

A Brief History of the Oxford Kiwanis Club

1926 –



Kiwanis came to Oxford in 1926, after Clifford Moore invited Dr. Harold Shearman, a professor at Miami University, and William Umstead, manager of the Oxford Hardware store, to a Kiwanis meeting in Brookville, Indiana. Shearman and Umstead began dreaming of a service club for Oxford and, after briefly considering Rotary, decided that Kiwanis was better suited to a community of Oxford's size (then 2500).

On March 2, 1926, 43 men gathered for a luncheon in the Knights of Pythias Hall to be installed as a Kiwanis club by a Kiwanis national organizer, Franklin Kean of Los Angeles. At this organizational meeting the club elected John F. Frazer as its first president; William B. Umsted, vice president; William C. McSherry, Treasurer; Dr. John F. Ziefle, secretary; and James. D. Hutchisson, district trustee. Members of the first board of directors included O. E. Henry, Charles A. Shera, Dr. Hazlett A. Moore, J.C. Barkley, J. Gilbert Welsch, Clem A. Towner, and Harold P. Shearman.

The new club's charter was presented to President Frazer at a dinner in the same hall on May 18, 1926, by District Governor Wilby G. Hyde, of Covington, Kentucky. By now the roster had expanded to 51 members.

For more than two decades, Kiwanis was Oxford's only service club until 1947 when a Lions Club organized in Oxford. When Art Miller became the first African American to join the Oxford Kiwanis Club, several Kiwanis members (including two past presidents) resigned and organized a Rotary Club in 1965.

In 1951 the club celebrated its 25th Anniversary with a dinner at the Oxford Presbyterian Church. President David Maxfield had the pleasure of introducing 12 charter members who were present. Entertainment was presented by the Miami University NROTC *Seachanters*, and Lawrence Reese of Philadelphia gave an address on "The Company We Keep."

An amendment to the Kiwanis International Bylaws, permitting women to become members of Kiwanis clubs, was approved at the 1987 International Convention. Two years later, Leona (Lee) Shawver was inducted as the first woman member of the Oxford Kiwanis Club. The following year Ellen (Lou) Aulds became the second woman member. Shawver was elected as Treasurer in 1992, becoming the first woman officer of the club, and Aulds was inaugurated as the first woman President in 1996. By then there ten women in the club, and today the numbers of men and women are roughly equal.

Service to Youth

Today the motto of Kiwanis International is "Serving the children of the world." From the beginning, the Kiwanis Club of Oxford has been committed to serving children in the Oxford community. During its early years the club provided a Christmas tree in West (now Martin Luther King) Park and distributed sacks of Christmas candy to Oxford children. In 2000, as that portion of the park was being renovated, Kiwanis funds enabled the purchase of a life-size, concrete pig for children to climb on.

When Boy Scout Troop 30 was organized in 1938 by a Miami freshman named John Dolobois, Kiwanis was there to help as the troop's sponsor. It was responsible for constructing a log cabin on Four Mile Creek, north of Oxford, that was used as a scouting facility until Camp Myron Kahn was opened. More than 100 boys from this troop have become Eagle Scouts, and Kiwanis continues to sponsor Troop 930 today.

In recent years, the Kiwanis Club has added the sponsorship of Cub Scout Pack 961, and it also supports the Indian Trails Girl Scout Service Unit, serving girls from the Oxford-Ross area.

The Oxford Kiwanis Club is known throughout the Ohio District for its sponsored youth programs. Our K-Family includes six youth organizations that are part of the Kiwanis Service Leadership Program. The Miami University Circle K was chartered in 1966, and it has consistently been among the largest and strongest Circle K chapters in the Ohio District. The Talawanda High School Key Club was re-organized in 1984, and it has produced a long string of Key Club Lt. Governors. In 1990 a Builders Club was started at the Talawanda Middle School, and K-Kids clubs have been chartered at all three elementary schools in the Talawanda District: Kramer (2006), Marshall (200x), and Bogan (200y)

Health and Safety

From the club's early years, before Oxford had its own hospital, Kiwanis members transported local children to Hamilton for tonsillectomies. When families were unable to pay, the club absorbed expenses. Kiwanis assistance continued in the form of support for dental care for children whose families cannot provide it. A local dentist who was also a Kiwanian waived a portion of his professional fees for this service.

For many years Kiwanis and Circle K members helped to support the Children's Unit of Longview Hospital in Cincinnati through the South West Ohio Kiwanis Mental Health Association (SWOKMHA). Today the Oxford Kiwanis Club works with McCullough-Hyde Memorial Hospital and Kiwanis for KIDS to provide bicycle safety helmets for local children.

The Kiwanis Club has been a leader in providing safety equipment for the Oxford Police Department and the Oxford Life Squad, through the purchase of child safety seats. It has supported the Oxford Fire Department with contributions toward a task van and a fire safety trailer. The club also purchased two CPR mannequins for the hospital to use in training community volunteers.

In the 1990s Kiwanis International, working with UNICEF, raised more than \$100 million to wipe out iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) in underdeveloped countries by constructing salt iodization plants. The Oxford Kiwanis Club contributed more than \$10,000 to this campaign as it designated a number of its outstanding members to be George F. Hixson Fellows, named in honor of the first Kiwanis International President. In 2010 Kiwanis again joined forces with UNICEF to raise \$110 million toward the goal of eliminating maternal and neo-natal tetanus (MNT) in 39 countries. The Oxford club is supporting Project ELIMINATE, and today the number of nations where MNT remains a threat has been reduced to 17.

Community Service

Kiwanis is a global organization of volunteers, dedicated to improving the world, one child and one community at a time. In the 1930's the Oxford Kiwanis Club participated in extended negotiations with the Ohio highway department to have State Route 73 extended into Oxford. Later it was active in promoting the construction of a new Route 73 bridge over Four Mile Creek and improving a high-accident stretch of that road.

Kiwanis played an important role in the establishment of Hueston Woods State Park just north of Oxford. In the late 1930s Dr. Robert Hefner, a zoology professor at Miami and a past president of Kiwanis, outlined possible conservation areas, including an area of beech woods which had been in the Hueston family since 1800. Kiwanis members campaigned for the state to purchase this wooded area, and the first parcel of land in what would eventually become a 3600-acre park was acquired in 1941. Each year many Kiwanis members volunteer at the Arts and Crafts Fair and the Apple Butter Festival sponsored by the Oxford Museum Association and held at the Pioneer Farm Museum located within Hueston Woods State Park.

The Oxford Kiwanis Club was largely responsible for establishing the Oxford Community Chest, and former club president Raymond Glos was instrumental in organizing procedures for its annual fund drive. Today that legacy continues as the United Way of Oxford.

Kiwanis members were among those instrumental in establishing the first swimming pool in Oxford and in providing playgrounds and other recreational facilities in the city. This includes the founding of Talawanda Recreation Incorporated (TRI) in the late 1960's. A major Kiwanis service project in the late 1970's was the beautification of High Street. In 1989 past president James Pelley led a campaign to have Oxford designated as a Tree City. When the uptown city park was renovated in the 1990's, the Kiwanis Club provided funds for a concrete pig on which children can play.

When Oxford's Citizen of the Year program was started in the 1952, Kiwanis joined *The Oxford Press* in recognizing outstanding members of the community. Those chosen as Citizen of the Year or Citizen of the Years are guests of the club at a luncheon during which the awards are presented. Many Kiwanis members have themselves been honored in this way for their exemplary volunteer service.

Sources of Income

The first Oxford Kiwanis Pancake Day, held on Saturday, May 11, 1957, was chaired by Bob Bogan and Jack Samuelson. Its purpose was to raise money to purchase Talawanda High School band uniforms. Aunt Jemima pancake batter was donated by the Quaker Oats Company. The net proceeds from this event amounted to \$500. For many years past president Arthur Miller, manager of Miami's food services, guided and assisted club members in planning and executing this event. Ticket sales are now supplemented by the sale of ads that are published in a Pancake Day booklet. In recent years, a second community breakfast has been organized in conjunction with the annual Porsches 2 Oxford event.

In 1985 past president Rusty Griffith presented a proposal for Kiwanis Peanut Days, to be held each fall on a weekend that featured a Miami football home game. Members of the K-Family stood on uptown street corners and in front of the Kroger store to give away specially marked bags of Kiwanis peanuts in return for free-will contributions from passers-by. For more than a decade this served as a second major source of funding for the Oxford Kiwanis Club until credit and debit cards resulted in few persons carrying cash.

Other sources of income have included chicken barbecues, chili suppers, and the sponsorship of traveling circuses. In June 1966 the club sponsored the Mills Brothers Circus which set up their tents at the Talawanda High School athletic fields. Co-chairs of the project were Rusty Griffith, Bill Jenkins, and Wallace Edwards. The net proceeds of about \$2,500 were turned over to the Talawanda Recreation, Inc. (TRI) to support its recreation center building project. In May 1999 we sponsored the Kelly Miller Circus in the Millett Hall west parking lot.