

Kiwanis Insider



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For the Leadership of Kiwanis International

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Dear Kiwanis Leaders:

Southern California on Fire

I need to disclose from the outset: This is a very personal issue for me. I come from a very large family (eight of us), and the majority of my family members live with their families in Southern California. All of them, including my parents, can look out their windows and see the smoke and fire. Though every one of my family members is safe and accounted for at this time, that is not the case for many of our Kiwanis family members. We are hearing stories every hour of Kiwanis members who have lost their homes, have been evacuated, or in some way have been impacted by these devastating fires. We are also receiving reports of Kiwanis clubs and members who have responded to this crisis the way Kiwanians always do. These Kiwanis heroes are feeding and housing people and doing whatever is needed to help those who are suffering. While I know there are issues and challenges all over the world in which Kiwanis members are making an impact, this issue is very personal and real to me, because the effected people are people I know and love. My personal thanks go to our Kiwanis heroes for all they are doing. Leadership is so critical in times of crisis, and Kiwanis leaders are making relief efforts happen. If you would like to help support them in their efforts, your Kiwanis International Foundation is accepting donations and aggressively supporting our Kiwanis family in the effected areas. You can make a donation online at <http://kif.kiwanis.org> or by calling 1-800-KIWANIS. If donating is not enough and you want to do more, please contact me at robparker@kiwanis.org and I will help connect you with the right people you can work with. If you are a Kiwanis member from Southern California, I would love to hear your story. If you know of any needs or are aware of specific work that is being done by our Kiwanis members, I would like to hear from you. Please pray for our Kiwanis families in Southern California during this time of crisis and consider what role you might play in the recovery effort.

Asia-Pacific Update

As you may remember, my last Kiwanis Insider was written on a remarkably long airplane ride from Indianapolis to Tokyo. This was my first visit to our Asia-Pacific Region and included stops in Japan, Taiwan, The Philippines, and Malaysia. Among the many goals for this trip: an evaluation of our services in the region, tours of our district and regional offices, meetings with district and regional staff, and, most importantly, opportunities to meet with members and leaders. We met all of these objectives because of the great work of our volunteer leaders who created some amazing opportunities for me to see and hear what our Kiwanis family is doing in Asia. The list of people to thank is much too long for me to list here, but I do want to single out our governors and district secretaries in Japan, Taiwan, Philippines Luzon, Philippines South, and Malaysia for their efforts. Kiwanis International board member Chia Sing Hwang also was of great assistance to me, along with Past International President Ito Torres. Over the next few weeks, I will be sharing stories with you about what we heard and saw on these visits as well as the results of a member survey that was conducted in both Asia-Pacific and Europe. Our Kiwanis family in Asia is vibrant, active, and alive, with much to be proud of and many opportunities for growth and development. I look forward to sharing more with you.

Districts-in-Formation

The International Board recently took action to give additional time for Poland, the Czech Republic/Slovakia, and Ecuador to reach district-in-information status of 500 members and to reach full district strength of 1000. The board also took action to return Mexico from district-in-information status to Kiwanis Nation status. In January the Board will be asked to consider a strategy for the other districts that have fallen below the required 1,000 members. If you are part of a district that is less than 1,000 members—or is at risk of falling below—please engage your leaders in dialogue about this important issue. We need to take proactive steps to turn this around and engage a large number of volunteers to help us grow. If you have questions or concerns you would like to share, please send an e-mail to robparker@kiwanis.org

Taking a Cruise

Though we have talked for years about taking a cruise, Stephanie and I have never actually done it. The stories we have heard have made it sound so wonderful: enjoying the sun, relaxing by the pool, non-stop eating, exotic ports of call, and people who are there to meet your every need. It all sounds amazing. To celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary, I promised her that as soon as we could find some time in our schedule, we were going on a cruise. We discussed it again on our 26th wedding anniversary and again on our 27th—which we celebrated with 6,000 of our new Kiwanis friends in San Antonio. For those of you who have made a similar promise and have not found a way to deliver on it, you know how important it is that I find a way to make this happen. Though Stephanie has assured me she understands, everyone who knows about this has said it is time for me to stop talking about it and just do it. So what does this have to do with Kiwanis? I can think of a few easy applications, such as:

- “Don’t make promises without a plan to deliver.”
- “Make sure you make the time for the most important people in your life.”
- “Life is too short to spend all your time working.”
- “Don’t make things worse by telling the whole Kiwanis family....”

I am sure those all apply, but that is not where this story is leading. The thing I have been thinking is this: If you were to compare Kiwanis to a boat, what kind of ship would it be? Is it like a cruise ship where people join so they have a place to enjoy themselves, meet new friends, relax and eat, travel to new places, and be served by others? Or is Kiwanis more like a battle ship where everyone has a battle station and a mission to serve and protect? Or maybe Kiwanis is like a hospital ship that travels where the need is greatest to serve the sick and hurting? Or maybe Kiwanis is a sailboat that needs a strong wind to fill its sails. Or a speed boat that is powerful and agile. Hopefully Kiwanis is not a dingy that is small and under-powered, with only a few people willing to take a turn at the oars.

I would like to suggest that Kiwanis should be more like a battle ship or aircraft carrier than a cruise liner. We would be huge and powerful with room for everyone. From the steady and stable deck, our planes would take off for their missions and return for refueling and recovery. On this ship each person would have a battle station and would be clear about the role they play in our success. The war we would wage would be against poverty, hunger, exploitation, and any issue that threatens our children. We would not act alone, but would be a great resource to the other people who are in this battle with us. And while this metaphor breaks down at some point, I hope the main point is not lost. I doubt there are many people who joined Kiwanis because they wanted to cruise, but I am also convinced that some of our clubs have forgotten that we are in a battle on behalf of the children of the world. Let’s be more like a battle ship than a cruise ship and make it happen for our children.

Thanks for leading.

