Twenty-one years ago, when Susan McDougal was a new member of the Kiwanis Club of Huntsville, she was assigned to serve on its Spelling Bee Committee.

She learned a lot about spelling bees that year, considering that she had never participated in one herself, and her son was only 7 then.

The next year, she found herself in charge of the Madison County Spelling Bee, which was one of her club’s annual projects.

“I witnessed the best and brightest students in the county competing. It gave me and my club a lot of joy to watch these kids,” McDougal said.

As a new decade gets under way in 2020, McDougal is president-elect of the Kiwanis Club of Huntsville and heading up not only the county spelling bee but the Alabama state bee, now under the sponsorship of the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation.

In recent years, the spelling competitions McDougal headed as a service project began getting a lot of media attention. Erin Howard, a student at Mountain Gap Elementary School in Huntsville, won the Alabama Spelling Bee — and she continued to win for a total of four years, going to the Washington, D.C., area to compete in the Scripps National Spelling Bee four times. Last spring at the national competition, Erin became one of the top spellers.

New decade, new duties

By Patrice Stewart
Kiwanis Kourier editor

Kiwanis Governor Bob Brown is trying something different from the standard midwinter meeting of the past.

He has announced three regional Midwinter Training Meetings in February, aiming for three times the attendance and three times the education and fun at far less cost per participant.

The governor gives some details and explains his reasoning in his column beginning on Page 2 of this Kourier.

Kiwanians can choose one of these three dates and locations:

- Feb. 8, Cullman
  (Divisions 1, 2, 3, 6, 7)

- Feb. 22, Montgomery
  (Divisions 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11)

- Feb. 29, Monroeville (12, 13, 14)

The sites were selected to put Kiwanians within easy driving distance of homes. If the meeting assigned to your division is not convenient, you can select a different location and date. Each

(See REGIONAL, Page 3)
3 regional meetings will help us gain strength through numbers

None of us is as smart as all of us.
— Ken Blanchard

Leadership expert and author of over 60 books, including his monumental bestseller, “The One Minute Manager,” Ken Blanchard is a man of rare insight into what makes organizations successful. His concepts are simple, but incredibly compelling.

For example, the quote above succinctly delivers the unequivocal truth that each and every one of us can achieve more when we involve others. We share knowledge with each other, we inspire each other, and let’s face it, working together is just more fun and more fulfilling than working alone.

When we work together toward a common goal, we draw strength from one another.

Alabama District Governor Bob Brown attended a midyear governors’ meeting in Dallas in January. At left, Brown (center) is with Michigan District Governor Sarah Kew and Georgia District Governor Andy Pipkin, who have the same international trustee counselor — Cathy Szymanski — as Alabama. At right, Brown meets with Southeast Area Director Rhonda Vrell of North Carolina and Kiwanis International President Daniel Vigneron of Luxembourg.

This simple truth certainly applies to Kiwanis. In fact, Kiwanis International has determined that one of the key contributors to club strength is consistent participation in district gatherings. Why? Because when we get together with other clubs, we share ideas, successes, failures and plans. In other words, we learn from each other.

In February, the Alabama District has the opportunity to significantly enhance our strength and, subsequently, our chances for success.

You are probably already aware of the fact that we are taking a different approach to our 2020 Midwinter Training Meeting. We are trying a format that other Kiwanis Districts have employed with great success (another example of the benefits of gathering and exchanging ideas!).

Less travel, less cost

We have heard from many of you that our traditional Midwinter Conference was too far for some clubs to travel, and had gotten too expensive for many of our members.

So this year, we are addressing both travel distance and cost by holding three meetings in different parts of the state (north, central, and south), and slashing the cost to just $25 per attendee, including lunch.

By making these sessions easier to get to and more affordable, we hope that we will get a significant increase in participation, which will translate into an increase in district communication, camaraderie and capability.

The District Board has put together an agenda that will help strengthen

(See GOVERNOR, Page 3)
Governor
(From Page 2)
every club that participates:
- Updates on all critical elements of our district, including membership, financial status, our Service Leadership Programs, our Alabama Kiwanis Foundation, and critical programs like Key Leader.
- A workshop on Club Strengthening, which will provide specific tools to measure and increase the potency and viability of your local club.
- A workshop that will provide all the contacts and steps you will need to know in order to set up your own local Reading Is Fundamental program so that you can continue to make a positive impact on childhood literacy in your community.
- Training for current club presidents and presidents-elect.
- Training for club secretaries and treasurers.
- The launch of a new district initiative (“MAY I Ask a Question?”) designed to simultaneously increase Kiwanis relevance to your local community and help drive member recruitment.
- Lastly, the smaller group setting will allow for enhanced communication between local clubs and the District Board, and between various clubs.

Due to our efforts to conduct these meetings at the lowest possible cost, we are not incurring the cost of offering online registration as we have in the past. Your club president and secretary have received a sign-up sheet to list all attendees from your club. Make sure your name is on it!

Strength in numbers
We all know the old adage that there is strength in numbers. Well, the greater the number of participants in our Midwinter Training Meetings, the greater the strength we will achieve. The more brainpower we gather together, the more problems we solve and the more progress we make.

The great American inventor Alexander Graham Bell (if you can’t recall his most significant invention, give me a phone call and I’ll refresh your memory) summed up the potential power of our upcoming meetings when he said, “Great discoveries and achievements invariably involve the cooperation of many minds.”

Please make your plans to be a part of our 2020 Midwinter Training Meetings. Come share your knowledge and partake of the bountiful knowledge of your fellow Kiwanians.

To paraphrase the great Ken Blanchard, “None of us is as smart … or as energetic, or as committed, or as passionate, or as intelligent, or as much FUN … as all of us.”

See you there!

Regional meetings
(From Page 1)
meeting will have the same program and almost the same speakers and trainers.
Locations are listed on this page. The meetings will be held from 9 to 3 p.m. and include district updates.
Officer training for club presidents will be led by Past Lt. Governor Mike Winstead, while Past Governor Colean Black will teach secretaries and treasurers.
A workshop on Club Strengthening will be taught by Rhonda Vrell, Southeast area director for Kiwanis International, and Pam Fleming, past Kiwanis International Trustee and Alabama District Governor.
Cathy Gafford, executive director of Jean Dean Reading Is Fundamental, will lead a session on “Implementing Your Own RIF Program” for clubs interested in continuing a reading program after JDRIF ends in September.
Clubs are being asked to sign up their members planning to attend a regional meeting on forms sent to their presidents and then mail those forms in with checks for the total amount (head count times $25) to District Secretary Tammy Driskill, P.O. Box 8505, Gadsden, AL 35902. (See Page 9.)

‘Meet the Governors’
The Inverness Kiwanis Club hosted a "Meet the Governors" lunch meeting Nov. 7, with both Alabama District Circle K Governor Zarien Morris (right) and Alabama Kiwanis Governor Bob Brown (left) speaking. Afterward, President Peter Northcott (front) moderated a dialogue and exchange of ideas on service and fundraising projects.
Governor’s travels

Kiwanis Governor Bob Brown hit the road after officially taking office Oct. 1, joining clubs around the state for meetings and service projects. From left to right, top row to bottom row, he is shown with many Kiwanis club members and lieutenant governors: Chelsea, Tuscaloosa, Wetumpka (new club), Capital City Montgomery, Cullman, Helena, Vulcan, Dadeville, Anniston and Oxford, Alexander City with Talladega, Auburn and Dadeville, and Gardendale.
Huntsville Kiwanis Club starts reading program and other initiatives at school

By Mike Roddy
Division 1 Lieutenant Governor
Past President, Kiwanis Club of Huntsville

The Kiwanis Club of Huntsville has always been a big supporter of the Jean Dean Reading is Fundamental program. With the RIF program closing in 2020, the club was searching for a way to continue working with children to encourage them to read and to enhance their reading skills.

Bryan Bennett, a retired Air Force Colonel and member of the Kiwanis Club of Huntsville, started working with the Huntsville City School System to see what the club could do to help with their reading program for underperforming children.

Many ESL students

Teachers from McDonnell Elementary School were invited to speak at our club and related their huge need for help with the reading programs in their school.

McDonnell Elementary is a Title I school with 80 percent of the student body identified as English as a second language (ESL). Most of their students are performing at reading levels one or more below their grade levels.

Under the leadership of 2018-19 Huntsville Kiwanis president Marc Byers, a group met last summer with Huntsville City School representatives to discuss how they could help at McDonnell Elementary.

Twenty-four Huntsville Kiwanians are currently serving as twice-weekly reading coaches for students at the school. They conduct two 30-minute back-to-back sessions with students from grades K-5 on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Teachers identified students who needed help with reading following the reading assessment conducted at the beginning of the school year. Coaches are provided a list of tasks that need to be accomplished with each student during each session. Kiwanis coaches record the student’s progress at the end of each session.

Video made Oct. 15

The first hands-on session with the students was held Oct. 15, 2019. Huntsville City Schools Educational TV attended this session and provided the following video clip to all local TV stations to encourage other civic organizations to determine what they could do to strengthen the local school system.

The video includes Bryan Bennett, Kiwanis program chairman; Lavonda Grant, curriculum specialist at McDonnell Elementary; Kiwanis coaches such as President-elect Susan McDougal; and several students. You can view the video here: https://www.huntsvillecityschools.org/video/nojs/view/197940818/4132662 (watch it soon, as it may not be available later).

When you view the video, you will be impressed by the children — well-behaved, eager to learn, and having a great time interacting with Kiwanians.

(See READING, Page 12)
Past Governor Steve Cragon dies

Past Alabama Kiwanis District Governor Stephen D. “Steve” Cragon of Birmingham died Dec. 14, 2019, after complications from recent surgery. He was 90.

The family received friends beginning at 10 a.m. Dec. 19 in the parlor at Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church. A memorial service followed at 11 a.m. in the sanctuary.

Cragon was born July 28, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, to Henry and Anne Cragon. He graduated from Peabody Demonstration School in Nashville and enrolled as part of the first NROTC class at Vanderbilt University. He was a member of Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity and was manager of the Vanderbilt men’s basketball team.

Following graduation and his commission, he served three years active duty in the Navy on the carrier Midway and an additional 25 years in the Naval Reserve, rising to the rank of captain.

He met Mary Josephine Cox while home on leave in Birmingham, and they married in October 1952. After leaving the Navy, he went to work for Southern Bell Telephone Company.

Cragon raised his family of three children while working in several cities in Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia and Alabama. He retired with BellSouth Services in Birmingham in 1991 after more than 38 years service.

He was an active member at Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church, where he served in many church capacities over the years.

He dedicated much of his retirement to Kiwanis, including serving as district governor. He had also served as Alabama Kiwanis district secretary and in many club roles in the Vestavia’s Kiwanis Club. Most recently he was a member of the Hoover Metro Kiwanis Club and actively attended state conventions.

A board member emeritus of the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation, he also helped with funding for the Kiwanis International Foundation and its worldwide projects such as eliminating Iodine Deficiency Disorder and Maternal-Neonatal Tetanus.

Cragon was a big supporter of the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation’s signature project, Jean Dean Reading Is Fundamental program.

Cragon enjoyed golf, puzzles, travel with Friendship Force and family, and rooting for his Commodores. Cragon truly never met a stranger and loved spending time with his family and friends.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Mary Jo Cragon; daughter Carol Sims (Tom); son Stephen Cragon Jr. (Laura); six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents; a daughter, Anne Mason Kouns; and sister Judy Cragon Reeves.

Luncheon to celebrate Jean Dean RIF’s 30 years

The March 7 “Open Books — Open Minds” celebration is being planned by Russ and Carol Grimes as a tribute to 30 years of the Jean Dean Reading Is Fundamental program.

Russ Grimes is an Alabama Kiwanis Foundation board member and RIF committee chair.

A limited number of tickets are left, so reserve yours quickly. The event chairs had an early deadline to guarantee a number to the catering team at the RSA Activity Center in Montgomery. Email RIF Executive Director Cathy Gafford at jeandeanrif@gmail.com to check on tickets, or call her at 334-750-9974.

For 30 years, Gafford has operated this signature project for the Foundation, and it has drawn international recognition. Before the program ends in September 2020, she and JDRIF supporters want to thank Kiwanis clubs and members who have helped buy books and have read those books in Head Starts and other locations, as well as team captains, site coordinators and volunteers who have put labels in books and prepared them for shipment.

The luncheon will run from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on the first Saturday in March at 201 Dexter Ave. Tickets for Kiwanisians are $40; the deadline to pay is Jan. 25 by sending a check to JDRIF at 1105 Fitzpatrick Ave., Opelika, AL 36801, or through celebrate.jeandeanrif.org.

Gafford emailed letters to her Kiwanis club contacts, thanking them for “your caring and dedication to giving children the tools to prepare them for school and beyond.” She announced that at each of the three regional Midwinter Training Meetings in February in Cullman, Montgomery and Monroeville, she will put on a 45-minute workshop on how clubs can continue their own reading programs.

She also said the A-O Emblem Club will put on its final Breakfast for Books benefiting Jean Dean RIF on Feb. 1 from 7 to 11 a.m. at First Presbyterian Church in Opelika. Tickets are $5 for pancakes and sausage with milk, juice or coffee; get them in advance from her or Emblem Club members, or at the door.
Your club needs to sponsor at least 2 students to go to Key Leader weekend

**By Pam Schisler**
Alabama Key Leader Coordinator

Key Leader 2019 is just around the corner.

The Alabama District Key Leader weekend will be held April 24-26. This program will take place at Camp ASCCA on Lake Martin in Jackson’s Gap, Alabama.

Key Leader is a wonderful servant leadership program for students from 8th to 12th grades. Students who attend this fun-filled weekend stay in separate male and female cabins with chaperones.

This life-changing event focuses on five core principles: integrity, growth, respect, community and excellence.

Those attending learn leadership skills that will help them change the way they view their schools and communities. They participate in a weekend of community workshops and team-building activities. There is also plenty of outdoor fun on the low ropes course.

By the end of the Key Leader program, students will have made new friends from all over the state of Alabama.

We have challenged each Kiwanis club in Alabama to sponsor at least two students from your area.

Key Leader is not just for Key Club members. It is for any student wanting to develop leadership skills and confidence. It can be for a family member, niece or nephew, grandson or granddaughter.

Let’s not forget that these students are our future.

Key Leader would not be possible without your support and generosity. We appreciate the continued support of the Alabama District Key Club and the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation for their generous scholarships.

These scholarships provide many students with the opportunity to attend.

For more information, visit [www.key-leader.org](http://www.key-leader.org) or contact Pam Schisler, leadscout@troycable.net, or one of the Key Leader student liaisons: Blake Busby, lgt8@alabamakeyclub.org, or Elizabeth Schisler, lgt16@alabamakeyclub.org.

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**Attend Midwinter Training; help start clubs**

Hello everyone, and happy 2020!

I am humbled to read about the great service projects of your district. The impact many will feel because of your projects is impressive.

Alabama District Governor Bob Brown is leading by example and letting actions speak louder than words. That is also Kiwanis International President Daniel Vigneron’s motto for the year.

Remember that Governor Bob’s No. 1 priority in January will be signing your clubs up for the three Midwinter Training meetings.

We would love to have you volunteer for the new-club opening event in southern Alabama during the week of March 9. There are many ways you can volunteer — perhaps by making calls to set up appointments for the team, or posting on social media.

Please contact Governor Bob to discuss how you can help start a club. There is a lot we can learn from these events, and the more hands to serve, the more we learn from one another.

This year’s Kiwanis International Convention will be held June 17-20 in Indianapolis, Indiana. There are many new packages being offered this year; check out the information at [https://www.kiwanis.org/convention/2020](https://www.kiwanis.org/convention/2020).

Kiwanis is serious business with a playful spirit. So that’s exactly what this convention will be — a union of grown-up commitment and childlike exuberance. Come to Indianapolis for leadership education with a playful twist.

Airline Captain “Sully” Sullenberger is just one of the extraordinary speakers in Indianapolis.

I appreciate each and every one of you and what you represent. I am so proud to be serving the Alabama District. If there is anything I can do for you, let me know. Email cathy@szy.com.

Cathy Szymanski of Wattsburg, Pennsylvania, is the Kiwanis International trustee who serves as counselor to the Alabama District for 2019-20.

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**Get ready for Kiwanis Pancake Days!**

Look up dates for nearby fundraisers and see how many you can attend!
Spelling
(From Page 1)

national “octo champions” during her final year of eligibility.

The national bee is usually held right after Memorial Day at the Gaylord National Resort & Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland. In 2019, the 92nd Scripps National Spelling Bee finals were on May 30, televised on ESPN. The 562 contestants spelled until they were wrong; the winners were eight co-champions, including Erin, who lasted through 20 rounds.

McDougal’s responsibilities have increased through the years, as she became the most experienced person at the state bee and was put in charge.

Responsibilities grew

The Birmingham Post-Herald sponsored the state spelling bee for years, but that newspaper went out of business in 2005. McDougal, as the county coordinator with the longest involvement, was asked to help find a sponsor.

“I jumped fast, because I didn’t want to let these kids down,” McDougal recalled. At the time, she was employed by a travel agency with offices around the state. She proposed that they sponsor the state bee, and they agreed, with her handling the details.

Last spring, about the time of the state bee, she went out on her own as a travel agent. It was time to look for a sponsor again.

While watching Erin spell difficult words on national television and cheering her on, McDougal was concerned about the future of the program she had nurtured for two decades. First the newspaper sponsorship had ended, and now sponsorships by other businesses were ending.

She began talking to Alabama Kiwanis Foundation 2018-19 President Ernest Hulsey of Huntsville about sponsoring the state bee.

“I knew it needed to go to a group that cared about kids,” McDougal said. She presented the idea at an early summer meeting of the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation board in Montgomery and was told afterward that they wanted to take on the role of sponsor, with her help. Jean Dean Reading Is Fundamental is in its 30th and final year as the foundation’s signature project.

First Kiwanis bee
March 21 at UAB

The first Alabama Spelling Bee to be sponsored by the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation is scheduled for Saturday, March 21, in Birmingham, according to Susan McDougal.

The executive director of the Alabama Kiwanis Foundation’s newest project wants to involve Key Club and Circle K members at the state bee, which will be held in a hall provided by the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The formal announcement was made by Hulsey at the Alabama Kiwanis District Convention in Huntsville last August, with McDougal and her national champion speller present.

“Everybody has really jumped in to help spread the word,” said McDougal, who oversees the Alabama Spelling Bee from her office in Huntsville.

During the fall, she has been working with county coordinators and taking applications. The fee to enter the state bee was $165 from May 1 to Oct. 15, and then it increased to $240 until the Dec. 20 deadline. That fee goes directly to Scripps, which provides all the materials for the state bee.

“Everybody needs to encourage their schools to register,” said McDougal. “For some schools, that’s a lot of money, but they can approach civic organizations or have PTA bake sales.”

Follow the Alabama Spelling Bee Facebook page to learn more.

For the winning student at state, the sponsor of the bee provides flights and accommodations for the national event, outside Washington, D.C. McDougal would like to add a cash prize.

3 judges and 1 pronouncer

As county coordinator, her duties include encouraging teachers and students to enter the spelling bee. She got other Kiwanians to help with site setup, plus some to answer questions for students, teachers and parents.

Every county spelling bee needs three judges, one pronouncer, an appeals person and a record keeper, McDougal said. Normally, the current president of Huntsville Kiwanis serves as a judge, plus another Kiwanis member who has experience as a judge.

McDougal noted that the Madison County bee brings in more students than the state bee.

Through the eighth grade

“We use the county bee as a time to sell our Kiwanis Club of Huntsville pancake tickets,” she said. The site rotates each year in order to highlight various schools; this year the county bee will be held at the Academy for Academics and Arts. Some counties set a minimum age; students cannot compete after finishing the eighth grade.

That’s why champ Erin Howard is not eligible to enter the Madison County spelling bee again this year. She won the county bee and the state bee four times and went to nationals four years, finishing as a co-champion last year. She now attends Grissom High School and plays in the band.

A student must compete in the Alabama State Bee to get to the Scripps National Spelling Bee, said McDougal, who has arranged many trips for spellers and parents but has never been to watch nationals herself.

Schools enroll online to hold spelling bees, and national sponsor Scripps sends them electronic materials such as access to study guides, spelling lists and pronouncers’ guides. “They are pretty autonomous until they have completed their school’s bee,” McDougal said. “Scripps sends me materials for district bees and the state bee.”

Some counties may hold district spelling bees (Jefferson, Mobile-Baldwin, and Etowah do), and home schoolers form a district, too.

Kiwanis clubs that sponsor their county bees are Kiwanis Club of Montgomery, Kiwanis Club of Tuscaloosa, and Kiwanis Club of Dadeville in Tallapoosa County, as well as Kiwanis Club of Huntsville for Madison County.

Other Kiwanis clubs can help, said McDougal, by sponsoring county bees and helping with students’ entry fees and travel. She said these counties currently don’t have competitions affiliated with the state bee: Barber, Bullock, Clay, Conecuh, Coosa, Crenshaw, Fayette, Franklin, Geneva, Lawrence, Marengo, Marion, Perry, Pike, Randolph and Sumter.

“Kiwanians can start talking it up for next year,” McDougal said, since the deadline to register for the 2020 competition was in December.
2020 Midwinter Training Meetings

Choose a Saturday: Feb. 8, Feb. 22 or Feb. 29.
All meetings 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Total cost per attendee $25 (includes lunch).

The Divisional assignments shown below are recommendations only, based on geographical proximity. Clubs or individual members may choose to go to a session other than the one designated for their Division if the date is better for them. The agenda and program content for all three meetings will be the same.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Divisions</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>1,2,3,6,7</td>
<td>Saturday, February 8</td>
<td>St. John's Church</td>
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<td>512 2nd Avenue SE</td>
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<td>Cullman, AL 35055</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>4,5,8,9,10,11</td>
<td>Saturday, February 22</td>
<td>Alabama Cattlemen's Association</td>
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<td>201 South Bainbridge St.</td>
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<td>Montgomery, AL 36104</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>12,13,14</td>
<td>Saturday, February 29</td>
<td>First United Methodist Church</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>324 Pineville Road</td>
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<td>Monroeville, AL 36460</td>
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Program Highlights

- District Updates
- Workshop on Club Strengthening
- Workshop on Implementing Your Own RIF Program
- Club President training
- Club Secretary and club Treasurer training
- Launch of a new District initiative — MAY I Ask a Question?
- Food, friends, fellowship and FUN!

Club Name:
Session (select one): __Cullman, Feb. 8  __Montgomery, Feb. 22  __Monroeville, Feb. 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attendee Name</th>
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Please mail sign-up form and checks to District Secretary Tammy Driskill by February 1, 2020.
(__ attendees X $25 each = ___ enclosed)

P.O. Box 8505
Gadsden, AL 35902
Kiwanians around the state stayed busy during the Christmas season, from ringing bells for the Salvation Army to helping with Angel Tree gifts. Other projects included an ornament featuring Pell City High, part of a fundraiser series for Pell City Kiwanis Club. The Christmas parade sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Gadsden featured the first-prize float, top right, and Kiwanis Governor Bob Brown driving wife Mary Lynn in a 1970 Mustang convertible, center right, compliments of Lt. Gov. Jerry Ware. Clubs decorating trees for Children’s Hospital included Homewood-Mountain Brook, center left, with a toy theme, and Hoover-Metro, center, with a Nutcracker theme. In Gardendale, Kiwanians handed out candy from their booth along the parade route, bottom left. And Key Clubbers got into the spirit with a caroling fundraiser planned by Lt. Governor Blake Busby; 25 participants from five area Key Clubs raised more than $425 for Children’s Hospital.
Circle K Leadership Academy

These Alabama District Circle K members spent a fall weekend on the shore of Perdido Bay for the annual Alabama Leadership Academy. They shared ideas, participated in leadership activities, made new friends and renewed old acquaintances through the weekend. The college students and Alabama District Circle K Administrator Peck Fox left energized, inspired and ready for service.

Fall board meeting

The 2019-20 officers and board members for Alabama District Circle K met last fall to plan their year. Shown with them are Alabama Circle K Administrator Peck Fox (left) and Kiwanis Children’s Fund board member and Past Alabama District Governor Armand St. Raymond (right). Alabama Circle K’ers Tana Early and Racheal Fairley are now serving as trustees on the Circle K International board.

Retiring Old Glory

Members of the Birmingham-Southern College Circle K chapter follow the official steps for a “flag retirement ceremony” for flags that will no longer to be flown.

102nd Annual
Kiwanis District Convention

Gulf Shores, Alabama
Gulf State Park
August 14-16, 2020
Bring the family!
Kiwanians will be eating cake and singing “Happy Birthday” a lot in the next year or two, as another round of Alabama District clubs turn 100.

According to Kiwanis International records, five clubs will celebrate 100th anniversaries in 2020. KI lists the following clubs and organizational dates: Bessemer, April 7; Decatur, April 8; Opelika, May 6; Anniston, July 12; and Dothan, Sept. 23.

Then in 2021, more 100-year celebrations will be held. KI lists these clubs as having been organized in 1921: Tuscaloosa, April 9; Cullman, April 18; Eufaula, Sept. 23.

An installation ceremony for 2019-20 K-Kids at Gulf Shores Elementary School was held Oct. 22, with members receiving certificates. K-Kids officers taking part in the program are, from left: Vice President Jack Nelson; President Brody Shiver; Treasurer Joey McAleer; Secretary Presley Barker; and Sergeant at Arms Lennox Ray. Advisers attending the installation ceremony are, from left, Lindsay Taylor, faculty adviser; Kristie Wheeles, parent volunteer; Staci Robinson, faculty adviser; Taylor Means, a past Kiwanis lieutenant governor and Gulf Shores Kiwanis Club member; Mary Hoerlein, K-Kids Alabama Kiwanis District administrator; Stacy Bathrick, Gulf Shores Kiwanis Club adviser; Luke Roberston, Gulf Shores Kiwanis Club president; and Ashley Weekley, faculty adviser. K-Kids is a student-led service club for students in elementary schools. K-Kids was developed by and is modeled after Kiwanis International, a global network of men and women devoted to serving the children of the world. The K-Kids program helps develop leadership through service to the school and community. For information on starting a club, contact K-Kids Administrator Mary Hoerlein by emailing prathmh@auburn.edu.

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The Alabama Aktion Club Northern Conference was held Oct. 19 at Camp McDowell, sponsored by the Jasper Aktion Club with some financial support from the Kiwanis Club of Jasper.

More than 110 registered from Aktion clubs in Huntsville, Florence, Gadsden, Exceptional Birmingham, Moody and Jasper. This year’s themes were “Aktion Club — hero at heart” and “My superpower is helping others.”

Participants were encouraged to wear something from their favorite superhero, from a scarf or hat to a full costume.

When they registered, each person was given a number and directed to their table. Each table included members from different clubs, so they were able to share ideas and enjoy communicating with everyone.

Many members have made friends that they see only once a year at the conference, so they were able to enjoy their friendships.

The day began with Alabama Kiwanis Vice Governor Scott Sims talking about how Aktion Club and Kiwanis members work together, and how Aktion clubs help their communities.

Then each table had a Kiwanian or faculty adviser moderate a table workshop. Those at each table decided on their group’s name, and each person stated their superpower and how it helps their Aktion Club. After those items were noted on a list, a person from each table shared the information with everyone.

Then there was a special visit from the fire department. The fire chief discussed how to be safe in your house and how to deal with any fire event. Aktion members were able to ask questions about safety and then given a tour of a fire truck. They were able to get close to the fire truck and interact with the firemen.

After lunch, there was a visit from a local organization that focuses on neighbors that we all have in Alabama: animals. The leader talked about various animals and how to be safe around them. Then the organization’s volunteers took the animals around to the tables to let Aktion Club members pet them and ask more questions.

The snake was the most popular. Several members were afraid but able to see it up close, while others were able to touch it.

Also attending were Division 5 Lt. Governor Keith McKendall, a member of the Indian Springs Village Kiwanis Club, and Division 3 Lt. Governor Steve Thomas, a member of the Jasper Kiwanis Club and supporter of the Jasper Aktion Club. They enjoyed interacting with Aktion Club members at the conference, which blended being with friends, sharing information and learning how great Aktion Clubs are.

District Aktion Club Administrator Glenda Selman told the group that it was her final conference as administrator, since she will be stepping down in March after serving in that post since 1988 or 1989, except for one year. “Since this was my last conference, they gave me a thank-you card, and I got hugs from all the members and advisers. It really meant so much to me,” Selman said.
Gadsden Aktion Club helping veterans, police and residents of nursing homes

Members of the Gadsden Aktion Club voted to help veterans, police and nursing home occupants.

For two years, they have helped the Gadsden Etowah Patriots Association with two events. In May, they helped prepare for the Memorial Day ceremony by setting up chairs and distributing programs, and later they worked to take down everything. They also wrote cards to be distributed to the veterans hospital at Thanksgiving.

Club members also helped set up for the annual Veterans Luncheon and cleaned up after the event. They set up the table decorations and made sure all tables had the correct number of chairs and silverware so the attendees could enjoy the event.

Veterans’ names and service

They also helped set up the stage and put up posters outside the venue that honored veterans with their names and service. After the event, they cleaned the tables and moved the chairs for storage.

The Patriots Association thanked them for their hard work and commented that without the help of Aktion Club members, it would have taken all afternoon to set up the day before and all afternoon to take down everything.

Aktion members had their photo made with the speaker, Army Ranger Howard “Mad Max” Mullen, and gave him a card thanking him for his service. Mullen was inducted into the Army Ranger Hall of Fame for his more than 20 years of service.

In December, club members wrote Christmas cards for Gadsden Police Department and delivered them to the police chief and commanders, who distributed them to the police. This made the Gadsden Times newspaper.

Jail or handcuffs?

While delivering cards to the Police Department, Aktion members joked around and asked if the police could put Aktion Club District Administrator Glenda Selman in jail. The police said no to that, and it made the newspaper article. They also said no, that the Aktion Club president could not borrow the police handcuffs to put on Selman.

In February, the club will send Valentine cards to veterans and help Kiwanis Club of Gadsden members at Pancake Day. They are planning a St. Patrick’s party for a local nursing home and an Easter party for kindergartners and then will end their year with another Memorial Day event.

— Glenda Selman, District Administrator for Aktion Clubs
Aktion Club in Dothan has myriad projects

The Vaughn-Blumberg Services Aktion Club in Dothan completed a Toys for Tots drive in December — one of its annual projects.

We have partnered with our sponsoring Kiwanis Club of Dothan this year in helping with their fundraiser for the Jean Dean Reading Is Fundamental program, as well as the annual pancake breakfast fundraiser. We were happy to sell approximately 75 pancake breakfast tickets.

A few of our other projects include a summer food drive for the Wiregrass Food Bank, planting and cultivating begonias from seed and taking them to Wesley Place for Mother’s Day, and picking up trash at the Kiwanis park to ensure children and parents have a clean area for playing, walking and having picnics.

We are always excited to help in the community and give back.

— Sheri Maupin

Aktion Club has 12,000 worldwide

Aktion Club is the only service club for adults with disabilities, and it has more than 12,000 members worldwide.

Aktion Club is an organization which provides its members with opportunities to serve their community, build character and develop leadership. Their core values are leadership, character building, caring and inclusiveness.

For information on starting an Aktion Club in your area, contact Alabama District of Kiwanis Aktion Club Administrator Glenda Selman at glenda.selman@gmail.com.

Play with purpose June 17-20, 2020

Kiwanis International Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana

Kiwanis is serious business with a playful spirit. So that's exactly what this convention will be — a union of grown-up commitment and childlike exuberance. Come to Indianapolis for leadership education with a playful twist.

■ Three registration options are new this year: Register for the entire convention, for the Kiwanis Education Conference, or for a day. Register online through May 22, 2020.

■ Featured speakers include Captain “Sully” Sullenberger, who became renowned for safely guiding US Airways Flight 1549 to an emergency water landing in New York City’s Hudson River, and Kevin Carroll, who has dedicated his life to advancing education, sports and play as a vehicle for social change and success.

■ Bring the family along to enjoy all that downtown Indy offers near the convention center: Zoo, Children’s Museum, art museum, state museum and more museums; NCAA Hall of Champions; downtown mall; ball park; IMAX movies; canal walk with paddle boats; a city market and more. If that’s not enough, you can head out to the Indianapolis Speedway.

www.kiwanis.org/convention/2020

Email news and photos of club projects to the Kiwanis Kourier, kiwaniskourier@gmail.com
Montgomery club funds zoo’s train engine

Everybody loves a train ride — especially kids!
The Kiwanis Club of Montgomery wanted to give a gift to kids to mark their 100-year anniversary, so they decided to make sure the kids in their area have a train to ride around the Montgomery Zoo.

At the club’s celebration breakfast Oct. 31 in the RSA activities center downtown, a train engine burst through the balloon arch and chugged around, with several television stations filming.

The big check written to the Montgomery Zoo for $100,000 — $1,000 for every year of service provided by this club — will allow the zoo to purchase a new train engine and keep on chugging.

The Kiwanis Club of Montgomery — the third largest and among the oldest Kiwanis clubs in the world — will also keep on chugging and providing monetary grants and service to dozens of area agencies that serve children and others.

The club had the foresight to start a huge annual service project of the type that keeps on giving.

For 65 years, area families have had fun with the rides, shows and concessions at the Alabama National Fair. Proceeds from the fair help the club contribute $200,000 to $300,000 each year to area agencies that help children, according to the club’s president, Sam Johnson.

He and other club members, including last year’s Alabama Kiwanis Governor Ben Taylor, were in a banquet room in Orlando during the Kiwanis International Convention last June when the Alabama National Fair was named the top Kiwanis signature service project in the world.

The club’s donations usually go to organizations that benefit children, ranging from Boys and Girls Clubs of the River Region since 1938 to newer groups such as Service Dogs Alabama.

It is estimated that in its 100 years, the club has donated about $9 million to organizations and scholarships.

Some of that is due to the Pete Peterson Trust, which started with a $700,000 donation in 1968 that has grown to more than $3 million.

Daphne envisions Project Sandbox

Kiwanis members are front and center at the kickoff of “Project Sandbox,” an effort to build the Eastern Shore a new, inclusive playground. The campaign goal is to raise around $350,000. The city of Daphne pledged $100,000 and agreed to provide property and maintain the playground. The team includes the Kiwanis Club of Daphne-Spanish Fort, the city and the Exceptional Foundation Gulf Coast. The artist’s vision shows the plan for an environment where all children can play.
Clubs in Action

Great gumbo and good weather drew a crowd to Fairhope for the “Best of the Bay” Gumbo Cookoff Oct. 19. Governor-elect Mark Kellerman and Fairhope-Eastern Shore Kiwanis Club President Sherry Sullivan invited Kiwanis Governor Bob and Mary Lynn Brown to attend the fundraiser. Also seen sampling gumbo and enjoying live music were Past Governor Keith Graham, Azalea City Kiwanis President Dee Dee Graham and their daughter Emily, and Past Governor Karla Moons. Past Lt. Governor Thomas Lott and Linda were representing the Daphne-Eastern Shore club holds ‘Best of the Bay’ Gumbo Cookoff with live music

Spanish Fort Kiwanis Club in the competition. This Alabama World Food Championship event was held at Halstead Amphitheater at Coastal Alabama Community College. At a club meeting soon afterward, the Kiwanis club honored Ashley Bell with the O.O. Stewart Award, named for a founding club member who inspired others through community service. For the past nine years, Bell has served as chair of the gumbo championship event, growing it to almost 40 cooking teams and helping raise more than $80,000 for the community.

Monroeville presents 3 awards

The Monroeville Kiwanis Club presented three awards at its annual awards luncheon Dec. 3.

Paul England was named Citizen of the Year, and Jeanie Smith was named Kiwanian of the year. Phyllis Bell received a Zeller Fellowship for work with Project Eliminate, a joint effort by Kiwanis International and UNICEF to raise funds for wiping out deadly maternal and neonatal tetanus.

Both England and Smith are past presidents of Monroeville Kiwanis, who have served the club and district in numerous capacities.

Membership in Kiwanis is not required for Citizen of the Year. It is based on a history of service to the local community. England came to Monroeville in 2000. He manages the local Trustmark Bank office. He is from Mobile and has served three terms as a Kiwanis lieutenant governor.

Kiwanian of the Year is chosen by local club members who submit nominations to a secret committee.
The Monroeville Kiwanis and Rotary clubs donated $4,690 to the Monroeville Area Angel Tree to help purchase Christmas gifts for children. The money came from the annual Kiwanis/Rotary auction of cakes and other baked goods, held Nov. 19.

During Christmas 2019, the Angel Tree Program served 207 children ages 3-10 whose families could not afford toys due to unemployment, illness or underemployment.

Sponsors took children’s names from Angel Trees in the community and then gave the children gifts. Individuals, Kiwanis, Rotary, and Monroe County High School’s Beta and National Honor Society clubs collectively raised over $5,400 to cover names that were not picked.

“This was an incredible effort and an example of a great community working together,” said Pam Barnhardt, the volunteer chairperson for the Monroeville Area Angel Tree. She is employed as minister of youth and education at First United Methodist Church in Monroeville.

Columbiana Kiwanis Club’s Shelby County Fair

The Shelby County Fair has been the signature service project of the Kiwanis Club of Columbiana for 70 years. Proceeds go to local service agencies such as Scouts, school libraries, Key Club and more. The theme for the Nov. 4-9 event was “Hats Off to 70 Years.” District Governor Bob Brown helped set up and man the Kiwanis booth, with help from Richard Harley of the Indian Springs Kiwanis Club on one night and John Garrison of the Columbiana club on another. Volunteers from Indian Springs, Montevallo and other neighboring clubs helped throughout the week. Brown said the highlight was Kenny Moor filling out a Kiwanis application at the booth and becoming the Columbiana club’s newest member.

From left: Pam Barnhardt, Rotary President Mary Jackson, Kiwanis auction coordinator Tom Lomenick, Kiwanis Vice President Debora Jinright and Kiwanis President Pete Black.

Monroeville club helps pay for Christmas gifts

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2020 Kiwanis family calendar

- Feb. 8, Northern area Midwinter Training Meeting, Cullman
- Feb. 22, Central area Midwinter Training Meeting, Montgomery
- Feb. 29, Southern area Midwinter Training Meeting, Monroeville
- Feb. 28-March 1, Circle K District Convention, Huntsville Marriott
- March 7, Celebration luncheon: 30 years of Jean Dean Reading Is Fundamental, RSA activity building, Montgomery
- Week of March 8, Club opening blitz, Baldwin/Mobile county area
- March 21, Alabama Spelling Bee sponsored by Kiwanis, Birmingham
- April 3-5, Key Club District Convention, Hyatt Regency, Hoover Galleria
- April 24-26, Key Leader weekend, Jackson’s Gap
- June 17-20, Kiwanis International Convention, Indianapolis, Indiana
- Aug. 14-16, Alabama Kiwanis District Convention, Gulf State Park

Register for the Kiwanis International Convention June 17-20, 2020, in Indianapolis, Indiana
A ‘Reading Oasis’ in Birmingham
The cool spot to visit at West Center Street Head Start in Birmingham is its “Reading Oasis.” At the fall Jean Dean Reading Is Fundamental session, readers (bottom left photo) included Leland Keller and Deb Gasque, whose Homewood-Mountain Brook Kiwanis Club built the Reading Oasis. Kiwanis Governor Bob Brown also was there for the first reading of the 2019-20 RIF year, “which promises to be our best ever,” he said. On Nov. 21, Kiwanians from the Hoover-Metro, Homewood-Mountain Brook and Downtown Birmingham clubs gathered to read to nine classrooms of eager and attentive young students in this neat reading room that kids love, Brown said.

Indian Springs: More laptops
The new year brought even more computers donated by the Kiwanis Club of Indian Springs Village to area schools. This time, Kiwanians concentrated on the elementary level. Presenting 28 Chromebooks for classrooms to Debbie Horton, principal of Oak Mountain Elementary School, are Dr. Dale Elliott, left, President Jake Guercio and Rick Harley, right. The club donated $75,000 in Chromebook laptops to the Oak Mountain School District during 2018-19.

Governor Bob Brown and wife Mary Lynn joined the Fort Payne Kiwanis Club and Division 7 Lt. Governor Jerry Ware to install the new officers and board members Oct. 17. Immediate Past President Randy Posey passed the gavel to new President Jeremy Taylor. Also installed were President-elect Christian Payne, Treasurer Kyle Burt and Secretary Sharon Jones. She also received a 30-year perfect attendance award.