

Kiwanis Insider



Rob Parker • Chief Executive Officer

For the Leaders of Kiwanis

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Dear Kiwanis Leaders,

Leaders Communicate Effectively

Our church just hired a new lead pastor who is a very talented and inspirational communicator. During his inaugural sermon this week, he used two metaphors to describe his vision for our church that I think would apply well to Kiwanis. He started by saying that he felt that we should not be like a carton of eggs. If you open a carton of eggs, you notice that all the eggs look the same, they are all the same color, they are all perfectly lined up in a row, and none of them are touching each other. He suggested that we should strive to be much more like a salad that is made up of all different sizes and colors and shapes, all tossed into the bowl and mixed together. Kiwanis will not become a dynamic, growing force for good in the world if we don't recruit a diverse group of individuals who are willing to step out of their protective cartons and mix it up with other people. He also suggested that we should be much more like a river than a pond. Although both a pond and a river will get you wet, ponds are small, stagnant and are not connected to anything. Rivers on the other hand are fast moving, challenging, and are headed somewhere. At Kiwanis, we need to be like a river that allows our new members to get swept up in the current rather than just getting wet.

Each Kiwanis leader has an opportunity to cast a vision for our members, clubs and districts of what Kiwanis could be like in the future. My encouragement to you is to continue to develop your ability to tell the Kiwanis story in a way that is compelling and interesting to all of your audiences. Great leaders learn to use words to describe a point in the future that is different/better than the way things are right now...which is really all that a vision is. Cast and re-cast that vision often, and people will follow.

Imagine what you we could do... if we could do what we imagine...

Can you imagine a Kiwanis that is so attractive and magnetic that we have to open new clubs because our existing clubs can't handle all of the new members? Can you see a time when we have waiting lists for our leadership development education, and where Kiwanis Family members are recruited for colleges and careers because they are some of the best prepared leaders on the planet? Can you envision a day when Kiwanis leaders are convening other leaders to solve some of the most troubling issues facing our children? Can you imagine a time when our young people join Kiwanis directly out of high school or college because we are a relevant and dynamic part of their lives? Can you picture a day when our members view their membership dues as one of the best investments they could possibly make in themselves and in their communities? Can you see it? Can you imagine it? I hope you can.

Your Assistance Needed

This most recent edition of the Kiwanis Magazine included a leadership interview with Tony Dungy, Head Coach of the Super Bowl Champion Indianapolis Colts. Tony is an amazing leader who just happens to be a football coach but could easily be leading in any number of settings. Our plan is to interview leaders from a variety of sectors from all over the world and have them share their personal views on leadership. This will help support our leadership branding efforts and will position us as a source of important leadership content. If you have any suggestions of people we should interview and can open a door to make the interview happen, I would like to hear from you at robparker@kiwanis.org.

Governors and Governors-Elect Shattering the “My Year” Syndrome

This year's class of governors and governors-elect (GE's) have been challenged to break the “my year/your year” mentality that has plagued our organization for years. There are many encouraging signs that point to significant progress, including the development of multi-year strategic plans, improved communication between leaders and the partnering of our governors and governors-elect to grow their districts. We are seeing governors reach out to their successors and encouraging them to begin planning early, and are mentoring them through the process. Governors-elect in some districts are recognizing that if they are going to lead through relationships, then the governor-elect year is a very important time of relationship building. Growth Summits are being planned in many districts as a partnership between governor, GE and the growth chair, and several have already taken place. This type of team work will make a huge difference in the future. If you have any stories to share about the positive partnerships in your districts, I would like to hear from you at robparker@kiwanis.org.

Choose Your Legacy

At the Governor-Elect Education Conference a few weeks ago, we had a chance to share some thoughts with our incoming leaders about the opportunity to choose their leadership legacy. We asked them to imagine that their year as governor was already over and people were evaluating the success of that year. Would their legacy be that they were well-liked, well-known, well-traveled or well-fed...or would they be known as a governor who really made things happen? Not that any of those things are bad, but are they the kind of things that will make a lasting difference? Our research and review of successful districts indicate that there is a direct correlation between how the governors (and other leaders) spend their time and the progress that the district makes in service, growth, and in developing the next generation of leaders. **Some of our most well-liked, well-known and well-traveled leaders have presided over districts whose clubs are struggling, membership is declining, leaders are squabbling with each other, and the passion for service is low.** They visit every division, shake hands with lots of Kiwanians, put thousands of miles on their car and attend every meeting possible...but when the year is over there is very little lasting impact.

In the next few issues of the Kiwanis Insider, I would like to share some thoughts on how we can break this cycle. We have been studying the habits of Kiwanis leaders who have overcome great obstacles and still had success growing their clubs and districts. We would like to share some of the best practices of these “High-Impact Leaders” so that we can begin to replicate and multiply that success. The way we spend our time and the things that we focus on as leaders can make a huge difference. It can cause us to grow and become increasingly relevant, or it can distract us from our primary purpose. While some of the changes we need to consider may not be popular, if we can create a legacy of leadership and service, then the need to be well-liked and well-known diminishes in importance.

Thanks for leading.

Rob