic agency, seeking to build for the betterment of all mankind.

Kiwanis came into being as a local club in Detroit, Michigan, in January, 1915. The following year, when more than twenty Kiwanis clubs had been organized, fifteen clubs sent representatives to a convention in Cleveland, Ohio, where a "National Constitution" was adopted, and the name "The Kiwanis Club" was designated as the official title of the combined clubs.

Under the authority of their new constitution, clubs were soon chartered at Hamilton and Toronto, Canada, and in rapid succession in various States of the Union. Thus, when the annual convention met in Detroit in 1917, there were two Canadian clubs and fifty-three American clubs. Kiwanis had become International. After the close of World War I, Kiwanis moved forward "with an unexploited potential." The present official name — KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL — was adopted at the eighth annual convention at Denver, Colorado, in 1924, at which time, also, the Constitution and Bylaws were adopted.

Kiwanis has grown from year to year by the process of division and multiplication. For the purpose of making advancement and promoting the best interests of its members, the Kiwanis International area, which embraces all of the United



States and Canada, is divided into Districts, and Districts in turn are sub-divided into divisions, the latter being areas for convenience of administration. At present there are thirty districts and approximately 475 divisions, each varying greatly in geographical area, and in the number of clubs in the area.

In some instances the area of a district is co-extensive with the area of the State. In other cases, a district embraces two or more States. Iowa is in the unique position of having some of its clubs in each of two districts. Twelve clubs in eastern Iowa — those of Burlington, Clinton, Davenport, Dubuque, Keokuk, Lansing, McGregor, Monona, Mount Pleasant, Muscatine, Postville, and Waukon — are in the Illinois-Eastern Iowa District. Thus, they are closely allied with their friendly neighbors on the east, in both the metropolitan areas, and the smaller city clubs of the more rural sections of Illinois.

All other clubs in Iowa — seventy-six in number — are in the Nebraska-Iowa District. These are closely associated with a wide western expanse embracing most of Nebraska, including clubs in Omaha and Lincoln. Thus, Kiwanis clubs throughout Iowa have a feeling of unity with clubs extending from Chicago westward for almost 800 miles. This situation came about because of the manner in which the early clubs were organized in this area.



The first Kiwanis Club organized in what is now the Nebraska-Iowa District was formed in Omaha, in February, 1919. The following month a club was organized in Lincoln. On June 30, 1919, the third club in this area, and the first one organized in Iowa, was chartered in Des Moines. At an Executive Session of the Board of Trustees in October, 1919, authority was given to organize a new area, to be known as the "Western Iowa District," and which would embrace these three newly organized clubs. Accordingly, at a meeting in Des Moines on January 6, 1920, the new District was organized. Although two of the three clubs represented were from Nebraska, and although Mr. A. R. Edmiston of Lincoln, Nebraska, was elected Governor, the name designated for the newly formed area was the "Western Iowa District." At a convention in Omaha in September, 1921, Mr. Joseph L. Long of Des Moines was elected as District Governor — thus becoming the first Iowan to hold that high office. In May, 1922, the name of the district was changed to the Nebraska-Iowa District.

Meanwhile, Kiwanis was advancing in eastern Iowa. The Illinois-Eastern Iowa District was first organized as the Illinois District in September, 1918. At that time there were but four clubs in the District — Chicago, Aurora, Peoria, and Rockford. In October, 1919, the district was extended westward into Iowa, and the name Illinois-



Eastern Iowa District was adopted. The first Iowa club in this district was organized at Dubuque on February 20, 1920. During that same year clubs sprang up at Davenport and Clinton.

Thus, at an early date Kiwanis was exemplifying its motto "We Build." It was dividing its areas, increasing its membership, sharing its responsibilities, and multiplying its benefits, a process it has continued through the years.

The objects of Kiwanis as set forth at the annual convention in Denver in 1924, and approved as an International standard in 1925 were:

To give primacy to the human and spiritual, rather than to the material values of life.

To encourage the daily living of the Golden Rule in all human relationships.

To promote the adoption and the application of higher social, business, and professional standards.

To develop, by precept and example, a more intelligent, aggressive and serviceable citizenship.

To provide, through Kiwanis clubs, a practical means to form enduring friendships, to render altruistic service, and to build better communities.

To cooperate in creating and maintaining that sound public opinion and high idealism which make possible the increase of righteousness, justice, patriotism, and good will.

To meet specific community and national problems, annual objectives are adopted by the International Board of Trustees. The Kiwanis Objectives for the year 1960 are:



- To exemplify the highest moral and spiritual values.
- To urge complete understanding between Canada and the United States.
- To develop individual citizenship responsibility.
- To stimulate youth to strive for excellence; and broaden all youth activities.
- To organize and support effective programs for senior citizens.
- To generate individual concern for safety, improved traffic laws and enforcement.
- To demand sound fiscal policies in all phases of our economy.
- To promote free enterprise and foster labor-management cooperation.
- To increase our knowledge of world affairs and advance the rule of law in international relations.

The administrative theme adopted by Kiwanis International for 1960 is: **FREEDOM IS UP TO YOU.**

Many years ago — long before the heyday of Kiwanis — a distinguished Iowa statesman, Jonathan P. Dolliver of Fort Dodge, speaking in the halls of Congress said:

I like a man who can not only take care of himself, but can do something for the unfortunate who surround him in this world. When you bury a citizen like that, you do not call him a man. You call him a lover of mankind, and build monuments to him.

Kiwanis exemplifies and promotes ideals such as those characterized by Mr. Dolliver. Members of Kiwanis promote friendliness, good fellowship, and helpfulness among their members. They take



care of themselves. But they also have a forthright, constructive program for helping the unfortunate who surround them in the world. More significant than that, they contribute of their time, talent, and influence to the educational, cultural and moral development of citizens everywhere.

Loyalty, cooperation, and patriotism are virtues which Kiwanis seeks to exemplify. Weekly Kiwanis meetings are usually opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

In Kiwanis circles these are familiar words: "We pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands — one nation under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all."

Many clubs also display a large banner with this pledge which the members recite in unison.

As our Country's  
Flag signifies  
Purity  
Valor and  
Justice,

May We true  
Kiwanians  
exemplify those  
Virtues  
As We Build.

Kiwanis contributes something more than ritual and lip service. It is a practical application of the principles of the Golden Rule as applied to our



modern everyday life. It is a composite group of business, professional and agricultural men devoted to the rendition of service to the respective communities in which clubs are located. In its rendition of service it has come to have a meaning of its own. It means what its many thousands of members throughout the United States and Canada have chosen to make it — a substantial and praiseworthy benefactor of mankind.

In any discussion of Kiwanis activities and personnel, however, it should be noted that Kiwanis is but one of several organizations interested in community advancement. Among the several clubs in a community there may well be a healthy, competitive, friendly rivalry. Yet there is a unity of purpose toward which all are striving. Each, in its own way, endeavors to excel in advancing community welfare. Thus each club grows and is strengthened by its own initial activities, and the aggregate of civic improvement is thereby raised to a higher level. Accordingly, Service Clubs, as a group, are to be commended. The motto of Kiwanis "We Build" would be a fitting slogan for all Service Clubs. For all are building for the advancement of community interests and the betterment of all mankind.