

HOST AN OPEN HOUSE

PURPOSE: To help a club prepare to host an open house as part of a membership drive.

AUDIENCE: Club members, the membership committee and any participating district leaders.

FREQUENCY: At least annually — preferably semi-annually or quarterly.



TWO MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Choose your team.** Surround yourself with people committed to making the club bigger and better. Consider involving the Service Leadership Programs (SLP) club or clubs that your Kiwanis club sponsors.
- Seek approval for the event from your club's board of directors.** Costs could include postage or digital marketing, room rental, printing programs and food and beverages.
- Appoint individuals to lead the following tasks:**
 - **Project lead.** Coordinates the entire program, orients team members to their responsibilities (see below) and monitors their progress.
 - **Community impact.** Creates a Club Impact Sheet to show the club's impact through the years, backed with data (e.g., the number and dollar amount of scholarships granted, the number of books purchased, backpacks prepared, etc.).
 - **Attendance.** Develops a list of prospects, arranges for distribution of invitations — either mailed, emailed or via social media. Uses the Roster Analysis document to identify prospective members by profession.
 - **Venue.** Establishes the meeting time, date and place, setup and materials (including name tags and applications) and identifies greeters.
 - **Service project.** Identifies and plans a service project in which guests can easily participate. For example, a nonperishable food drive, a book drive or a school supplies drive.
 - **Program.** Arranges speakers and sets the agenda.
- **Public relations.** Writes the media release and posts to promote the event via social media, online announcements and bulletin boards — and via newspapers, radio stations and city/county government meetings. Asks other nonprofits and the Chamber of Commerce to help share your information.
- **Follow-up.** Reaches out to invited guests after the event to answer questions and assess their interest.
- Schedule the event.** Avoid competing with other high-traffic community events or scheduling too close to other club activities. Your club's normal meeting day and time is ideal.
- Develop a brochure or handout describing your club's activities to use with the Club Impact Sheet.** Use our templates and branding guidelines, which are available at kiwanis.org/branding.
- Determine quantities of your invitation materials.** Experience shows that around 50 invitations will result in 15 to 20 guests.
- Order copies of the Join Us brochure and inserts from the Kiwanis Family Store (kiwanis.org/store).** This free resource includes a membership application.
- Purchase any supplies such as envelopes, stamps and pens for invitations.** You can also find the customizable club meeting flier at kiwanis.org/club-toolbox. Download it, fill it in and email it to guests.



SIX WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

- **Pick a venue.** Your normal meeting place is best, unless you expect more people than it can accommodate. In that case, consider community gardens or restaurants that have enough room to showcase what you do and project a good image.
- **Plan your agenda.** Consider the following example:
 1. **Welcome (5 minutes).** Make introductions and give an overview of the event. Ask members and guests to state their name, profession and who invited them. As guests are arriving, engage them in a simple — but meaningful — service project. This allows people to get to know each other while showcasing what Kiwanis does.
 2. **Introduction to the club and Kiwanis (5 minutes).** Ask a dynamic speaker in your club to share information about your club, its cause and the community it serves. Distribute the Club Impact Sheet.
 3. **Club impact (5 minutes).** Ask a member who is a dynamic speaker to talk about your club's impact in the community. You could also ask members to explain what Kiwanis means to them in one word.
 4. **Club plans (3 minutes).** Ask the club president to talk about upcoming projects and goals.
 5. **New member's perspective (3 minutes).** Ask someone who has recently joined to give their thoughts and observations about the club.
- 6. **SLP club advisor (3 minutes).** Ask your club's advisor to one of the sponsored SLP clubs to talk about the impact of youth programs for students. Ask members to talk about their experiences being in K-Kids, Builders Club, Key Club, Circle K International or Aktion Club.
- 7. **Closing remarks/request (5 minutes).** Leave the final word to your club's best salesperson — someone who can leave guests happy to fill out an application. Potential script:
 "Today, we are inviting you to step up, stand up and be part of the Kiwanis Club of [NAME]. You've heard our members, what Kiwanis means (repeat the words stated earlier). You've heard the difference we're making in our community. And we invited you because we want you to be part of our club. All you have to do is complete the application at your table. Our members can answer any questions you may have."
- 8. **Discussion.** Allow members and guests to mingle. Be available to ask and answer questions and to follow up with guests who complete a membership application.
- 9. **Service project completion.** With your guests, finish the project you started at the beginning of the event. Take a group picture and congratulate the guests for finishing their first Kiwanis service project. Post the pictures on social media. Share with local media.



THREE WEEKS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Share the following information:**
 - Time.
 - Date.
 - Place/location.
- Develop a prospect list.** The people most likely to join are those your members know well:
 - Friends.
 - Coworkers.
 - Clients.
 - Neighbors.
 - Family members.
 - Business professionals.
 - Community leaders.
 - Church members.
 - Parents of SLP members.
 - Local educators.
 - Community partners.
 - Event sponsors.
- Use the Kiwanis Roster Analysis.** Look at professions and seek names of community members who are in those professions. Also check the local Chamber of Commerce list of businesses.



- Aim for at least 50 names.** Generally, about one-third of invitees will attend. You'll need each prospect's full name, address, email address and phone number. Consider offering a prize to the member who can provide contact information for the most prospects.
- Use Google search to boost the list.** Look for businesses, non-profit organizations, city/county/town office holders, first responders in your community and the business name, address, phone number and email address. Contact them via personal visit, phone, email or letter to invite to the event.
- Invite prospects.** Mail or email a high-quality invitation or postcard to each prospect, including details about your club's open house. Make sure the Kiwanis branding is correct.
- Extend personal invitations.** After the invitations have been sent, divide the list of invitees so that members can follow up with each person to extend a personal invitation (while mentioning their referral) and answer any questions.
- Keep records of follow-up communications.** Ask the member who made the referral to make reminder phone calls to each attendee a day or two before the event.

DAY OF THE EVENT

- Practice.** Train members to share the Kiwanis message and address concerns or questions, such as how to answer questions about dues. Use the ACE tool "Host potential members" to review the process for getting current members ready.
- Print name tags.** Aid conversation by including guests' organization name. Visually distinguish their name tags from members' tags to help them see who can answer questions.
- Be prepared.** Set each guest's place with a pen, a Join Us brochure and a club brochure.
- Set up an app to receive payments.** Common choices are Venmo and Cash App. For any online payment system, use a QR code when possible.
- Position greeters.** Put members at the door to welcome guests and collect contact information. Make sure everyone knows their role and the purpose of the event.
- Emphasize hospitality.** Do not let guests sit by themselves. Engage them all and make them feel welcome.
- Most of all, keep it positive!** Leave club business for another meeting and remind members of the importance of first impressions.

WITHIN ONE WEEK AFTER THE EVENT:

- Thank every guest** by phone, email or a personalized card.
- Thank everyone who said they'd come but didn't.** Invite them to the next event. Remember, the best person to invite a potential member is a new member.
- Do a review of the open house.** How many new members did you get? Was it what you had planned? What went well? What could have gone better? How can you improve the event for next time?
- Begin onboarding new members.**

ONE MONTH AFTER EVENT:

- Begin planning next open house.**