

Best Practices: Opening New Kiwanis Clubs

Creating an effective new-club team:

- Teamwork is the key to success. Include at least five to eight people on the committee, not counting the lieutenant governor and the new-club builder.
- Select people for the new-club team who have complementary skills. Knowledge of Kiwanis is a must, as well as enthusiasm for the project.
- A sponsoring Kiwanis club creates a “win-win” situation. The new club receives guidance and support, while the sponsoring club renews its enthusiasm for Kiwanis.

Evaluating opportunities:

- The site survey should be completed early in the process. The purpose of this initial survey is to identify needs that a Kiwanis club can fulfill and to identify a core group of members for the new club.
- Use the site survey as an opportunity to develop a prospect list. Referrals from contacts made are the best. Business listings and chamber of commerce memberships can be used to supplement the list, but need to be checked for outdated information.
- Create a short overview of the results of the site survey. This “case for a new club” can be used by the recruiters when contacting prospects about membership in the club.

Connecting to the community:

- Think outside the box for opportunities to organize different styles of Kiwanis clubs. Evaluate information to determine what type of club, meeting time and location, and prospect base is best for the new club. Remember, the charter members will make the ultimate decision.
- Meet with the new-club team to establish a time line to complete the new club. Key to creating a time line is identifying the best time to schedule the recruiting days.

Inviting additional members:

- Personalize the recruitment letter whenever possible and ask one of the core members from the site survey to sign it.
- Train all Kiwanians who are recruiting. Review the materials and a typical contact call. Role-play to increase confidence.
- Print an extra set of mailing labels for the prospect list and place them on index cards. Distribute to recruiting teams to make notes and coordinate efforts.

- Divide the prospect cards into geographic areas to make travel time efficient. Have physical addresses listed on the card, not post office boxes, and provide maps for the recruiting teams.
- While recruiting, pair Kiwanians to play off each other's strengths (for example, men and women, young and old, new and experienced Kiwanians).
- Appoint someone to keep the prospect list organized while recruiting continues. Place completed membership applications and checks for membership fees in a binder or folder.
- Ask everyone you contact for referrals, whether they joined the club or not. The best leads come from others in the community.
- Follow up with people who did not initially join but wanted to stay informed. Send letters, postcards, and e-mails, and/or make phone calls to inform them of meetings and projects.

Guiding the new club to organization:

- Schedule meetings to begin after you have at least the minimum required number of members who have completed an application and paid the membership fee.
- Create a nominations and bylaws committee at the first preorganization meeting of the new club to prepare recommendations for bylaws and nominations of officers and directors at the organization meeting.
- Use the pre-organization meetings and the official organization meeting to inform the new club members how a Kiwanis club is structured and functions. The new-club team guides the new club through decisions that are in the best interest of the new club.

Providing leadership training and education:

- The club counselor provides an orientation program on Kiwanis to all members of the new club.
- Schedule a club leadership education session for club officers and directors.

Supporting and mentoring:

- The club counselor regulates the flow of information—which can be overwhelming—and helps the new club set priorities. He or she will stay with the club for the first two years.
- Conduct a fundraising activity such as a silent auction at the charter event.
- The club counselor, in conjunction with the sponsoring club, organizes the first service project.
- Charge the sponsoring club with the task of continuing recruiting for the new club for the first year after organization.