GOOD SPORTS

KIWANIANS IN NEVADA KEEP THE FUN ROLLING WITH A BIKE CAMP FOR KIDS

PLAYER ASSIST
BUILDERS CLUB
BASEBALL

FLORIDA FUN RUN
BEACH BODIES IN MOTION

BED GAMES
NO TIME FOR NAPS IN THIS RACE
When the time is right, Landscape Structures will be there to bring play to your community. In the meantime, take a virtual field trip at youtube.com/PlayLSI. Landscape Structures continues to be a Proud Vision Partner of Kiwanis International since 2013.
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Don’t sleep on this ...
From the executive editor

When I joined the staff of Kiwanis International as the CKI magazine editor in 2005, one of my first tasks was to attend the CKI convention in Greensboro, North Carolina. I was only weeks into my job, and here I was hanging out with hundreds of college-aged (and Kiwanis) leaders who wanted to change the world. I met so many great people that week. I knew right then and there that Kiwanis was special.

And here we are now. 2020. As I write this, we are in the middle of a global pandemic that is keeping most of us stuck indoors. But that hasn’t stopped us from staying in touch. We use technology to reach out to friends and family — possibly more now than before the crisis hit. And you know what? One of the people who has reached out to me during this is someone I met at that CKI convention in 2005. He wanted to tell me about a Kiwanian who is helping with testing during this crisis.

That’s the best thing about Kiwanis, isn’t it? The connections we make. Not only with the people we help and serve, but the people we serve with and the new friends we make along the way.

I’ve told you about so many amazing people I’ve met through Kiwanis. The women learning to sew in Vanuatu. The Kiwanians in Belgium who take kids sailing. The children (see below) we met in Madagascar whose mothers were immunized against maternal and neonatal tetanus.

In my new role as executive editor, I hope to introduce you to a lot more people through the pages of Kiwanis magazine. Kiwanis family members. Experts. Thought leaders. People you can learn from and share ideas with. That’s the point of this magazine.

We share stories that will hopefully inspire you to say to your fellow club members: We can do this! We’ve added tips to some of our stories to help you do just that. Steal these ideas. Try a new project or fundraiser. Read a feature about vaccinations or homelessness or hunger and think: How can we tackle that in our community? How can we help?

Enjoy the stories. And don’t forget to tell us yours at shareyourstory@kiwanis.org.

Thank you for reading. And thank you for your service.

KASEY JACKSON
EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Get your Store Purchasing Card sent to your phone right now.
Just text "KiwanisCard" to 844-446-6358.
To shop online, register at http://bit.ly/Kiwanis_OD

This Office Depot business savings program is administered by Excelerate America.
Earlier this year, life as we knew it was disrupted in a powerful and painful way. Choices taken for granted were no longer available. Gatherings were postponed or canceled in order to slow the spread of a virus and save lives. We have had to make many adjustments. It has been difficult for everyone, and heartbreaking for many families.

Now more than ever, I am proud to be a member of Kiwanis. My faith in our mission and purpose is reinforced by seeing our reaction to a global health crisis. It has been distressing to watch the effects of COVID-19 without knowing exactly what to say or how to help. We have not been able to meet face to face, but we are grateful that technology has allowed clubs to stay in touch and to be active.

Our organization has responded to health concerns by following guidelines to be safe and prepared to handle whatever comes next. The way we have carried on shows the bond that Kiwanis creates. We remain true to our core values.

The spirit of friendship and collaboration is one of my key messages for 2019-20. By cooperating, we can help kids and communities by solving a problem, lending a helping hand and creating opportunities.

Recent events have challenged everyone to think and behave differently. There will be needs that we haven’t even thought of yet. Kiwanians will be there to respond with a fierce resolve to have a positive impact.

Together, we are stronger than we are alone. We have learned to be more flexible and adjust as we navigate new territory. My message of friendship and collaboration includes using our differences as assets to strengthen our organization and our communities.

Our global society may be reshaped, but I am certain we will rebound with a new sense of gratitude and determination. Kiwanians will always use our good hearts, teamwork and resources to help and serve.

The food banks that have had more demand but less support. The kids who have been deprived of Kiwanis literacy programs — or the club-sponsored programs that gave them safe places to play. There are so many problems that have only grown with less of our service and fundraising.

But difficult times are calls to action. When this is over, kids will need Kiwanis more than ever — and clubs will need more members. Take heart. Stay safe. Envision the days when our hands and hearts will be critical to rebuilding all we’ve lost.
We’ve saved so many lives already. Now, the crucial part: reaching mothers and babies in some of the world’s most dangerous areas. Don’t rest — this is the critical moment. Help eliminate maternal and neonatal tetanus from the face of the Earth.

kiwanis.org/TheEliminateProject
The future is theirs

Never have I found an issue of Kiwanis magazine more valuable than the April/May 2020 issue. Thanks for publishing such useful information, appropriate quotes and practical ideas for addressing climate change.

Louis Logan
Kiwanis Club of Moses Lake, WA

All in the family

Your article on diversity under Membership was good (Kiwanis magazine, March 2020). Page 50 - Is your club inclusive? is awful and insulting. Think again and be more discerning in the future about what you place in this magazine that presents the wonderful group of Kiwanians. What I have seen is welcome arms and hearts within Kiwanis, embracing all those who are interested. Are we perfect? No. But definitely going in the right direction. Your article listed reasons why diversity is good. Page 50 just about erased that article. It is smug and talks down. Awful. I do not want to be a member of an organization that insults and does not lift us up. I am ashamed of this magazine and leadership which allowed this to be a part of such a vital magazine. I am just asking you to think in a deeper way. Very disappointed. My opinion.

Valerie Taylor
Kiwanis Club of South Shore, Sun City Center, Florida

Valuable translation

Thanks to Kiwanis for the Spanish translation of the magazine story (on kiwanismagazine.org). While reading the activities that Kiwanis carries out in the world, makes us proud to belong, we are encouraged to carry out our service projects in the community and we commit ourselves to supporting responsible volunteering so that the Kiwanis brand is strengthened and more members join.

Martha Andrade Posso
Kiwanis Club of Atuntaqui, Ecuador

On social media

Miss getting together with my local Kiwanians, but so many are actively showing acts of kindness from helping to sew masks to shopping for those who can’t venture out. We are Kiwanis strong!

Stephanie Cox
Facebook

Every Kiwanian misses his/her club meeting and Kiwanian friends. Let us be patient with the lockdown for the health and benefit of all of us. God bless you all.

Michel Fongue
Facebook

Thank you once again Kiwanis! This LTG is headed out this morning to perform a few random acts of kindness, for those in need. All while keeping myself and their safety and health number one!

Natali Tatiana
Facebook

So grateful! Summerville @Kiwanis Club just donated a $100 @Publix gift card to help us continue our weekly meal distribution (right) at the @SFYMCA. #WeAreAllInThisTogether @KatiesKrops Twitter

COMMENTS
For Kiwanis clubs, time and money are precious assets. Save some of each through Club Resources. Get goods at great prices through Kiwanis Warehouse. Enjoy preferred pricing and more at Office Depot/Office Max. Save time, save money. Then serve more kids.

kiwanis.org/club-resources
COVID-19 updates

Kiwanis clubs around the world are performing service and helping those impacted by the global pandemic.

At the time of publication, news was just beginning to come in about how clubs are helping during this time.

To read about club responses, visit kiwanis.org.

Youth protection hotline

As part of our commitment to meeting the highest standards of youth protection, Kiwanis International has established 1-866-607-SAFE (7233), a confidential helpline to receive reports of incidents, situations or behaviors that might put a youth at risk. This is available in the U.S. only.

The helpline is available to Kiwanis members, advisors, members of our Service Leadership Programs, faculty advisors, parents or anyone who thinks a youth involved in Kiwanis is at risk.

It will be staffed 24 hours a day through our partnership with Praesidium, one of the leading safety experts in the United States.

Learn more at kiwanis.org/youthprotection.

What’s happening

TRENDS, TIPS, FACTS AND FIGURES FROM KIWANIS INTERNATIONAL

Important dates in June and July

Father’s Day: June dates in several countries
World Chocolate Day: July 7
Nelson Mandela International Day: July 18
Miracle Treat Day with Children’s Miracle Network (U.S. only): July 23
International Friendship Day: July 30

Conventions canceled

The 2020 Kiwanis International Convention, 2020 Key Club International Convention and CKlx 20 are canceled. The Kiwanis International Board of Trustees declared a condition of emergency exists because of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The board concluded that conducting a convention for the 2019-20 administrative year would be inadvisable and impracticable because of the health threat to Kiwanis family members, their families and all individuals traveling to and from the convention.

Those who have registered for the Kiwanis convention received an email with details about their refund. Additional questions can be sent to registration@kiwanis.org.

The 2021 convention in Salt Lake City is scheduled for June 23-26.
Signature project contest finalists

Congratulations to the finalists in Tiers I and II of the Kiwanis Signature Project Contest.

**Tier I finalists (27 or fewer members)**
- Kiwanis Club of Adelaide Hills, Australia
  
- Kiwanis Club of Dyngja Reykjavík, Iceland, Faroes
  Weekend Retreat Center for Children
- Kiwanis Club of Christchurch, New Zealand, South Pacific
  The Women and Children’s Emergency Housing Shelter
- Kiwanis Club of New Lucena Central, Philippine Luzon, Philippines, Eat and Learn
- Kiwanis Club of North Ridgeville, Ohio, United States
  Trykes for Tikes
- Kiwanis Club of Conyers, Georgia, United States
  Helping Kids Read and Lead
- Kiwanis Club of Oak Lawn Area, Illinois, Eastern Iowa, United States
  Feed 6 Mega Event
- Kiwanis Club of Edinburg, Texas-Oklahoma, United States
  Wish Upon a Cure
- Kiwanis Club of Ormond Beach, Florida, United States
  Kiwanis READS! Summer Reading Challenge
- Kiwanis Club of New Orleans, Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee, United States
  Painting with Purpose: Ceiling Tiles for Children’s Hospital

Learn more at kiwanis.org/signatureproject

**Tier II finalists (28 or more members)**
- Kiwanis Club of Lucena Kalilayan, Philippine Luzon, Philippines, K-Jipney, Kalilayan’s Partner in Service
- Kiwanis Club of Geo-Ormoc, Philippine South, Philippines, Protect Children’s Rights
- Kiwanis Club of Tellico Village, Kentucky-Tennessee, United States
  Robotics/STEM in the School
- Kiwanis Club of Metairie Dawn Busters, Louisiana-Mississippi-West Tennessee, United States
  Rewards for Reading
- Kiwanis Club of Ames-Town and Country, Nebraska-Iowa, United States
  Teen Maze
- Kiwanis Club of Mansfield, Ohio, United States
  Friendly House
- Kiwanis Club of Prescott, Southwest, United States
  Live Annual Auction
- Kiwanis Club of Paris, Texas-Oklahoma, United States
  Paris Kiwanis Pancake Days
- Kiwanis Club of Western Kenosha, Wisconsin-Upper Michigan, United States
  Taste of Wisconsin
- Kiwanis Club of Gig Harbor, Pacific Northwest, United States
  Kiwanis Cares for Kids

Learn more at kiwanis.org/signatureproject

**Back to school**

It’s time to take advantage of back-to-school resources. And Kiwanis has you covered. Whether you’re a parent, grandparent, teacher or a caring Kiwanian, there are many ways you can support the children in your family, classroom and community.

Check out these resources today:

- **Kiwanis Warehouse.** Operated by Kiwanis partner Dollar Days, you can get backpacks, school supplies, hygiene products and more at wholesale and bulk prices. Stock up in time for school donations.
- **Scholastic.** Kiwanis clubs can receive resources to help children get access to books and reading opportunities, regardless of socio-economic status.
- **Reading is Fundamental.** Kiwanis club members can volunteer to be a guest reader at schools and community events, host a book drive, access RIF literacy resources for mentoring, order RIF books or stage a RIF fundraiser.

For more information on how you can work with any of these Kiwanis partners for back-to-school needs, visit kiwanis.org/partners.
Derailleur. It’s hard enough to spell. Try fixing one. A derailleur is a gear-changer on a bicycle — and a young cyclist needed hers repaired as she struggled through an obstacle course at a Downtown Sparks, Nevada, Kiwanis Club bike camp. When the campers later moved inside for repair classes, she consulted with club member Shane Kapala (at right).

“Let’s get it up on the stand and take a look,” Kapala said.

He showed her how to index a derailleur, lining it up at its lowest setting and then setting the cable tension so it worked.

“From there, we just moved up through each of the gears and lined it up so they all functioned as they should,” Kapala said.

Twenty years ago, the Downtown Sparks Kiwanis Club inherited a bike program from another Kiwanis club. Roger Jacobson, a club member, recalls the days of donating reconditioned bikes to schools and children-focused agencies in the Reno-Sparks community. Back then, the club budgeted US$5,000 for its Kiwanis Bike Program; today, it’s just under $200,000. And it’s much more than giving away bikes.

FAMILY CYCLE
SPARKS, NEVADA, KIWANIANS HELP KIDS AND THEIR FAMILIES MAINTAIN, REPAIR AND ENJOY THEIR BICYCLES AT A SPECIAL BIKE CLINIC.

Story by Jack Brockley | Photos by David Calvert
“In those early days,” Jacobson says, “we had some members — myself, my wife, Ellen, and Les Ede — who had been 4-H leaders. We soon began to ask ourselves why we weren’t doing more. Why weren’t we teaching kids responsible bike ownership, which means keeping your bike in good working condition so you can ride safely?”

The Kiwanians began adding safety rodeos and repair classes. Then came earn-a-bike incentives, family rides, school-based bike clubs and more.

At their repair shop, the Kiwanians sell reconditioned bikes, but rarely new ones. Nor do they charge for repairs. That would spoil a good relationship with local bike shops.

“What most people may not know is that bike shops make most of their money on repairs, not selling bikes,” Ellen Jacobson says. “If we’re teaching repairs, we’re not competing with the stores. If we’re selling repairs, we’d be in competition with them.”

Still, the club needs money to maintain its wide range of operations. At bike swaps, area residents sell their own bikes and give the consignment fees to the club. But the club’s biggest fundraiser — accounting for $50,000 annually — involves one of Earth’s most unusual cultural events.

Burning Man brings nearly 70,000 people from around the globe to a temporary city in the Black Rock Desert of northwestern Nevada. Wikipedia describes the one-week festival as “an experiment in community and art.” One of the attendees’ primary departure points is Sparks. Because motor vehicle use is limited at the festival, many “burners” rely...
on bicycles to get around the 7-acre community. That makes the Kiwanis bike shop a popular outfitter for them.

“We sell about 1,000 reconditioned bicycles each year to burners,” Jacobson says. “One of my favorite photos is of a woman from Ghana standing beside our map of the world with pins from visitors from around the world. She was on her way to Burning Man.”

When the week ends, many of those bikes are left behind and recycled yet again through the Kiwanians’ shop.

Jacobson also treasures a photo of a 10-year-old boy and his 80-year-old Kiwanis bike-shop mentor. The boy, who was in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program, became a volunteer in the Kiwanis bike program and continued through high school. “He was a typical teenager,” Jacobson remembers. “He’d say, ‘I’m not going to get hurt. I’m totally perfect on my bike. I don’t need a helmet.’ So I’d tell him, ‘If you don’t wear a helmet, you can’t come into the shop anymore, because you are a role model for all the younger kids.”’

The next day, the teen slid through a puddle, crashed and landed hard on his head. “If he hadn’t been wearing a helmet, he would have died,” Jacobson says. “Instead, he became our best advocate for fixing bicycles and bike safety.”

A year later, that teen joined the United States Navy. He’s now a nuclear engineer and credits the Kiwanis shop with giving him a practical foundation of mechanical know-how.

Lauren Brilliant is a story unto herself. Currently an honors student at the University of Nevada-Reno with med-school plans, Brilliant was required to complete a service learning project. A friend suggested the Kiwanis Bike Program.

“I didn’t even know how to fill a tire up with air when I started,” she says. “I learned pretty much everything I know (about bikes) at the shop. After I completed...
“While I will eventually be a doctor for other people, I currently am a doctor for bikes.”

my service learning hours, I ended up staying on as a student employee.”

Along the way, she met Rafael. “When she started out at camp, she was really unsteady on her bike,” Brilliant says. “Watching how she became increasingly confident, skilled and a safe rider was one of the most rewarding experiences, as Les Ede and I worked with her throughout the week.”

At the end of the camp, Brilliant, Rafael and other campers completed a successful long ride. “While I will eventually be a doctor for other people, I currently am a doctor for bikes,” Brilliant wrote in a school essay. Les Ede fondly remembers a timid 10-year-old girl named Emma.

“Emma was always the last one to do anything,” he says. “Of course, she was the last one to go out on the pump track.”

The pump track is a looped course with a series of mounds and flat dirt. The purpose is to use the upper and lower body to “pump” a bike around the circuit without pedaling. “It’s a full-body workout,” Ede stresses.

“The first lap, she was a bit slow,” he remembers. “The second time around, she picked up a little more speed. After about two hours later of whoop-de-dos, we had to physically go out and pull her off the track.

“From then on, she was always first in line to do anything. It was a 180-degree character turnaround.”

The Truckee River Flood Management Authority recently offered a new location for the club’s bike program. Now called the Kiwanis Activity Center, the 1.5-acre site has room for the bike shop, bike courses, pedestrian-safety classes and more.

“It’s been a much more complex move than we ever thought,” Roger Jacobson says. “After six months of repairing it, we’re just now (March 2020) getting permission to occupy the new building.”

But the new center is already generating new stories. “Big Brothers and Big Sisters decided to come in once a month and teach kids how to garden in our garden,” Ellen Jacobson says. “Not only do we have Big Brothers and Big Sisters coming into our shop to fix bikes, but they’re also coming in and planting garlic and onions. How’s that for crazy!”
FUN RUN IN THE SUN

FLORIDA KIWANIANS TRANSFORM HONEYMOON ISLAND INTO AN ADVENTURE RUN THAT WINDS THROUGH FORESTS AND BEACHES.

Story and photos by Jack Brockley
“We realized that in order to continue to support our community at this level, we needed another fundraiser.”

With more than three miles already behind her, the runner feels good. But as the course turns onto the beach, the sand yields beneath each step, sapping strength from her calves and precious seconds from her speed. Soon, every huff of breath can be heard above the crush of the early-morning tide.

There are no digital timers along the routes of the Dunedin, Florida, Kiwanis Adventure Runs. There are no tote bags of souvenir bling for the 5K and 8K runners and walkers. Instead of professionally designed posters, handmade 8-by-10-inch signs are staked along the trail, expressing encouragement and thanks.

Yes, the annual January races are unlike most fundraising runs. On Honeymoon Island, entrants watch ospreys soar overhead, their talons clutching the morning’s catch. A forest of slash pine and palmetto palms line the course. In its 11th year, the event has fostered a genial camaraderie among the 350 runners, who unselfishly share repellent to chase away a persistent predator: the mosquito.
Runners greet course volunteers, acknowledging their host and the purpose of this race: “Thank you for your service.” “Thanks, Kiwanis.”

Prior to starting the Adventure Runs in 2010, the Kiwanis Club of Dunedin already had a profitable fundraiser. The popular Midnight Run puts between 1,200 and 2,400 entrants on the streets of Dunedin every year on the night of July 3. Its success has allowed the club to make sizable contributions of more than US$125,000 to a playground and splash pad projects in recent years.

“We realized that in order to continue to support our community at this level, we needed another fundraiser,” says member Dan Borba.

“Honeymoon Island is the most visited state park in Florida. It also has a lot of wildlife; so, we work closely with the rangers to plan routes that won’t disturb the birds, turtles and other animals.”
There already were several 1Ks, 3Ks, 5Ks, half marathons and marathons in Pinellas County. However, with the exception of the Dunedin Rotary club’s triathlon, running competitions are rare on Honeymoon Island.

“Honeymoon Island is the most visited state park in Florida,” says Adventure Runs Coordinator Joe Garrison. “It also has a lot of wildlife; so, we work closely with the rangers to plan routes that won’t disturb the birds, turtles and other animals. Before the first year, the park biologist reported that the course was too close to the nesting eagle on the island’s north peninsula. We rerouted the course.”

The 25-member club relies on help from Friends of the Islands Parks and the Dunedin High School Key Club, which contribute a good share of the 75 volunteers needed for the races.

“It’s a challenge and much different from road races,” says Joe Mattiacci, explaining why he returned this year for his second 5K Adventure Run. “Plus, it’s a good organization. The money goes to charity. And they serve breakfast!”

The race is over. Following previous results, the club will net between $5,000 to $6,000 from entry fees and sponsorships.

One entrant, Steve Byrd, stands in the crowd as awards are presented. He recalls being part of the first Adventure Run. “It was 25 degrees with 40-mile-per-hour winds out on the beach,” Byrd says. “One guy didn’t wear a shirt, but the rest of us were all bundled up.”

After all the prizes are presented, runners and their fans line up for breakfast: sausage, pancakes, scrambled eggs, coffee and juice. The mosquitoes have disappeared. Out in the forest, an osprey chirps. Runners shake hands and hug goodbyes. Until next January.
It was a motley crew. Scientists and firefighters, police and children. Kiwanians, CKI and Key Club members. A dog, some wannabe doctors, a male and a female princess, a snowman, a reindeer, a few furry mascots and, since this is Canada, there were of course many hockey fans.

And the competition was fierce. Forget that the temperature hovered around -8°C — which is about 14°F. This group seemed oblivious to the bone-chilling cold. Everyone — even the dog — was here to do one thing: Claim victory in the 40th Annual Accora Village Bed Race for the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa.

The bed race, which is part of the Winterlude festival in the capital city of Ottawa, was revived by Ottawa Kiwanians in 2003 after the original sponsor backed out. Now the race attracts numerous teams and a respectable crowd, all cheering on as the action rolls by.

The beds are a simple 6-foot-by-3-foot metal frame with a headboard and footboard. No mattress. Rules say the bed must be on wheels for racing, have four runners and at least one rider on the bed (which uses a simple wooden slat so there’s somewhere to sit).

Many of the bed frames are built by students at a local college, and each team is urged to decorate their bed. Inspiration for the beds in the 2020 race come from all over. The movie “Frozen.” The game Operation. Hockey rivalries.

But even though some of the participants are dressed in Disney costumes, don’t be fooled. This is serious business. This fundraiser has brought in tens of thousands of dollars for the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa to pump back into the community. (And, let’s be honest, the prizes for fastest bed, best decorated bed and top fundraising team heat things up a bit as well.)

It’s exciting, but it’s what goes on behind the scenes that makes this not only a distinctive project, but a special one as well. The bed
“With Kiwanis lending Key Club a helping hand, so much was truly accomplished and members were inspired. This goes to show how much strength there is when Kiwanis and Key Clubs join together as a family.”
race is a partnership between Kiwanis and Key Club, bringing generations together to work side by side, teach one another and do good for the community.

Founding co-chair of the Kiwanis Bed Race Steve Georgopoulos says the seed was planted for this Kiwanis family partnership during a bus ride back from a Key Leader weekend.

He and another Kiwanis member brainstormed with Mannie Chabbra, then the Key Club of Canterbury High School co-president, about ways to get more Key Clubs interested in the bed race. And with that, plans were underway. Within five days, they had five more Key Clubs lined up.

The plan: Key Club members would pitch the project to friends, family and businesses to request funds for their registration, bed and additional donations. With Kiwanis members providing tips on how to make and complete the “sales pitch,” Key Club members went to it. They sent emails. Made in-person requests. And it worked.

“With Kiwanis lending Key Club a helping hand, so much was truly accomplished and members were inspired,” Chabbra says. “This really goes to show how much strength there is when Kiwanis and Key Clubs join together as a family. Together, there is nothing we cannot conquer when it comes to our dedication to service.”

For tips on creating your own bed race event, see page 50.
GOOD SPORTS

Fun facts about the bed race:

• It’s been a part of the city of Ottawa’s Winterlude festival for 40 years.
• It used to be run on a frozen canal.
• The race is 50 meters (about 54 yards).
• The race raises about CA$40,000, and the money goes to Kiwanis Youth Programs and other Kiwanis projects.
• In 2020, there were eight Key Club teams: Canterbury, Sir Robert Borden, Gloucester, Colonel By, College St. Joseph, Glebe and St. Mother Teresa and the Key Club of Norwood Norfolk in New York.
• With the participation of the Key Club of Norwood Norfolk, the race has officially become an international event.
MIRACLE WORKERS

A ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA, BUILDERS CLUB PITCHES IN TO HELP SPECIAL-NEEDS KIDS, SENIORS AND VETERANS.

STORY BY JULIE SAETRE • PHOTOS BY EVE EDELHEIT

For the usually balmy state of Florida, the March morning air in St. Petersburg was downright chilling, and the group of adults and children gathered at Walter Fuller Park snuggled into sweatshirts and heavy jackets. Among them, 18 members of the Seminole Middle School’s Builders Club spread out on Miracle League Field, ready to help special-needs students enjoy a spring morning on the baseball diamond.

And this wasn’t a one-off commitment. The Seminole Middle School Builders Club devotes some 200 service hours during each nine-month school year to help kids with physical and mental disabilities, offer companionship to seniors in a memory-care residency and honor military veterans, among other projects.

“I love making my community a better place for other people,” says member Aubrey, a sixth grader.

This hands-on dedication to service is so embedded in the club that retired teacher Deborah Love returned to her former role as advisor when school administrators came calling.

“These kids are so loving, giving and precious in their commitment that it’s such a feel-good experience in my life,” she says.

“Being around people like that who really want to do service and who treasure the things you do — it feeds my soul.”

The Miracle League of Pinellas County’s spring season spans March and April. Builders Club members join Kiwanians from the Seminole Kiwanis Club and other area volunteers to make

“These kids are so loving, giving and precious in their commitment that it’s such a feel-good experience in my life.”
each Saturday morning at the ballpark special for the athletes of honor. And honored they are. For its 16-year existence, Miracle League Field has been reserved for its special-needs guests and their families. In 2018, the field’s original rubber-tiled surface was replaced with a smooth AstroTurf version, ensuring easy mobility for kids on foot and in wheelchairs.

After the athletes register and exchange hellos and hugs, the ballplayers divide up by age group and are assigned a spot on either the Tampa Bay Rays or the Chicago Cubs team. (The field is funded in part by former Rays and Cubs manager Joe Maddon’s Respect 90 Foundation and the Tampa Bay Rays, as well as the Cal Ripken, Sr. Foundation.)

Before the “play ball” command is given, everyone lines up on either side of the diamond while Matthew Walker, a longtime league member now in his early 20s, belts out the U.S. national anthem from his wheelchair. One of the league’s many success stories, Walker, who has cerebral palsy, launched the annual Miracle by the Bay fundraising event in 2018 to support individuals with special needs.

As play begins, the Builders Club members spring into action. Every player gets the chance to bat at least twice, either at a pitched ball or off a tee.
Club members help the players steady and swing the bat. They guide players around the bases, either by hand or by pushing wheelchairs. Some club members head to the outfield, helping the young athletes catch and return balls. And all offer the gifts of support and friendship.

“Volunteering at Miracle League is one of the most rewarding experiences one can participate in,” says eighth-grader Savannah, the Builders Club president. “You develop strong friendships with the parents and their kids. Throughout the entire game, you cannot help but smile.”

“My experience in Miracle League has taught me that we are all human,” adds Liam, a sixth grader and the club’s vice president. “Every person has a special gift.”

Games only last a few innings, long enough for all athletes to play. No one ever calls a ball or a strike. And every game ends in a tie.

“Why?” says George Stone, the Seminole Kiwanis Club member who spearheaded the Pinellas County Miracle League in 2006. “Because they all hit, run and have fun playing ball. That’s all we need.”

He’s seen some striking transformations among the hundreds of athletes who have graced Miracle League Field over the years. “I had a 16-year-old girl with cerebral palsy, in a wheelchair all her life. She came up to home plate one day, stood up, hit the ball and ran to first base. Her answer was, ‘I can’t play ball sitting down.’ Another child who had never spoken a word in his life now talks, sings and tells jokes. My kids are doing things now I never expected to see them do. Their friends say, ‘You can’t play baseball.’ Their answer is, ‘Come on out and watch me.’”

Baseball isn’t the only sport the Seminole Builders Club makes possible for special-needs children. They also help with the Seminole Kiwanis Club’s Horses 4 Handicapped program in the fall and winter months. Kids with disabilities saddle up on gentle horses trained specifically for this duty. A Builders Club member flanks each rider, holding onto the child’s leg and the stirrup as a “side walker.”

“Even if they lose their balance, the rider can’t fall out of the saddle,” explains Love. “We can help them get back into position.”

Club members decided where to target their efforts after conducting a community survey. The results led them to prioritize special-needs individuals, the elderly and veterans.
Other ongoing projects include monthly visits to members of a memory care residence, in-person card deliveries to a veteran’s hospital and visiting a veterans’ cemetery to place wreaths on graves and clean the grounds.

The sixth and eighth graders who join the club bring a variety of life experiences, Love says. “We have a rather large gifted population at Seminole Middle School, and a lot of those kids choose to become involved. They have a heightened awareness of how fortunate they are, which leads them to feel that they have a real responsibility to give back. They are very aware that their special needs could easily be on the other side of the spectrum.”

Some club members come from disadvantaged families, so they recognize the importance of service to those in similar situations. “It’s so important for them to be able to give back because of their own circumstances,” Love says. “I think it’s remarkable. And that part of their character development is really, really important.”

That character once again was on full display when a K-Kids member was diagnosed with stomach cancer. In response, Builders Club members decided to create 50-plus “hospital dolls.” Each doll has a tiny incision in one shoulder, under which is inserted a water-bottle cap to represent the port system young patients often need for treatment. Doctors at John Hopkins All Children’s Hospital in St. Petersburg use the dolls to help children understand what they will experience. Members hoped that their K-Kids friends would each receive a doll to help with their hospital stay. Says Love, “It just illustrates what beautiful souls these children have.”

The Builders Club members, however, say they are the ones who most benefit from their Kiwanis family experience. “I love leaving at the end of the day knowing that I helped improve someone’s life,” says eighth-grader Amelia.

Adds Liam, “My experiences in Builders Club have taught me, through helping the community, there’s always a reward for giving back.”
On the front lines

WRITER TELLS HIS PERSONAL TALE OF COVERING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC — AND THE ILLNESS THAT FOLLOWED.

Story by Tom Chiarella

It was a sunny March day in Omaha, Nebraska, which now reads in my mind like some postcard from another world. It’s a dim memory to me, though as I write this it was only five weeks ago. After I returned from Omaha, I didn’t feel well. More than a month would pass before I felt like myself again. The sunny day in Omaha? It would be forgotten without my notes. Most things from that time would be. These days, a month can shred a lot of memories.

I was in Omaha visiting the National Quarantine Center — the largest of its kind in the United States — which sits in the middle of the campus of the University of Nebraska Medical Center. I was there to do research for a magazine story, to observe the work of staff members in the Biocontainment Unit, which at that moment housed a number of the nation’s first confirmed COVID-19 patients.

Among many other requests I made, I’d asked to speak to a nurse who worked in the Quarantine Center. I waited for her in an ordinary hospital hallway. The woman who agreed to speak with me got off the elevator carrying a bag of IV medication and a sheaf of patient files under her arm. ID card clipped to her waist. Blue-gray scrubs. Newish white shoes. A watch. Smart haircut. A single ring.

I noted all those details. I used an exclamation point. “Nurse!” I wrote at the top of a page.

She had 11 minutes. “OK, call it 12,” she allowed. “This is the middle of my work. I have to be precise.” I thanked her for the time. She thought I meant the work. “Everybody here works,” she said. “This is my job. No need to thank me for showing up to work.”

OK. No need to argue. I shrugged and started up with the questions. At the time, I figured she might be right.

In that hallway, outside the staff entrance to the Biocontainment Unit, two federal marshals monitored the ins and outs. The day before, I’d interviewed the medical center CEO, two physicians, an epidemiologist and a lab researcher. I caught them on the move — between meetings, standing in front of a vending machine, walking to or from their cars, standing in a spare conference room. They were fairly patient, but they never paused in their work. They were tired, but they made time to tell me what they had learned.

Between interviews, I sometimes stood in that unadorned carpeted corridor outside the staff entrance to the Biocontainment Unit and observed the comings and goings of those who worked inside. The marshals wouldn’t talk, not even to confirm they...
were marshals. (They were.) But it wasn’t difficult to get a word in with the medical staff when they queued up at the marshal’s table after clocking in. Nurses. Doctors. Respiratory therapists. As they paused at the door for an ID check, they often gave a thumbs-up, or an affirming nod. They smiled as they moved toward their work, their patients. They didn’t have much time to tell stories. One nurse spoke about his weekend lacrosse game. Another described the process of teaching her son to ice skate. Mostly they looked at the plain, wooden door and spoke about what was beyond it, in preparation for the work ahead.

Consider: women and men, headed into a “hot zone” of viral containment, a worrisome pinch-point in the possible spread of a dangerous novel virus. This, in the days before social distancing was introduced to the world. Early March of this year. Most of them had been training — periodically, repeatedly — for years to work in the Biocontainment Unit. The first of its kind in the country, the unit opened at UNMC in 2004 and was first used during an Ebola outbreak in 2014. The veteran employees had learned to trust the work then, when this facility was the only unit on U.S. soil that dealt with active Ebola patients. Serious, important, and yes, dangerous work.

And no one seemed afraid.

“We all seen movies about epidemics. It was not a cinematic location. There was nothing dire or dramatic in the attitude of the people who worked there. The atmosphere felt nothing like a movie about a global pandemic. It was simply a scene from inside a real one. I saw no measure of fear in their faces. There was a pervasive calm and a sense of the ordinary. No one in the hall wore hazmat suits. No buzzers or flashing lights. No one wavered when they

“This kind of work is why I chose nursing. I want a job where I have to concentrate in every minute of the thing. Time goes by quickly when everything you do matters.”

talked about their work. They had no doubt. This is Nebraska. This is health care. These people simply wanted to get to work.

Once inside, they would don a full set of top-grade personal protective equipment — a process carried out with a partner, involving 12 to 15 minutes of long, memorized checklists and vetting procedures. Redundant masks and face screens, triple-redundant gloves, layers of gowns, aprons, dozens of seals and cinchings. All of it double-checked by the partner, rechecked against posted lists. This laborious process is repeated upon every entry, by every individual admitted to the unit.

With the donning process complete, they proceeded to a nurses’ station, where they were updated on patient status before finally moving to greet the patients behind another set of doors. The space is reverse pressurized to allow for a full exchange of air several times an hour. This is biocontainment.

They have learned not to fear it. Trained. It shows as they sign in to go work that day. No one is excited, however, or cavalier about the undertaking. Nor do they appear anxious. At least it doesn’t show. They are eager. Uniformly.

“I just want to see my patients,” said one nurse, a 28-year-old father of two who normally worked in the transplant unit. “Same as any other day, really. Virus or no virus. The people are the best part of the job. In the containment unit, there’s just some work you have to do to get to them.”

Another nurse was standing at the dawn of her third-consecutive day working a 12-hour shift. She was 48, with a husband and teenage daughter at home.

“No one is pushing me in the door,” she said. “This kind of work is why I chose nursing. I want a job where I have to concentrate in every minute of the
“The work obviously matters, to the country and to the world. So it’s something you naturally want to be a part of.”

When I couldn’t get time with the staff as they worked, I stopped people in the street. Were they aware of the work being done in the Biocontainment Unit? Did they know about the emergent novel coronavirus? Did it worry them to have this work going on in their city? At breakfast one morning, I spoke with six nurses from the maternity ward, sitting together at a clamshell table. They knew about the Biocontainment Unit and the Quarantine Center. They had friends training to work there. They expressed admiration for the work. Pride that it goes on in Omaha.

“I’m a labor and delivery nurse,” one of them told me. “I love what I do. I chose this career. But I grew up in Nebraska. We’re used to this. They had Ebola there in 2014, and they handled it.”

“I was in high school then,” said another, “and I couldn’t stop reading the newspaper. My parents were worried it was in Omaha. I just figured this is what we do.”

She paused, thinking back on the time between the two viruses. A mere six years. She can see a legacy already. “A lot of my friends became nurses because of that time, with all the news coverage,” she said. “The work obviously matters, to the country and to the world. So it’s something you naturally want to be a part of.”

At some point, I asked to speak to someone who worked with the patients in the Quarantine Center, which is in a different building from the Biocontainment Unit. A nurse volunteered. Same one who had emerged from the elevator, said bye to her friends over her shoulder and approached me carrying all that stuff. In my notes, I scratched out an inventory of what she carried. Same list you read at the beginning of this article.

I’m glad I have those notes. Days later, after returning home, I developed a fever and a painful cough. Exhaustion took hold of me. I started hearing my own breathing at night.

By now, you’ve heard the stories of quarantine and isolation with COVID-19 patients. I was told to ride out the flu-like symptoms, to get a test when it became available and to stay in touch with my physician. The illness might last four to eight days, and then I’d be able to leave isolation after being symptom-free for three consecutive days.

But for me, it has been a very different story.

I followed the directions given by the Centers for Disease Control and the state of Indiana where I live. I’ve had a low-grade fever every day. Exhaustion creeps up on me every waking moment. I’ve had so many varieties of cough and sore throat that I have given them names. They sound like birds. The woodland cough. The sandpaper throat. The kick-me lung warbler.

This is Day 32.

I filed the magazine story before I went into isolation. So my work in Omaha was over. But I think about UNMC often, and the people I met in Omaha. Because I went into isolation almost directly after my return from Omaha, my most recent memories of the world outside are stacked up around the people I met there, in and around the medical center. People I remember more for their jobs than for their names. Those nurses. An X-ray tech. A phlebot-

They got the news from the world just like everybody else these days — on the radio, on the way to work, on their phone or in strips running along the bottom of a distant television screen. And all of them were aware of the dangerous work going on with the virus in their very own city, in the nearby medical center.

No one showed fear. Without fail, they expressed pride in the city where they lived and worked. “It’s a tough job,” the Green Beret medic said, leaning against a counter in an espresso bar. “Makes you appreciate the people you meet walking around here. Omaha’s cool like that. Anybody could be saving the world. Or just going to work, I guess.”

I don’t list them that way — without their names — to make them any less human. I have notes. I can access the names. To the contrary, I don’t need the notes to remember the way they claimed their work as some proud part of who they are. Same as the nurses and doctors at the medical center.

I am remembering all this after more than a month in isolation, sitting behind the tall windows of a second-floor apartment in a 19th century mercantile building, facing the courthouse square in a little town in Indiana. The terms of the world out there have changed. It’s a time of lockdown and social distancing. Jobs have been lost. Many people can’t go to work. The ones who can — the nurses, doctors, orderlies, the janitors and cooks and supermarket cashiers — just seem brave for being willing.

Days ago, I was in an emergency room in suburban Indianapolis, waiting to get yet another chest X-ray. The radiologist came in wearing a full suit of personal protection equipment. I could hear the rasp of the respirator clipped to her waistband. And right then, for the first time, I was scared.

She worked away. Eventually, feeling somewhat lonely and overwhelmed, I spoke.

“Thank you,” I said, “for coming to work.”

She looked at me through her redundant protections, her glasses and facemask, and nodded. “It’s my job,” she told me, as if that were enough.

I ignored that and thanked her again. For showing up. For her work. Thank you.

It mattered, and this time I knew it needed to be said.

Tom Chiarella was writer-at-large for Esquire Magazine for more than a decade. He’s been a contributor to Popular Mechanics, The New Yorker, Golf Digest, O: the Oprah Magazine, Chicago Magazine, Euroman, Men’s Style, Fashion (Canada) and many others. He lives in Bainbridge, Indiana, and serves as an Emeritus Professor of English at DePauw University.
professional wrestler isn’t the most common motivational speaker to visit primary and secondary schools, especially when they look like Cody Deaner: long beard, hair curling over his shoulders, baseball cap turned backward, muscular arms covered with tattoos. His website says he “made a name for himself as a flamboyant, cocky and arrogant performer” early in his career. But when Jeff Westlake and his 4-year-old son met this gentle father of four, the president of the Kiwanis Club of Peterborough in Ontario discovered he was onto something.

“I found out that besides being an Impact Wrestling champion, Cody had started a second career as a teacher, then a third as a speaker, particularly to youth. So I thought it’d be great for Kiwanis to sponsor a tour to bring him here,” Westlake says. “We have smaller schools, about 200 to 300 students each, and they don’t have the budget to afford a world-class speaker.”

He thought Deaner’s message was one that Peterborough kids should hear: Dream big.

“He grew up in a small town like the kids around here, and he had small expectations put on him. Nobody believed he could become a wrestler,” Westlake says. “He talked to our kids about the obstacles he faced along the way and how he handled them. Now his catch phrase is, ‘Just giv’er.’ Give 100%. You can do anything if you put in the work. It’s a great message for any age.”

Deaner gives back to communities through his “Giv’er for Charity” campaign and is a recommended leadership speaker with the Canadian Student Leadership Association. Still, his earlier persona and physical appearance led some schools to “politely decline” having Deaner visit. However, every school that hosted him wants him back.

“Of the schools he visited, the teachers and principals couldn’t have been more positive. One principal is even passing out Cody’s business cards. He runs into that kind of reaction wherever he goes,” Westlake says. “Cody just does a great job relating to the kids. He’s very interactive with them.”

He gives a high-energy talk, often walking into the audience to address everyone in the room and bringing volunteers up front to demonstrate wrestling poses — always a big hit.
“He talked to our kids about the obstacles he faced along the way and how he handled them. Now his catch phrase is, ‘Just giv’er.’ Give 100%. You can do anything if you put in the work. It’s a great message for any age.”

“Teachers can’t believe he keeps (kids) excited for an hour,” Westlake says. “He talks about who his heroes were as a kid, he brings the action figures of those heroes, and he lets kids try on his title belt. You see grins from ear to ear.”

“We really appreciate that Cody brought two presentations, each gauged to the age group he was speaking to,” says Kate Adams of Millbrook/South Cavan Public School. “Having a speaker that keeps young students engaged through an hourlong presentation is no easy task.”

Deaner also visited R.F. Downey and Queen Elizabeth public schools.

Westlake says Deaner’s tour is part of the club’s effort to draw young members.

“The median age of our club was 74. We’ve begun to build relationships with schools, principals and parents, and we’re now better known in the community among a broader group of younger people. So we are trending in the right direction,” he says. “I believe we have to reach people where they are, and wrestling is hotter now than it’s been in years. This tour is the first of what we hope will be a series of events to engage young families and bring them into Kiwanis.”

WORDS OF WISDOM

Canadian wrestling star Cody Deaner has gained a following outside the ring for his presentations to young people throughout North America. His message of positivity isn’t exclusively for kids, however. Adults can benefit from heeding his simple advice.

1. You don’t have to be in the big time to make a big difference.

2. Don’t let the size of your town dictate the size of your dreams.

3. We all have the power of influence. Choose to be a positive one.
Hope in full supply
NEW YORK KIWANIAN’S NONPROFIT SENDS SUPPLIES TO KIDS IN NEED INTERNATIONALLY.

STORY BY LYDIA JOHNSON

Mark Grashow, a longtime Kiwanis family member and retired teacher, spent 45 years helping children in Brooklyn, New York. A 2003 trip to rural schools in Zimbabwe showed him that African students needed help too.

“They had absolutely nothing,” says Grashow, “and they were desperate for everything.”

In 2005, Grashow and his wife, Sheri Saltzberg, started the U.S.-Africa Children’s Fellowship (USACF) to provide school supplies to children in Zimbabwe, Ghana, Nigeria and South Africa. The former Key Club advisor collects donations from 35 New York schools and gives presentations to students about the challenges facing Africans who live in rural communities. No shoes, food or money for school leads to low enrollment, literacy and pass rates.

“A lot of what we do isn’t just to help kids in Africa,” says Grashow. “It’s really concerned with empowering American kids to know that they can change other people’s lives.”

The message has hit its mark. Since 2005, students have collected enough shoes, books, toys and school supplies to fill more than 50 40-foot shipping containers. In those 15 years, donations have helped nearly half a million children in 700 African schools.

Grashow also heads the annual Students Taking Action for Relief (STAR) Project, which helps refugees. Forty-five New York schools have collected supplies for Syrian refugees living in camps in Jordan, where families face dangerous conditions without many necessities.

Each participating school collected a single item from a list of shoes, clothing, toiletries, housewares, toys and books. In all, 2,159 boxes of donations were gathered and distributed in Jordan by USACF and its partner, United Mission Relief. The STAR Project also has collected supplies for Yemen and Somalian refugees.

USACF recently launched The Bridge Project, which brings technology to African schools. The organization’s IT team created a handheld computer called the “Bridge Pi,” a Wi-Fi hotspot that stores thousands of textbooks, lessons and exams.

Eleven schools in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Ghana are piloting the program. Instructors create learning centers stocked with the Bridge Pi, a projector and tablets. Students who once had no books now have the world at their fingertips.

American sister schools paid for the US$2,500 learning centers, building relationships that foster digital education and cultural exchange. It’s a concept Kiwanis family clubs can embrace, Grashow says.

“It would not only change the kids on the other side. You’re helping your own children become better people.”
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Winning equation

SOUTH CAROLINA KIWANIANS INSPIRE THIRD GRADERS TO GET EXCITED ABOUT MATH.

BY WENDY ROSE GOULD

Math can be a notoriously difficult subject in the classroom. That’s precisely why the Kiwanis Club of Spartanburg, South Carolina, decided to tackle it head-on. In 2006, the club launched the Math Medallion program, which encourages third graders to set their sights on a shiny medal by zeroing in on their multiplication tables.

“I saw a need for the program when I started working with kids in the fourth and fifth grade who were having to go back and (learn) division and multiplication,” says Ed Y. Hall, founder of Math Medallion. “The multiplication tables are the very foundation of future math success. Students with a strong, early, solid foundation with the tables are likely to be better and more successful math students.”

To earn a Math Medallion, students must score 100% on an 11-minute timed test. When that ribbon is placed around their neck, not only do they feel proud of their hard work, but they also understand they’ve mastered a skill that will be of great value to them in the future. Since the program’s infancy, more than 34,000 third graders have attempted to win a medallion, and a brainy 22,000 have walked away with the award.

“I think (Hall) is a great example of someone who has a passion and drive that’s really been almost contagious when it comes to working with students in this area,” says Darryl Owings, superintendent of District 6 schools in Spartanburg County. “Mr. Hall was so determined to make this happen, and we were just willing participants and the beneficiaries of his hard work.”

Each year, the club sets aside US$3,000 to $5,000 to purchase the medals. The members know it’s a small expense compared to the benefit it brings.

“We know we’re investing in a bright future for Spartanburg County students,” says Susan Dunlap, club president. “Children need to be recognized. A math medallion might be a small token, but it is such a point of pride for each student who earns one.”
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A portion of Kiwanis-branded merchandise sales is returned to Kiwanis International and contributes to helping Kiwanis members improve their communities and the lives of children around the world.

kiwanis.org/shop
Don’t sleep on this ...

HOW TO STAGE YOUR OWN BED RACE.
TIPS PROVIDED BY STEVE GEORGOPOULOS • PHOTO BY JAMIE JOHNSON

The Accora Village Bed Race for the Kiwanis Club of Ottawa has a 40-year history — 18 of those staged by the Kiwanis club.

“Our processes are fine-tuned,” says Founding Co-Chair Steve Georgopoulos. “We went from a race run on a ‘frozen lake’ to a more non-weather-dependent street location within the popular downtown Ottawa Market.

“We are proud of our model and website. The website provides all the details as well as loads of photos. The beauty of this event is that it can be modified to your area with ease.”

Here are some tips on getting started:

- Visit ottawakiwanis.org to look at the photos and get a feel for the event.
- Set up a core team of two co-chairs and about two to four others. The section leads could include Team Solicitation, Sponsorship and Fundraising, Marketing and Logistics and Day of.
- Determine your location and get permits well in advance. Talk to city/town officials early and often. You may wish to consider having it as part of an existing event to ensure a base of spectators.
- Set the rules. The race can get competitive. Determine size and type of bed and wheels. Create and collect signed waivers.
- Decide if you will sell beds, rent beds or have an option for both. Contact a community college that has a welding department to ask if they can make some beds available for the race.
- Set a reasonable/appropriate registration rate for your area and target market.
- There are many components to this event. Identify committee members or Kiwanians who can “make things happen.” Think of people in your club who know people or can offer expertise in a specific area. Know someone in marketing? Ask them for help. Know someone who owns a box truck? You’ll need it. In our case, for example, we require storage and transportation for beds. It is very helpful that our two co-chairs are in industries that can facilitate these two important aspects.
GIFTS GO FARTHER TOGETHER.

When you give to the Kiwanis Children’s Fund, you amplify your Kiwanis impact. That’s because you’re joining with Kiwanis family members who have done the same. After all, we do more when we do it together. Let’s reach kids who need Kiwanis — all over the world.

kiwanischildrensfund.org
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