



## ESTABLISHING CIRCLE K CLUBS

### THE BEGINNING

Working with service-oriented college men came relatively early in the history of Kiwanis club activities. At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the International Board in April of 1922, a letter was received from the chairman of a committee appointed by the Michigan District governor. It asked the Board to investigate the forming of junior Kiwanis clubs in colleges and universities. But after thorough discussion and consideration, the Board dismissed the idea as impractical.

Seventeen years later, in 1939, the March issue of The KIWANIS Magazine carried an article titled "Pullman Sees Them Through." The article detailed an activity of the Pullman, Washington, Kiwanis club that enabled twenty-six young men to attend college. The club had purchased a house in which the young men lived for \$20 each per month, which covered their room and board. Jay N. Emerson, a member of the Pullman, Washington, Kiwanis club, had first presented the plan in 1936, and the residence was called the Circle K House.

Circle K's origin was therefore a fraternity. During the 10th anniversary year of the Circle K House, its founder became President of Kiwanis International. President Emerson's first objective for the 1946-47 year was to "consider every boy and girl an opportunity for Kiwanis service." He was determined to expand youth work by Kiwanis clubs, and his enthusiasm for his home club's Circle K project ran high.

At the February 1947 meeting of the International Board, the Circle K Club of Pullman, Washington, requested permission to rename itself using Greek

letters, a traditional designation of fraternities. It was a challenge for the Board. The feelings of the Board were clear. The Board voted that *"because every Kiwanis club should have the right to install a Circle K House and because certain colleges do not permit Greek letter fraternities; because certain colleges have limited the number of fraternities on the campus, which limit is now reached; and because from a selfish standpoint we want to keep the 'K' in our affiliated organization, we decline the request of the club to change its name."*

In 1947, a new kind of Circle K club, based on service to the campus, was founded at Carthage College in Illinois. Its 23 members became the nucleus of what would soon become Circle K International. Additional Circle K clubs were organized in each of the following years. In June 1953, representatives from 15 clubs met in New York City, elected officers, and began the drive for official recognition as a Kiwanis-family member organization.

On March 9, 1955, Secretary O.E. Peterson wrote President Alford of Circle K the following: At a recent meeting of the International Board on February 18 and 19, the following recommendation of the Board Committee on Kiwanis Youth Organizations was unanimously accepted: *"Voted, that the present organization of Circle K clubs receive International recognition and a charter from Kiwanis International at the Cleveland Convention (Kiwanis - June 1955) provided the International dues be \$4 per member per year, and that a Constitution and Bylaws which have the approval of Kiwanis International be adopted."*

Circle K Clubs soon began to put their Kiwanis sponsors to shame with their intensive efforts to serve their fellow men,

with both traditional service work on campus and new work with the disabled persons of the community. Young women were admitted to membership in 1973 and began to take an active interest both in the service projects and the administration of clubs, districts, and Circle K International. By the late 1970s, almost half of the International Board were women. Many women also were serving as district governors and in other top leadership capacities.

By 1981, more than 700 clubs and more than 12,000 members proved that the response of Circle K members to the 1958 Circle K Chairman Armand Rodehorst statement, *"We sincerely appreciate this opportunity to work with the finest college men in America - Circle K International,"* was positive.

In the late 1980s, Circle K began to look at membership qualifications. In light of the organization's goals, its leaders believed that there should be a movement away from being just another club in which anybody could become affiliated. The first requirement was that every member must be at least a half-time student. Also, the member must be a well motivated student, meaning that he or she must be working toward graduation in some field. All of the current trends have had the desired effect of stabilizing the number of Circle K clubs and members. They also are giving an incentive to the growth of a college organization, which once again gives increasing evidence of meeting the personal needs of the college student. Confidence in its strong position and appeal to incoming students resulted in the establishment and implementation of the "Key To College" program. Circle K members have invited members of high school Key Clubs to visit college campuses and to see firsthand what Circle K has to offer to further their full development as members of the student body.

## **THE MISSION AND VISION OF CIRCLE K INTERNATIONAL**

A statement of mission and vision are critical measures to evaluating progress and success. The mission is a statement of what Circle K International wants to become and for whom. The vision is a description of the desired future of the organization.

### **The Mission**

Circle K International is college and university students who are responsible citizens and leaders with a lifelong commitment to community service worldwide.

### **The Vision**

Circle K is the organization that holds the promise of today's college student becoming tomorrow's leader. It exists to meet the personal needs of the individual collegian through the qualities of leadership, the rewards of service, and the unique spirit of friendship. Circle K's potential lies in its ability to positively influence those in our society who are facing ultimate personal decisions and those who will one day create the vision of mankind for generations to come. Circle K is the embodiment of those qualities necessary to shape the future, realized in the colleges and universities of today.

The vision of Circle K International is dedicated to the realization of mankind's potential.

All of these new directions on the part of Circle K also has meant new and challenging responsibilities for sponsoring Kiwanis clubs. Each must understand what role Circle K wishes to play on the campus and to be better prepared to assist as true sponsors. There are practical means for expansion of the Circle K movement so more members may share in this growing organization dedicated to meeting the personal needs of college students.

New and challenging experiences in a greater percentage of campus-oriented service projects plus greatly expanded opportunities for personal growth and development leading to a sincere desire for a full and successful lifestyle after graduation now demonstrate that Circle K members enjoy their Circle K experience. And they realize that their active participation makes them better men and women because of Circle K's continuing challenge.

Source: *Dimensions of Service, The Kiwanis Story* by L.A. "Larry" Hapgood.